LEARNING THROUGH SERVING
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Introduction

Why a Book about Learning through Serving?

CHRISTINE M. CRESS

Learning through Serving: A Student Workbook for Service-Learning across the Disciplines is a textbook for students who, like yourself, are involved in service-learning experiences as part of the college or university program. We wrote this book because we care about your serving and learning experience. Whether you are performing service work in the community as a member of a course or engaging in service on your own, we offer exercises and activities to help you have a more effective, interesting, and meaningful experience.

The purpose of this book is to guide you through the essential elements of learning and serving. In other words, we focus on how you can best provide meaningful service to a community agency or organization while simultaneously gaining new skills, knowledge, and understanding as an integrated aspect of your academic program.

As you may know, service-learning courses are complex teaching and learning environments that are designed to enhance learning through the process of connecting academic course content with service opportunities in the community. This approach will require you and your instructor to participate in new roles and in different ways of learning than a traditional lecture course. What you are about to experience is an entirely new context for learning—one based in active practice in the community—that will challenge you to connect that learning back to classroom instruction, course readings, and discussion. We have developed this workbook to assist you in planning, processing, and evaluating your learning-through-serving experience.

The text first guides you over the initial hurdles faced in service-learning courses by addressing questions of meaning and values as you face the potential irony of “required volunteerism” and grapple with the essence of what it means to be a learner, a citizen, and a community member. For the most part, we assume that you are reading the text and completing the activities as part of a service-learning course. If you are not, however, you can still easily adapt any of the exercises to be completed on your own. You might also use these exercises to reflect upon your service experience even if your instructor does not assign all the activities to be completed as part of your class.

We have intentionally planned the book to be read over an academic term or semester. You will probably read about one chapter per week. Most important, though, is that you pace your reading of the text and completion of the exercises with the progression of your community-based experience for maximum benefit and insight.

The various inventories and reflective activities in this book are designed to help you understand your relationship to your classmates (viewing the classroom as a community), to the community organization (or wherever you are providing the service), and to the larger society. Further, the book prepares you to enter multicultural communities by addressing diversity issues that you may encounter in community-
based work. We offer information, resources, and activities to explore issues of race, class, gender, ability, orientation, and other lived differences and likenesses that you may encounter in your classroom and extended community.

The text also provides academic scholarship and inquiry questions to help you glean lessons regarding the nature and process of societal change. We encourage you to think about how your academic program or major can be used as a framework for understanding and addressing complex community challenges. Moreover, the text offers further reflective strategies for assessment so that you can make meaning of the service you have performed (the processes and the outcomes) and envision future roles you will play in your community (as a citizen, a volunteer, and an employee).

Thus, this book is designed as a practical guide to help you survive and thrive in service-learning experiences, whether that service to the community lasts a few weeks or a few months. The book can also be read as a companion text to your course readings in that it offers creative resources and ideas for bridging the gap between learning and serving across a variety of academic fields and a multitude of community-based experiences.

As you will see, each section’s chapters include theoretical information in order to provide a contextual understanding of contemporary community issues. The bulk of each chapter, however, incorporates methods for self-reflection and assessment, offers questions for your individual thought and group discussion, suggests techniques for effectively interacting with the community, and details brief case-study examples of service-learning projects at other institutions.

To assist you, key symbols have been added to the exercises to highlight their relative importance in explaining chapter concepts. If applicable, check with your instructor in advance to see which exercises he or she may require you to complete on your own and which ones you might complete as part of a group.

Exercises with a star cluster ⭐️ are of utmost importance to complete (working either on your own or as part of a group); those with a lightbulb💡 represent optional exercises (strategies for gaining deeper insights into the issues); and those with a question mark❓ identify exercises that provide further resources and information in your quest for understanding community problem solving and change. Please note that, because of the range of community-based experiences, we will use the terms service-learning and community-based learning relatively interchangeably, although we will explore the differences between these terms in chapter 1.

For clarity and ease of understanding, the book is divided into four sections: (1) Understanding the Learning-through-Serving Proposition; (2) Learning the Landscape, Learning the Language; (3) Facilitating Learning and Meaning-Making Inside and Outside the Classroom; and (4) Assessing the Engagement Effort.

### Part One: Understanding the Learning through Serving Proposition

The goal of part one is to prepare you for the experience of learning through serving. Some students begin their service-learning courses already understanding the foundations for this type of classroom-community experience through their own personal histories of volunteering and engaged citizenship. For others of you, the experience may be unfamiliar, untested territory. Chapters 1–3 will provide you with the steps for connecting yourself to the community and offer suggestions for how you might begin to experience yourself as a collaborator in learning through serving.

#### Chapter 1 What is Service-Learning?

In chapter 1, we look at the nature of “service” and “learning” as they are enacted in service-learning courses and connect this description to a larger conversation about democracy, citizenship, and civic responsibility. You will be introduced to reflection as a key practical element that distinguishes service from volunteerism. We also discuss the role of colleges in facilitating the development of your civic capacity, and the types of knowledge, skills, and motivation that will allow you to become a fully contributing member of your community.

#### Chapter 2 Building and Maintaining Community Partnerships

In chapter 2, we delve more deeply into the potentially transformative power of your partnership with a community organization. We discuss the key elements for successful partnerships by offering a case study example of entering, engaging with, and exiting a service-learning experience. You will also have an opportunity to develop an “Action Learning Plan for Serving” (ALPs)
as a strategy for making the most of your serving and learning.

Chapter 3 Becoming Community: Moving from I to We
In chapter 3, we discuss “community” as experienced in a service-learning course: the class as learning community, extended community as wall-less classroom, and the intersection of these learning landscapes. We discover that good intentions and communication are not always enough to ensure a fruitful serving experience, as multiple parties may have differences in values and goals. We also introduce you to a new leadership model as a framework for how to make the best use of collaboration in creating community change.

Part Two: Learning the Landscape, Learning the Language
As you participate in your learning-through-serving experience, you will come to understand yourself and others in new ways. In this section of the book (chapters 4 and 5), we provide you with information and exercises for interacting with diverse groups of individuals in order to maximize your effectiveness and empathy as a learner and server.

Chapter 4 Groups Are Fun, Groups Are Not Fun: Teamwork for the Common Good
Whether or not you are part of a formal team to perform your service, teamwork and collaboration in a group setting is a standard process in many, if not most, service-learning experiences. Chapter 4 specifically addresses the development of your knowledge and skills for creating effective group collaboration to further both course learning and service objectives.

Chapter 5 Creating Cultural Connections: Navigating Difference, Investigating Power, Unpacking Privilege
Chapter 5 builds on the experiential learning inherent in navigating differences in group practice to look more closely at multiculturalism. No doubt you hope to work respectfully, ethically, and effectively on behalf of classmates and community constituents, but to realize these goals you must look at underlying issues (power, privilege, discrimination, stereotypes, intercultural communication, cultural competence, and others) that affect the life of a community. In this chapter we examine how to incorporate multiple voices to offer a chorus of viewpoints on community and discuss the politics of difference and the implications for community engagement.

Part Three: Facilitating Learning and Meaning-Making Inside and Outside the Classroom
The goal of part three (Chapters 6–8) is to highlight multiple venues for understanding the community-based experience—when things are going well and when things are not going well. Specifically, how can you use reflection to construct meaning and knowledge from your experience, what can be done if the community interaction is a disappointment or is failing, and how can the context and content of the course itself provide direction and insight?

Chapter 6 Reflection in Action: The Learning–Doing Relationship
Without sufficient, multiply focused opportunities to reflect on your actions, you are at risk for leaving the service-learning class without having articulated how your learning was amplified through engagement with your community partner and what that engagement meant to you. In chapter 6, we suggest strategies for structuring the ongoing practice of reflection throughout the service-learning experience. Moreover, we help you understand how your learning style may be supported through multiple modes of reflection.

Chapter 7 Failure with the Best of Intentions: When Things Go Wrong
In spite of the best-laid plans of faculty and students, a host of things can go wrong when working with the community. For example, students can become bitterly embroiled with one another when working in groups; the community partner may not provide sufficient information or support for the learning experience; and financial and logistical requirements may not be met within expected time frames. This chapter will help you anticipate and circumvent possible “failures,” strategically problem-solve and confront issues, and persevere in the process irrespective of the odds for “success.”

Chapter 8 Expanding Horizons: New Views of Course Concepts
Identifying and understanding the relationship between course content and service-learning experiences
is often the most challenging aspect of community-based experiences. This chapter will provide you with critical leverage points and strategies for connecting cognitive theoretical material with your concrete experiential realities. The goal is to give you insights into how conceptual models and the content of various academic fields can better inform practice in the community. In addition, you will also learn how “real-life” situations and case studies can serve to add to our academic knowledge base about how to address community challenges and issues.

Part Four: Assessing the Engagement Effort

The goal of part four (chapters 9 and 10) is to assist you with evaluating the results of your community-based engagement. Did your efforts with the community actually make a difference to that community and its stakeholders? As for yourself, what skills, knowledge, and values did you gain in the process of connecting with the community? How might you leverage this learning in future efforts to make positive change in your community?

Chapter 9  Beyond a Grade: Are We Making a Difference? The Benefits and Challenges of Evaluating the Impact of Learning through Serving
There are a number of aspects to consider at the end of a service-learning experience. This chapter focuses on how to determine whether or not your service made meaningful differences to you, your classmates, your instructor, and the community partner. Were community stakeholders positively impacted by your work? What did you learn that is directly connected to your academic major? Was positive change realized? Included in this chapter is a number of rubrics and strategies to assist you in evaluating the multiple impacts of this college–community relationship.

Chapter 10  Looking Back, Looking Forward: Where Do You Go from Here?
The final chapter asks you to reflect in a holistic manner on your learning process. You will re-examine who you were when you began the service experience, who you have become, and how you leave this experience poised to act again in the service of the common good.

We believe this book will prove to be a valuable resource to you, your classmates, and your instructor in enriching your insights from learning through serving. What you will read here has been informed by the experiences of many persons. We extend sincere thanks to our scholar-colleagues at Portland State University who collaborated in the writing and preparation of the manuscript. We are greatly indebted to them for sharing their experiential insights and wisdom. And to our students—the best teachers we have had—we offer our gratitude and respect.
PART ONE

Understanding the *Learning-through-Serving* Proposition

The goal of part one is to prepare you for the experience of learning through serving. Some students begin their service-learning courses already understanding the foundations for this type of classroom-community experience through their own personal histories of volunteering and engaged citizenship. For others of you, the experience may be unfamiliar, untested territory. Chapters 1–3 will provide you with the steps for connecting yourself to the community and offer suggestions for how you might begin to experience yourself as a collaborator in learning through serving.

**KEY SYMBOLS**

⭐️ Exercises of utmost importance to complete (working either on your own or in a group)

💡 Optional exercises (strategies for gaining deeper insights into the issues)

❓ Exercises that provide further resources and information in your quest for understanding community problem solving and change
What Is Service-Learning?

ACROSS THE COUNTRY, students and their instructors are leaving the classroom and engaging with their communities in order to make learning come alive and to experience real-life connections between their education and everyday issues in their cities, towns, or states. If you are reading this book, you are probably one of these students. In some cases, you might even travel to another country to “serve and learn.” Depending on the curriculum or program, the length of your experience can vary from a couple of hours to a few weeks or months, and occasionally to an entire year.

These experiences are often referred to by multiple names: service-learning, community service, or community-based learning. Throughout this text we use these terms relatively interchangeably, but we also explore some important distinctions. The activities named above differ from volunteering or internships because you will intentionally use your intellectual capacities and skills to address community problems. While you will have an opportunity to put your knowledge and skills into direct practice, you will also learn how to reflect on those experiences in making your community a better place in which to live and work.

For example, volunteering to tutor at-risk middle-school students is certainly valuable to the community. Similarly, working as an intern writing news copy for a locally owned and operated radio station is great job experience. Service-learning, however, is different.

**Volunteerism**: Students engage in activities where the emphasis is on service for the sake of the beneficiary or recipient (client, partner).

**Internship**: Students engage in activities to enhance their own vocational or career development.

**Practicum**: Students work in a discipline-based venue in place of an in-class course experience.

**Community Service**: Students engage in activities to meet actual community needs as an integrated aspect of the curriculum.

**Community-Based Learning**: Students engage in actively addressing mutually defined community needs (as a collaboration between community partners, faculty, and students) as a vehicle for achieving academic goals and course objectives.

**Service-Learning**: Students engage in community service activities with intentional academic and learning goals and opportunities for reflection that connect to their academic disciplines.
In service-learning you will work with your classmates and instructor to use your academic discipline and course content in understanding the underlying social, political, and economic issues that contribute to community difficulties. In essence, you will learn how to become an educated community member and problem solver through serving the community and reflecting on the meaning of that service.

**How Is Service-Learning Different from Other Courses?**

For clarity, we will most often use the term *service-learning* to characterize your community-based learning experience. Each faculty member may structure the experience slightly differently depending on the goals and objectives of the course and the needs of the community partner. What is most important for you to know is that service-learning is truly a different way of learning—thus the hyphen between “service” and “learning.” These two facets are interdependent and dynamic and vary from other forms of traditional learning in that the focus is placed upon connecting course content with actual experience (see figure 1.1).

Instead of passively hearing a lecture, students involved in service-learning are active participants in creating knowledge. The role of teacher and learner are more fluid and less rigid. While the instructor guides the course, students share control for determining class outcomes. At first, this new kind of *pedagogy* (that is, teaching methods) can seem quite strange to students. As you and your classmates get more practice working with each other in groups and connecting with your community, though, you may find it far more interesting than “regular” classes.

In many traditional learning environments, the instructor delivers the content of the course through lectures, assignments, and tests. In some cases, students may also complete a practicum or other hands-on experience to further their learning. In contrast, learning through reflecting on experience is at the center of service-learning courses, and faculty guide students as they integrate intellectual knowledge with community interactions through the process of *reflection*.

One of the aspects of service-learning that may also make the experience enjoyable for you is that the experiential component connects to a wide range of learning styles. You may find that when you enter your service site, the needs of the community are quite different from what you expected. Say, for instance, that your service-learning involves teaching résumé writing to women staying at a “safe house” for survivors of domestic violence. In working with the women, you may discover that they also need professional clothing for job interviews. While they may still need your help in preparing résumés, their confidence in an interview may be undermined unless they feel appropriately dressed. As a service-learner, you might find yourself asking, “Now what do I do?”

You have probably succeeded thus far in your education because you have a certain level of ability to listen to lectures, take tests, do research, and write papers. However, for some students (including, perhaps, yourself) this does not come naturally. Instead, your skills may best emerge when interviewing community members or providing counseling assistance. Alternatively, you may excel at organizing tasks and developing project timelines, or you may be visually creative. In the example above, you may be the best person to provide résumé assistance for the women, or it might make more sense for a classmate to assist with résumé writing while you call local agencies to inquire about clothing donations. Ideally, all students will find the opportunity to build from and contribute their strengths to the service-learning projects using different skill sets.

**Figure 1.1. The Learning-through-Serving Model**
Along the way, your instructor and the course readings will further develop your range and repertoire of skills, knowledge, and insights, because service-learning courses invariably challenge students to consider where “truth” and wisdom reside. Moving more deeply into the scenario above, for example, you might begin to wonder why domestic violence exists in your community. What role might the media play in portraying healthy and unhealthy domestic relationships? Do economic factors such as unemployment make any difference? What about substance abuse issues?

Stop for a moment and think about how you would answer the following questions as you ponder your own education and the relationship you see between in-classroom learning and the outside world:

- What is the relative value of solutions drawn from scholarly literature compared to ideas presented by students, faculty, and community partners?
- How can we move beyond stereotypes, preconceived ideas, misinformation, and biases to understand real people and real issues?
- How can we be solution centered?
- How can we examine external norms and societal structures?
- Which community values should we reinforce, which are open to question, and how should a community decide this?
- How can we develop and act from an ethical base while engaging as citizens in our communities?

As a student in a community-based learning course, you will be asked to be highly reflective about your learning experiences. Often, you will keep a journal or write reflective papers that emphasize various aspects of your learning. The goal is to help you cognitively and affectively process your thoughts and feelings about your experience, while using academic content to derive broader insights.

Here’s an example of one way to reflect on your experience. In a senior-level course that provided after-school activities for at-risk students in an urban environment, the learners were asked to examine their experiences from a variety of viewpoints in their reflective journals:

- Describe what you did today.
- What did you see or observe at the site?
- How did you feel about the experience?
- What connections do you find between the experience and course readings?
- What new ideas or insights did you gain?
- What skills can you use and strengthen?
- What will you apply from this experience in future work with the community?

Reflecting on our experiences lends new significance to what we are learning. It also allows us to compare initial goals and objectives with eventual outcomes—to assess what we have accomplished. We will cover more about reflection and assessment of our community-based learning experiences in later chapters. For now, let’s turn our thoughts to why colleges and universities offer service-learning courses.

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**Exercise 1.1: Comparing Classrooms**

Think back to traditional classrooms in which you have been a student/learner. What responsibilities did you have in this kind of class, and what responsibilities did the instructor have? How do you imagine your role as a student will be different in this community-based experience? What kinds of responsibilities do you imagine that you will have in this class? How about your instructor? The others in your classroom learning community? The community outside your classroom?

Make a list of the activities you did in a traditional classroom and compare those with any of your nontraditional learning experiences. What factors in each environment best facilitated your learning? What factors made it more challenging for you to learn?
Learning Through Serving

Why Is Service-Learning Required at Some Colleges?

Colleges and universities are increasingly including in their educational mission the preparation of graduates as future citizens. What, really, does this mean? Are colleges merely hoping that you will vote and pay your taxes as contributing members of society? What about job training and preparing you for the workforce? Aren’t you, in fact, spending a lot of time and money on school? If so, why should you be required to perform volunteer service in the community? Isn’t obligatory volunteerism like being an indentured servant? In other words, Are you being forced to work for free?

Perhaps the greatest single resistance voiced in service-learning classes is the argument that service is volunteerism and, by definition, cannot be required. However, in service-learning classes, the good that you will do in your community necessarily includes the learning you will gain as a result of your efforts. The whole point of service-learning is for you to grow in skills and knowledge precisely because you are bringing your capabilities to real-world problems. While you do this, your community benefits as well.

Colleges and universities do not want or intend to be social-service providers. A myriad of governmental offices, nonprofit agencies, and religiously affiliated organizations serve community needs. Instead, institutions of higher education want to be good neighbors in connecting with their communities. Colleges are most concerned about preparing citizens for the future, graduates who are well prepared to enter the job market and contribute to society. Institutions that require service-learning courses believe that such courses offer a fundamental way to develop and graduate involved citizens.

What Is a Citizen and Why Must I Learn to Be One?

Being a citizen in the United States implies that you were either born here or naturalized as one (meaning you passed the citizenship exam and took the citizenship oath). Generally, U.S. citizens do not tend to reflect on what citizenship means. In the wake of significant national or global events, such as the attacks on September 11, 2001, or the war against terrorism, citizenship may be associated with American patriotism. Those in the armed services may frequently consider what it means to be a citizen since they are charged with defending and protecting our country and its democratic values.

Certainly, citizens of the United States hold a variety of views about what precisely that means. If you are an international student or if you immigrated to this country, your ideas about citizenship may be different from those of many Americans. As you engage in your service-learning course, you will have many opportunities to explore what it means to be a citizen, an active participant in the life of American communities. What are the duties, as well as the rights, for participation in this democracy?

A college student originally from Bosnia wrote the following during her service-learning course:

I came to the United States five years ago as a refugee because of the war. Before, in my country, I hoped for freedom. To be free to make my own decisions and free to go wherever I wanted without any limitations. Back then, I didn’t link it with democracy. Now, in the United States, I think about terms like freedom, democracy, and citizenship as interdependent. They can’t exist without each other. If we live in a democratic society we have certain freedoms. But we must also be a good and responsible citizen to protect those freedoms for everyone.

More than four decades ago, President John F. Kennedy said, “Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country.” This statement most succinctly and aptly describes the fundamental concept behind service-learning and community service. As citizens, it is our obligation to contribute to the improvement of our nation. Moreover, many would argue that as citizens of the wealthiest nation in the world, it is our responsibility to be good global citizens.

We are all aware of the multiple issues that face our communities: homelessness, poverty, drug addiction, violence, pollution, racism, sexism, homophobia, lack of health care, poorly performing schools, urban blight—and the list goes on. Other difficulties face us as well: corporate fraud, dishonest politicians, and biased judicial systems. In light of such concerns, it is natural
to feel overwhelmed, hopeless, and helpless. After all, what could you possibly do to change any of it? And while we might care about the issues (and maybe even donate a few dollars each year to charitable organizations), the guilty conscience that is prodding us to get involved may be overtaken by our own apathy. In the end, we feel bad but often go on with our day. We just do not know how to respond to President Kennedy’s challenge. The problems seem too big.

Yet most of us have done “good” in our communities at one time or another. We might have served Thanksgiving dinner at a shelter; answered calls at a crisis center; helped to raise money for new playground equipment in the park; taught religious education to kids in churches, synagogues, or mosques; registered voters or gathered signatures for ballot measures; donated blood; picked up litter on the beach; or tutored someone to learn to read. All of these efforts are a part of what makes our communities stronger.

Still, the question remains: Why must I be “required” to participate in service-learning? If I want to make a positive difference in my neighborhood, why shouldn’t I be left alone to decide for myself when and where I want to volunteer? Why should I be “forced” to serve in the community as a part of my education? Isn’t this denying me freedom of choice? And isn’t this even more problematic if I have to work at an organization or with others with whom I have differing political, religious, or ethical views?

The Role of Education in a Democracy

Some have described American democracy as a great experiment. Others have suggested that it is a work of art in progress. But unlike a laboratory experiment or a painting on the wall, democracy is the function of human interaction. Democracy is the attempt to balance differences in individual values, beliefs, and experiences with collective ideals of justice, equity, and security. Being a citizen in a democracy means that you possess both the rights of freedom and a responsibility to uphold democratic ideals such as fairness. In a way, it is a kind of double consciousness. We are accountable for ourselves and for the welfare of others.

We stand in a turmoil of contradictions without having the faintest idea how to handle them: Law/Freedom; Rich/Poor; Right/Left; Love/Hate—the list seems endless. Paradox lives and moves in this realm; it is the balancing of opposites in such
a way that they do not cancel each other but shoot sparks of light across their points of polarity. It looks at our desperate either/or and tells us that they are really both/ands—that life is larger than any of our concepts and can, if we let it, embrace our contradictions. (Morrison, 1983)

Institutions of education in U.S. democracy have attempted to bridge these complementary but competing forces—individualism and society, freedom and responsibility. Colleges and universities encourage us to live up to the “American dream” by working hard and increasing our intellectual capacities. The hope is that we will make use of our new insights to get good jobs and be good neighbors.

This is not a simple proposition. Our society, and our world for that matter, is plagued by incredibly complex problems. Pollution will not be stopped through curbside recycling alone, hunger will not be reduced by building larger food banks, and women will not be made safer merely by adding more streetlights.

Educational leaders have come to realize that the critical issues facing our nation can be solved only through the creation of educated citizens. Indeed, John Dewey (1916), in Democracy and Education, argued that students must be engaged not just in thought, but in action, and that this mode of education is crucial to the formation of responsible citizens. Two key elements—knowledge and skill—are the catalysts for developing civically engaged students and graduates.

Being civic-minded is more than just what you know. It is what you do with what you know. Institutions of higher education risk producing graduates who know without doing—and are increasingly incorporating service-learning to address this concern. Equally detrimental to our communities are those who do without knowing. What our country needs is more than either abstract visions or “blind” actions. We need mindful individuals who choose to “do good” for their country. In essence, community-based educational experiences increase our capacity for how to apply our knowledge and skills to civic issues. This is known as enhancing our civic capacity.

I knew that helping an underprivileged kid learn to read would be challenging and fun. But I never realized that as a class we could have an impact on the whole community. Because of the after-school program we started, parental involvement has increased and juvenile crime the last six months has decreased. I hope this trend continues.

How Is Civic Capacity Developed in Service-Learning Courses?

The development of civic capacity occurs when we explore the connection between academic knowledge and experience-derived insight into the breadth and depth of societal and political issues. Having a surface understanding of deforestation, for instance, is not enough to address all the associated environmental and economic questions. Knowing that our schools need additional resources is not enough to ensure that children learn mathematics. We can no longer afford to take a singular or microscopic view of our world. Instead, through your service-learning course readings, discussion, research, lecture, and community experiences, you might come to understand how the purchase of your new running shoes or morning coffee makes you an interdependent part of the global community, whether you examine it through the disciplinary lens of history, biology, psychology, architecture, computer science, English, political science, or urban studies. If we do not see how our individual lives are a part of the whole, we will lack the ability to identify leverage points for creative change. In other words, being an engaged citizen involves more than “thinking globally and acting locally”; it means deliberately applying our academic knowledge and skills to positively transform ourselves, others, and organizations.

Meeting homeless families personally allowed me to get to know the faces behind the statistics. It also helped me to see how social issues and political issues are connected. While I was taking my service-learning course we were electing a mayor in my hometown. One of the candidates wanted to institute a policy to charge parents with a misdemeanor if they failed to get their kids to school. Many of the homeless families I met struggled to enroll their children in schools when they were
Understanding problems and recognizing opportunities for improvement is a great starting point. From there, your service-learning course will help you develop the capacity to apply your skills. You will have frequent occasions to test your talents and abilities on real community issues. How, for example, do you best organize volunteers for a legislative rally to support public schools? How might you identify and provide health care services to people without insurance? How do you promote tolerance in a racially segregated community? How do you teach a refugee to surf the Internet?

Each day, our workforce and neighborhoods become more diverse. We need the knowledge and skills of mathematicians, anthropologists, chemists, writers, engineers, musicians, sociologists, and every other discipline, in order to learn to work and live together. Just as importantly, we must practice patience and tolerance in understanding each other. In the end, empathy will be the glue that effectively binds our knowledge and skills into a source for community growth.

What Else Will I Gain from a Service-Learning Course?

Many studies indicate that students who participate in community-based learning realize greater educational and learning gains than their peers. Their academic and social self-concept is higher, they tend to be more moral and ethical in their decision making, their tolerance and empathy for others is improved, their understanding of societal and community issues is broadened, their cognitive and problem-solving skills are more advanced, and their interest in influencing positive social and political change is increased.

After participating in service-learning courses, students stated the following:

The empowerment given to students created a sense of responsibility and commitment.

Reflective journals helped to organize my thoughts and experiences.

Students also commented on their communication and critical-thinking skills:

Exercise 1.3: Making a Difference

If you are working on your own, divide a sheet of paper into four columns. At the top of each column write one of the following words: Location, Action, Skill, and Knowledge.

Next, make a list of the places you have helped out in the community and put them under the Location column. This does not have to be formal volunteerism. Maybe you planted trees in a park as part of your Girl Scout troop or maybe you walked in a fundraiser for juvenile diabetes. Everything counts.

Beside each Location, briefly describe what you did. What was the Action?

As you consider what you did, note the Skills (the concrete abilities) and Knowledge (the base of information) you used to accomplish the Action.

Read what you have written. What do you notice about the ways you have worked to make a difference in your community? What does this say to you about your own civic capacity? What might that mean for you as a service-learner in this new experience? What knowledge and skills, in particular, would you like to expand in this new experience?
The experience benefited me in improving my communication skills and leadership abilities. It also helped me to further my conflict resolution skills. Most importantly, it gave me the opportunity to have an experience in a real environment.

I learned how to talk effectively with others and how to resolve professional differences without anger.

Students further noted how the course brought new insights and understanding to their own stereotypes, biases, and prejudices while expanding their appreciation for diverse others.

The most important aspect I learned in this experience was dealing with a sector of the community I might never have worked with otherwise, gaining insight into the juvenile justice system and the needs of the Southeast Asian immigrant community.

I learned to understand myself and to overcome a lot of biases I had toward the poor.

Service-learning courses should not be viewed as an educational utopia. Personality conflicts can arise, students may lack the ability to deal with others who are different from themselves, community partners may not follow through on their commitments, and group members may not meet their responsibilities. In addition, many community service projects are in neighborhoods or parts of the community unfamiliar to students. It’s quite likely that you may experience a variety of emotions and reactions while performing your service, including fear, guilt, or outrage. Because service-learning experiences are grounded in relationships—the relationship of student to community, to other students, to the instructor, and to the self—the thoughts and feelings you have about your service experience may be quite intense at times. We address these issues of understanding, managing, and processing your feelings and reactions in later chapters in this book.

The fundamental principle underlying service-learning and community-based learning courses is that you as a student have knowledge and skills that can improve society. You just need a chance to practice them. Working with community partners compels us to assess and reevaluate our abstract ideas about societal and political problems. As a result, we will see that the community is more than just a place with “needs.” Through working with the community, we will learn of the knowledge, skills, and expertise of our community partners. We will also learn from the individuals we are there to “serve.” Ultimately, community-based experiences are a reciprocal learning process between the educational community (students, faculty, administration) and the community partners (organizations and individuals).

What We All Gain

Colleges and universities would be educationally remiss if they did not teach students how to connect themselves to their communities. A central premise of the U.S. Constitution is that, in order to form a more perfect union (of communities), we must work actively to establish justice and ensure liberty. Service-learning courses are an important tool for learning how to take a thoughtfully informed and rational approach to living and working in community that is tempered by active empathy, respect, and care.

Before I came to the United States from Chengdu, China, I thought that everyone here would be treated equally. Supposedly, everyone is born equal but that is not the case. Some people are treated badly because of their race, age, sexual orientation, physical situation, and gender. I did not expect this discrimination. We must learn about social problems, use the knowledge to solve social issues, help others, and strengthen social responsibility.

While individuals may choose to volunteer for a variety of reasons, and learning from that experience naturally takes place, service-learning allows for deeper individual and collaborative reflection on how to create positive societal transformation. We have the
capacity, individually and collectively, to transform our communities to include those who have been disenfranchised due to race, ethnicity, gender, age, class, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, disability, religion, or political view. As such, service-learning courses teach us how to address the issues of today and tomorrow.

In the beginning, you may find it a struggle to define the concept of civic responsibility and civic engagement in articulating the connections between your service-learning and broader community involvement. At times, even faculty are uncertain about how to differentiate between service, “doing good,” and the enrichment of their own civic capacities through encounters with community organizations, community issues, and community members. By being patient and practicing reflection throughout the process, you will “learn through serving.” As Benjamin Barber (1992) states:

[t]he fundamental task of education in a democracy is the apprenticeship of liberty—learning to be free . . . [T]he literacy required to live in a civil society, the competence to participate in democratic communities, the ability to act deliberately in a pluralistic world, the empathy that permits us to hear and thus accommodate others, all involve skills that must be acquired. (p. 4)

The following chapters are designed to help you through the apprenticeship of becoming a civically engaged individual and community member as you participate in your service-learning experience.

### Key Concepts

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### Key Issues

- How is community-based learning different from traditional forms of learning?
- Why do colleges require community service and service-learning?
- What is the role of freedom and responsibility in a democracy?
- What knowledge and skills are involved in developing civic capacity?
- What does the community gain as a result of student engagement?
Exercise 1.4: Reflection Questions

- What should be the role of education in preparing students to become citizens?
- What does an effective citizen do? Can you identify some behaviors and actions associated with being a “good” citizen?
- What is a global citizen?
- What, in your view, are the pros and cons of requiring community-based learning courses?
- What specific knowledge or skills have you learned in your courses that you can apply to this community site?
- How might you be able to use your academic major and its associated knowledge base to address community issues?
- Is the “American Dream” possible? If so, how and for whom?
- What connection do you see between societal issues and individual responsibility?
- How do issues of discrimination and prejudice inhibit societal change?
- What community issues concern you the most?
Building and Maintaining Community Partnerships

VICKI L. REITENAUER, AMY SPRING, KEVIN KECSKES, SEANNA M. KERRIGAN, CHRISTINE M. CRESS, AND PETER J. COLLIER

ON A BEAUTIFUL TUESDAY morning in early July, several student grantwriters and their instructor from a service-learning course gathered during their class time at a huge warehouse in an industrial section of their city. The space they were about to tour—the former administrative and manufacturing headquarters of a local sportswear company—had been donated to their community partner, whose vision was to create an inclusive space for both emerging and established artists to come together outside of the competitive world of commercial galleries and conservative museums. This prospective artistic community center, which was to include spaces for exhibitions and performances and a resource center for working artists, now sat in front of them, behind a massive (and locked) front door. Those assembled waited five, ten, fifteen minutes. A few more students showed up. They all waited a bit longer. Now the community partner was really late. So were about half of the students from the class.

Though perhaps seemingly minor, the apparent breakdown in communication described above is no trivial matter in a community partnership, but it is quite a common one. In this chapter, we explore the process of creating successful partnerships (those that serve not only the community, but also the students who are working on behalf of community change) and the outcomes that result from such partnerships. We will return to the above scenario and examine others to investigate how these students might actively approach this opportunity to build their own knowledge and skills through effective collaboration with the world outside their college campus.

Orienting the Self toward Serving and Learning

Before we talk about the hallmarks of a successful partnership, let’s think about “service” itself. In chapter 1, you learned why colleges and universities are increasingly focused on engaging with their communities. This commitment allows the expertise of those who make up the higher education community (students, faculty, and staff) to impact the surrounding community positively, in order to address societal and political challenges and to create positive change both for individuals and within systems.

That’s not the only reason colleges and universities partner with the community, however. In addition to the social change possible from these partnerships, students may receive extraordinary benefits not accessed through traditional lecture-style courses. Because community-based learning environments energize, enhance, and make real the course curricula, students typically report significant growth in their abilities to communicate with diverse audiences in multiple ways, enhancement of leadership and project management skills, and development of their capacities for understanding themselves in relation to others who are both similar to and different from themselves. Participating
in a service-learning course may also help students clarify career goals and provide a network of contacts (and even, in some cases, job opportunities). Like students before you, you may also experience a significant shift in your identification as an informed and involved participant in your communities and your world.

These outcomes don't result by accident. Thoughtful preparation for community-based learning on the part of all involved dramatically increases the chances of successful results. We all have individual gifts and skills to offer our classmates, the instructor, and the community. By participating in this experience, we implicitly agree to put these capacities to use to create a rich, meaningful, and vibrant experience in an environment of mutual respect and commitment.

As noted in chapter 1, you can also expect to build academic discipline skills, deepen your knowledge of the issues facing your communities, and develop greater capacities for self-awareness. In fact, it is precisely through the reciprocal action of all of the parties involved in community-based learning that everyone benefits from the endeavor. That is to say, the community is able to achieve its outcomes and objectives through your focused actions, and you expand your knowledge and skills through putting theory into practice. This is the meaning of “partnership”: All parties gain in the relationship, and they gain precisely because the others are gaining, too.

In chapter 3, you will complete an activity to help you identify specific objectives for your service-learning experience, and you will develop a plan for achieving these objectives within the context of your particular community site. For now, we are going to explore how best to initiate and create a community partnership for your service-learning experience, and we'll start by exploring “service.”

Community Partnerships

Community partners are members of the community in businesses, government agencies, and social service organizations that agree to work with students individually or collectively in order to meet community needs. Partnerships are designed to create a service to the community while addressing educational opportunities for students. No two community partnerships are exactly alike. Each partnership occurs in a different context.

Exercise 2.1: Exploring “Service”

Look up the words community, service, partner, and reciprocity in the dictionary and write the definitions down. How are these words and their definitions related to each other and to this course?

Now, as you write responses to the questions below, try to locate yourself within these terms and their meanings. Please be as concrete as possible, using examples, as you consider the following:

• How have you experienced a sense of community in other settings?
• When have you been of service to others? In what ways?
• When have you been served by others? In what ways?
• What did you give to others when you were providing service? What did you gain from your service experience?
• What images about those being served do you carry?
• Have you experienced situations in which benefit has resulted from a collaborative effort?
• What have been some of the critical elements of those partnerships that contributed to the success? What do you think and feel about them as a result of having been involved in them?
• What communication skills, critical thinking abilities, or other new skills did you develop as a result?
• How do you think your experience might prepare you for this current community-based learning opportunity?
community context, with multiple constituents who bring diverse sets of needs and assets to the table. In community-based learning courses, who you are—and how you and your classmates interact with one another—meets the particular nature of your community partner to create your unique partnership. Because the very character of collaboration is dynamic and relationship based, it is not possible to offer a single set of standardized steps that will ensure the success of your shared work.

It is possible, however, to look at the key elements of successful partnerships as a way to guide your current service-learning opportunity. The next few sections of this chapter are meant to provide you with a set of preparatory tools to help you work effectively in your unique community environment. For those students who are able to choose their community setting from among several possibilities, we will start by describing different kinds of community-based learning environments.

Community-Based Learning Environments

Your service-learning course is an opportunity for you to connect academic knowledge with community challenges. Broadly speaking, community-based learning environments can be characterized as two basic types: direct-service and project-based (or indirect service). In a direct-service experience, students work directly with the persons served by the partnering community organization. For example, students might spend several hours a week tutoring non-native-language speakers who recently arrived in the United States, or they may interview elderly persons living in a nursing home in order to compile oral histories of their life experiences.

In a project-based learning experience, students are more likely to focus on an end product and develop the necessary processes to lead them to the achievement of that goal. Writing grant proposals to win funding for a community partner’s programs and developing a public relations campaign for an organization are two examples of project-based experiences.

The nature of the work you will take on—and the methods you will use to accomplish your tasks—will help to frame the ways you will most effectively interact with your community partner. If you are part of a class that will be working one-on-one with homeless and low-income individuals (direct service) to provide resources for housing, for example, you should certainly expect to receive training from the organization involved to understand the policies and protocols to which you will be subject. You may need to fill out a series of forms (including, perhaps, a background check and confidentiality agreements). It is the responsibility of your instructor and community partner to prepare you for the work you will be engaged in, and it is your responsibility to take advantage of the preparation afforded by them.

If you are working in a project-based partnership, you still need to be oriented to your partnering organization, its mission, the methods it uses to fulfill its mission, the persons it serves, and the particular tasks you will be undertaking. In some cases, your faculty may be able to provide a comprehensive introduction to your community organization, but usually some time spent with contact persons from the organization will be vital, as well.

In some instances—such as a group of students creating a photo essay about a changing neighborhood to supplement their coursework on understanding community cultures—community-based learning happens without a formal community partner present.

Often, the decision about whether you will engage in direct service or in a project-based experience is made long before you step foot in the classroom. Instructors may determine this in advance and select the community partner. In other cases, one of the first tasks of your service-learning course might be to work collaboratively to decide the type of community service and the community partner. If you are embarking on a community-based learning adventure on your own and can make this choice yourself, turn to Exercise 2.7: Which Type of Community-Based Learning Is Right for Me? located on page 28. You may also want to contact your college’s service-learning or community service office to inquire about potential community partners and to get a list of service-learning course offerings.
Even without an identifiable community organization to whom you are accountable, it is still important that you, your classmates, and your instructor understand the goals of the project and that you identify the roles and responsibilities each person has in a successful community experience. After all, while you are not providing direct service to a specific set of clients in the example above, you are still serving the community in terms of the accuracy and honesty with which you represent it.

**Am I Ready for This Challenge? Is My Community Partner Ready for Me?**

Students engaged in the community are faced with unique responsibilities as workers and learners. As a service-learner, you will be a representative of your college or university, requiring you to think about how your individual actions will portray your institution. As an ambassador to the community, you should consider and stay attentive to the ways in which your behavior may influence how a community partner approaches working with students in the future.

Community partners also have a lot at stake. Frequently working on “shoestring budgets” subject to the changing perceptions of social need, many organizations rely on input and expertise from students and faculty to help them fulfill their missions. Not only are the contributions of students and faculty a cost-effective means of furthering the work of community organizations, but they also bring a diversity of perspectives into those organizations, creating entities with greater capacities to serve their constituents.

The organization Community-Campus Partnerships for Health (CCPH) has outlined a number of principles of good practice for effective partnerships, principles that delineate responsibilities shared by colleges and universities (and the students who represent them in community-based learning projects) and communities. In the view of CCPH, partners in effective community-based learning situations exhibit the following traits:

- Agreed-upon goals and values on how to progress towards accomplishing those goals
- Mutual trust, respect, authenticity, and commitment
- Intentional working out of identified strengths, addressing areas that need improvement
- A balance of power and a sharing of resources
- Open and accessible communication
- Collaborative processes established through the interaction of all
- Feedback for improvement
- Sharing credit for accomplishments
- Commitment to spending the time it takes to develop these elements

As a student you have both **responsibilities** and **rights** that attend your participation in a service-learning experience. Let’s consider each of these areas and how they impact the community partnership and your own learning.

As a student you have **responsibilities**, including legal ones, to ensure that all persons associated with your partnership may achieve maximum benefit without experiencing undue risk or potential harm. Your instructor and community partner, for example, will have very clear ideas about the parameters within which you may operate. For example, most (if not all) partnerships will not permit students to transport clients of a community organization in their cars or to visit with clients in a private home. You are responsible for understanding the role you are fulfilling with regard to your community partnership and the expectations for your performance in that role. Also, as a community-based learner, you need to make good ethical and legal decisions that are consistent with and further the shared vision of the service-learning effort.

You are also responsible for negotiating time and time management issues. The majority of community partners we have worked with, when asked about the greatest challenges they have encountered, identify students’ failure to manage their time well (and the resulting difficulty this causes) in their partnerships.

For an exercise that helps you to consider visually your weekly time commitments to assist you in creating space for community commitment, turn to **Exercise 2.8: As Time Goes By...** on page 29.
Moreover, it is your responsibility to learn in this nontraditional learning environment (which you may remember seeing in schematic form in chapter 1), through engaging with the community, dialoguing with others, and reflecting on how your work connects to the content of your course, larger societal and political issues, and your own sense of yourself.

Now let’s examine your rights in the community setting. Your community partner is responsible for creating an environment in which it is possible for you to learn through serving, an environment in which you may use what you know for the benefit of yourself and others. This environment must be free from the kinds of threats that prevent learning through serving from taking place, particularly sexual and other forms of harassment based in discrimination. If possible, review the pertinent sections of your community partner’s personnel manual that articulate the rights of staff, volunteers, and clients of the agency. These rights apply to you, as well, when you are working on behalf of the community partner.

So far, we have looked at your rights and responsibilities as a community-based learner and your connection to a community partner’s responsibilities to create an environment that supports your work as a learner. Further, we must address the rights of the community partner, what a collaborating organization may expect to count on from the students with whom it is working. The following activity—which may be completed in writing, discussed with others, or both—is intended to further your understanding of the reasonable expectations of a community partner.

To review your responsibilities as a community-based learner, turn to Exercise 2.9: Pre-Service Checklist of Student Responsibilities on page 30.

Exercise 2.10: Pre-Service Checklist of Student Rights on page 31 is intended to reaffirm those rights and identify any areas that need to be addressed before and/or during your work with your community partner.

Exercise 2.2: What Can a Community Partner Expect?

Imagine that you are the Program Director for an organization that serves the refugee community in your city by providing workforce readiness programs and tutoring in English. You are preparing to welcome a group of students from a local college involved in a service-learning course that combines both direct and indirect service: tutoring small groups of refugees in English language skills and revising the outdated tutoring manual that your organization uses as a guide for volunteer tutors.

Because your organization has worked with student interns, you have a fairly good sense of your responsibilities to the students. You’ve prepared job descriptions for the students, scheduled training sessions, and identified a process for them to get feedback and to assess their efforts.

In the past, though, some of these relationships have not worked so well for your organization. For example, students often arrived late for their sessions, and occasionally they did not show up at all. As a result, some tutoring sessions had to be doubled up or canceled. To prevent this from happening again, your supervisor has asked you to create a list of the organization’s rights in relation to this service-learning class to share with the students before their first tutoring session.

Your task is to create that list. What, fundamentally, can your organization expect to get from the students who are preparing to engage with you?
This section was designed to draw parameters around your upcoming experience and make transparent the fundamental rights and responsibilities inherent in the community-based learning endeavor. In the next section, we’ll take a closer look at how you might flesh out these basic rights and responsibilities in the context of your particular community partnership.

**What’s This Place? What’s My Place?**

Before we discuss specific ways that you can formally learn more about your community organization and how your particular academic framework and skills might be of support, let’s start with an exercise to identify what you hope to accomplish, what your concerns are, what you need to be successful, and what you expect from others.

Your service experience will be greatly enhanced if you can have a discussion with your community partner representatives about their hopes, fears, needs, and expectations and compare them to your own. If you are able to do so, plan a specific time within the next week to have a one-on-one or group discussion with your community partner representatives about goals for this partnership to increase the likelihood of success for all involved.

**Learning about Your Community Partner**

Effective community engagement requires us to understand the needs, assets, mission, and goals of the organization with which we are preparing to work. Without this understanding we may be insensitive to the challenges and capacities of individuals within the organization; we may provide services that are actually of little use to the organization; or we may fail to comprehend the impact we have had on the organization, the community it represents, and the larger world.

Further, while our community partner and those it serves have needs that we might hope to address, they are not just “needy.” In fact, it is essential to a true collaboration that students understand that those they serve bring their own capacities, as well as their self-identified needs, to the table—just as students bring their needs as learners, along with their capacities and skills.

Our initial impressions of an organization and their clients may be based in reality or influenced by our biases and lack of information. We risk an unproductive service-learning experience unless we clarify our own perceptions with the community partner and with others involved in the community experience. The next exercise is intended to bring into alignment our notions with the reality of the community partner.

By now you have thought about what you bring to the partnership and what you hope to get out of it. You have considered your rights and responsibilities and the rights and responsibilities of your community partner. You have begun to develop your partnership by learning more about the community organization. In effect, things are off to a positive start.

Because any collaboration is rooted in human relationship, there is the possibility—and, realistically, the probability—that something will arise to challenge...
you, your classmates, your instructor, and the community partner. In the next section, we will explore what to do when there are breakdowns in even the best-laid plans.

**What Now?—Navigating Breakdowns**

Remember our half-formed group of students waiting outside their community partner's door at the beginning of this chapter? Rejoining their story, we find one of the students using his cell phone to call the Executive Director of the organization, who had visited the students’ class the week before and confirmed that today's visit was on the organization's calendar. Reaching her, the student learned that she was in her car on her way to the organization's office site but was turning around to come meet the students at this exhibition space. There had apparently been a misunderstanding, she said; she thought that the Artistic Director had offered to facilitate today’s visit, but now she wondered whether he thought she was scheduled to do it. She apologized for the miscommunication and asked the students to please wait.

The rest of the students from class arrived just as the Executive Director pulled in with more apologies and a key to the locked door. The students toured the cavernous space filled with art from a huge cross section of regional artists, taking notes for their grant proposals and asking questions of the Executive Director. Some stayed past the end of class, interested in interviewing the artists who were arriving to install even more art for the exhibition opening that weekend.

When the students were asked to reflect during their next class session on their visit to the gallery, many spoke about the negative impact the Executive Director’s lateness had made on them. Several wondered aloud whether their grantwriting project was important to the community partner, let alone a priority; others maintained that the incident had soured them on the relationship and the project for good. Another student remarked that it was indicative of the flakiness of artists in general to blow off an important meeting. Many expressed that their time was valuable and that they resented having to wait.

Then one student offered an alternate view. He said that, from his perspective, the community partner’s internal miscommunication signaled that they were working really hard with very little funding to pull off an enormous task—creating an inclusive exhibit of dozens

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**Exercise 2.4: Organizational Action Research**

This activity is designed for you to learn about the mission, history, staffing, structure, and budget of the community organization with which you are working through interviewing different persons associated with the organization. You are not limited to gathering information from the primary contact person at the organization. Instead, try to get a broad and comprehensive view of the organization by talking to as many people associated with the organization as possible. In addition to answering the questions below, gather one piece of organizational literature that best describes the organization’s mission and services.

- Name of organization
- Brief history of the founding of the organization
- Mission statement
- Summary of vision: What would this organization like to accomplish/become? What is it trying to make happen?
- Describe the population the organization serves.
- Outline the public policy areas the organization might influence.
- What geographic area does the organization serve?
- How many paid staff are employed by the organization? What are their roles?
- What roles do volunteers play in the organization?

Adapted from R. Battistoni (2002), *Civic Engagement across the Curriculum: A Resource Book for Service-Learning Faculty in All Disciplines.*
of artists—and that proved to him how important his
grantwriting would be to the organization. The small
staff was so overtaxed with the basic work of the organ-
ization, he imagined, that they had failed to remember
a meeting that would potentially benefit them. He said
he was impressed that the Executive Director acted so
quickly to correct the mistake the organization had
made, redirecting her entire day to accommodate their
visit despite her understanding that someone else was
responsible for it. Finally, he suggested that just as we
were judging the community partner’s lateness, so
might the community partner judge the lateness of half
of the students in the class—assuming that those who
were late didn’t care about and hadn’t prioritized the
visit, or were just “too flaky” to show up on time.

What these students were illustrating in a very
practical way was the difference between intent and
impact in communication. When interacting with
others, all of us hold certain intentions for what we
hope to communicate, and we use the various tools of
communication (word choice, tone of voice, body
language, behavior, and so on) to get that message
across. Try as we might, we sometimes fail to have the
impact on others that we intend; we also sometimes
create impacts that inadvertently send a message that
is directly opposed to our intentions. When the other
students in the class heard that their lateness could be
interpreted as flakiness or willful disregard of the
community partner, they protested this perception:
One argued that the bus had been late, several others
that their bike rides had taken longer than they had
imagined, and another that she had gotten lost on the
way to the site. All of these quite legitimate reasons
for lateness—like our contact person’s—illustrated the
fine line we walk as communicators between intent
and impact.

Because service-learning courses are collaborations
between persons (and groups of persons) with a variety
of needs and resources, inevitably breakdowns in the
process will occur. Students, faculty, and community
partners may choose to view these glitches as fatal to
the collaborative process and, as a result, shirk their
commitment to the shared endeavor. On the other
hand, students, faculty, and community partners may
choose to understand that such mistakes are opportu-
nities for learning and growth, as these are often exactly
the things that expose areas ripe for improvement (for
example, the need for greater communication between
staff people within an organization, or the importance
of getting accurate directions before driving to a new
place for the first time).

You may have noticed that the word “choose” is
used in the preceding paragraph to describe how stu-
dents, faculty, and community partners assess the suc-
cess of their efforts at partnership. At a basic level, the
only things within the control of any single person in-
volved in community-based learning are his or her
own behavior and responses. The community partner,
the instructor, and the on-time students did not con-
trol whether the other students were late or not, just as
the instructor and students did not control the com-
munity partner’s choices. However, all of these persons
controlled how they reacted to the choices of the oth-
ers and whether or not they used those outcomes to
further their own learning.

**Exercise 2.5, Exploring Breakdowns**, offers several
situations of breakdown between community partners
and students. Investigate your reactions to these situ-
ations either in writing, in discussion with others, or
both.

As you may have noted, the perceptions and per-
spectives of any one person in a situation are im-
pacted by many factors, some of which that person
may have in common with others, and some of which
will differ from person to person. Further, many of
these differences in experience result from the multi-
ple ways that persons do and do not experience privi-
lege and access to power in the world. In chapter 5,
we explore in depth what it means to investigate
power, understand privilege, and navigate difference.
As you begin to work with your community partner,
however, you might start to think about how who you
are and what you have experienced impact the way you
see the world, including the current world of this part-
ership. Don’t stop there, either: Get curious about the
multiple realities you will encounter as a community-
based learner. Think about how a genuine exchange,
which is the promise of true collaboration, can leave
all persons fuller, more whole, and better able to relate
effectively to others than before they entered the part-
tnership.

**Developing an Action Learning Plan for Serving**

Perhaps the best strategy for circumventing potential
problems is the development of an “Action Learning
Plan for Serving (ALPS)”
Exercise 2.5: Exploring Breakdowns

Situation 1a
You are a student working with a community organization dedicated to welcoming refugees into your city by offering workforce training and tutoring in English. For your service-learning course, you have committed yourself to meeting with a tutee every Tuesday afternoon at the public library for a two-hour tutoring session. Your tutee showed up for the first scheduled session, missed the second session entirely, and came for the third session but indicated that he could only stay for an hour. While he was there, he told you that he might be moving out of town next week.

Situation 1b
You are a student working with a community organization dedicated to welcoming refugees to your city by offering workforce training and tutoring in English. For your service-learning course, you have committed yourself to meeting with a tutee every Tuesday afternoon at the public library for a two-hour tutoring session. Everything went fine for the first two sessions, but your car broke down on the way to the library for the third session, and you had a dentist appointment scheduled during the fourth. You aren't sure where things stand with your tutee at this point.

Situation 2a
You are part of a team of students developing a public relations campaign for an organization that provides free health care to persons experiencing homelessness in your community. Your team has been very excited about diving into this project after listening to a panel of persons who had received care from this organization talk about the difference it made in their lives. In order to complete your project, you need concrete information from your community partner, but in the past week you have sent three e-mails to your contact person, none of which have been answered.

Situation 2b
You are part of a team of students developing a public relations campaign for an organization that provides free health care to homeless persons in your community. Your team has been very excited about diving into this project after listening to a panel of persons who had received care from this organization talk about the difference it made in their lives. You are the designated contact person for your team, but you just moved into a new apartment and haven't hooked up your e-mail yet. You aren't sure whether or not you gave your new phone number to your teammates or your community partner.

Situation 3a
For your service-learning class, you are interviewing senior citizens at a local nursing home for a compilation of oral histories about the experience of living through the Depression. After your second day of interviewing, your contact person, the director of recreational programming at the nursing home, compliments your work with the seniors and suggests having a beer together over the weekend so you can get to know each other better.

Situation 3b
For your service-learning class, you are interviewing seniors at a local nursing home for a compilation of oral histories about the experience of living through the Depression. Since you're considering changing your major, you ask your contact person, the director of recreational programming at the nursing home, to have a beer with you over the weekend so you can get to know each other better.

Reflect on the above scenarios. How would you describe the breakdown in each of these situations? Who do you imagine is responsible for the breakdown? How does the “you” of each situation perceive the breakdown? How might the other person(s) involved perceive the breakdown? How are the perspectives in each of these situations impacted by the context of that situation? How might you choose to act in each of these situations to heal the breakdown and put the partnership back on track, and what choices might you make if the other person chooses to keep the partnership off course? If you really were the “you” of these situations, what would you do?

Now return to the list of principles of good practice found on page 20. Read this list and the above scenarios again. Where do you find a breakdown between these principles and the situations above? How could you make choices in these situations that would line up with these best practices?
Plan for Serving” (ALPS). Creating an ALPS can help you achieve your mountainous hopes because you have anticipated in advance the needs, resources, timelines, and obtainable objectives for the service-learning experience. The ALPS also includes the rights and responsibilities of all parties and offers an initial framework for assessing and evaluating your actions. Moreover, it allows you to track your progress during the experience to see if adjustments need to be made midstream. Exercise 2.6 (p. 27) introduces you to the ALPS, which you’ll refer back to throughout your service-learning experience. Complete it with your class or on your own before continuing.

**Conclusion**

The writer Angeles Arrien, in the book *The Four-Fold Way: Walking the Paths of the Warrior, Teacher, Healer, and Visionary*, explores indigenous wisdom traditions to articulate four central human tasks. Arrien asserts that, in order to live authentically with others, we must *show up, pay attention, tell the truth, and be open to the outcome*. These words ring true perhaps in no courses more than community-based ones. Students entering a collaborative exchange with the world outside their institution’s doors find that a dynamic experience awaits them, an experience that promises tremendous payoffs in personal growth, skill building, and understanding oneself and others in exchange for a commitment of time and follow-through.

As one of these students, you can use the material presented in this chapter to prepare you to show up and be fully present in the work that needs you to bring it to fruition; to learn all that you can through the experience of doing and reflecting on that doing; to articulate the meaning that the experience holds for you; and to deepen your capacity to understand that, in a true collaboration, no single person controls the outcome of the exchange. It is up to each of us to determine whether that is a frightening or an exciting proposition—and how to make our way through it, as individuals connected through the bonds of community.

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<tr>
<th>Key Concepts</th>
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<td>community partner</td>
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<td>contact person</td>
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<tr>
<th>Key Issues</th>
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<td>• How do students benefit through engaging in community-based learning?</td>
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<td>• What are the different types of community-based learning a student might participate in?</td>
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<td>• What are the characteristics of a successful community-based learning partnership?</td>
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<td>• What are some of the basic responsibilities and rights of student-learners in community-based settings? What are some of the basic responsibilities and rights of community partners?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• What is the difference between <em>intent</em> and <em>impact</em> in communication, and what are some examples of the breakdown between these factors?</td>
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Exercise 2.6: Action Learning Plan for Serving (ALPs)

This first ALPs worksheet asks you to consider what the purpose of this community-based learning experience is from the perspectives of all who are involved. To continue orienting yourself to your community partnership, answer the following questions, and keep your responses to refer to as your service-learning experience progresses. If you don’t have responses to some of these questions, return to this worksheet when you have developed them out of your experience.

1. Review your course syllabus and recall the ways that your instructor framed this service-learning experience. From your instructor’s perspective, what is the purpose/what are the purposes of this collaboration?
   • 
   • 
   • 

2. From your community partner’s perspective, what is the purpose/what are the purposes of this collaboration?
   • 
   • 
   • 

3. What are your individual learning goals for this collaboration? At the end of your time in this experience, what do you expect to have learned?
   • 
   • 
   • 

4. What are your individual service goals for this collaboration? At the end of your time in this experience, what do you expect from its service component?
   • 
   • 
   • 

5. What is the final product, if any, for this collaboration, and how will the final product be evaluated?

6. What are the main components of the final product for this collaboration?
   • 
   • 
   • 

7. What are the deadlines for the project and its components, as you know them so far?
Exercise 2.7: Which Type of Community-Based Learning Is Right for Me?

Reflect on the following questions to help you clarify which type of community-based learning to choose.

- What is the nature of the direct-service work I might take on? What kinds of projects might I complete? If there is not a preselected set of options, is there an office on campus that can help me identify my choices for community-based learning? Does my college/university offer an orientation to community-based learning, or will I get that in the course itself? Can I do a site visit with possible choices?
- As I consider my options, what kind of training, supervision, and feedback is available to me for each? How do these kinds of support fit with the type of support I think I will need?
- As I consider each option, do I understand the range of activities I’ll be expected to complete? Am I willing to do these activities? Do I know where to get support for my work?
- What are the logistical considerations for each of my options? Will I be traveling to the partner’s site or working from another location? Will I be alone or working with other students or employees of the partnering organization?
- How much time will I need to devote to this project in order to satisfy my community partner, my instructor, and myself? Am I prepared to dedicate this amount of time and rearrange my schedule as necessary?
- Will I be able to feel physically and emotionally safe enough in this environment to serve and to learn? What do I need to feel physically and emotionally safe? Are those factors present in the environments I am considering?
- What are my past experiences of working in a direct-service capacity? In a project-based capacity? What are my greater and lesser strengths working directly with others? What are my greater and lesser strengths in managing and completing projects?
- What are my personal/academic/professional goals for this experience? When I complete this experience, what do I want to have accomplished?
Exercise 2.8: As Time Goes By . . .

Start by taking a large sheet of paper (at least 11 × 14 inches, if possible) and creating seven columns, each of which will be labeled at the top with the days of the week. Across the left side of the sheet, make twenty-four rows and label them for each hour of the day. Begin to block off time for the activities that fill your time in a typical week at this specific point in your life: sleeping, eating, classes, employment, homework, travel, free time, and so on. Be sure that every hour of every day is accounted for with some activity.

After you have finished labeling all of the hours in your week, use colored pencils to lightly shade in each block. Use one color for activities that absolutely cannot be moved to another time in your week (classes, for example); use a second color for activities that are fairly firm but that could be moved around if absolutely necessary (perhaps your work schedule); and use a third color for the activities that are least fixed in your week (maybe free time or meals). Be sure that every block of time in your week has now been shaded in.

Now take a look at your week and use this visual representation of your time to help you make decisions about how you might commit yourself in this project. As you move more deeply into your project this term, you might repeat this exercise to reflect the changed nature of your schedule.

Note: This activity may also be used to guide teams in their negotiation of time responsibilities or as a template for scheduling with the community partner.
Exercise 2.9: Pre-Service Checklist of Student Responsibilities

As a means of facilitating a practical consideration of the roles and responsibilities you have in working with your community partner, complete the following checklist prior to your first actual workday. Read the following statements and initial on the line adjacent to the statement, indicating that you understand and have received adequate information about that item. If you have not received adequate information, put an asterisk (*) on the adjacent line and inform your instructor or appropriate college administrator.

1. Students should clearly understand the requirements of their community project:
   ___ I have a clear understanding of both my instructor's and my community partner's expectations of me.
   ___ I understand my parameters (I have thought of the consequences of performing actions beyond my agreed-upon responsibilities).
   ___ I have identified the skills needed to carry out this project, and I feel comfortable with those skills.
   ___ I have identified the skills needed to carry out this project, and I have devised specific plans for strengthening skills with which I am not comfortable or familiar.
   ___ I know my client population and am making every attempt to understand their needs from their perspective.
   ___ I know what to do in case of an emergency.

2. Students need necessary legal documents:
   ___ If I will be driving, I have a valid license and liability insurance.

3. Students should take responsibility for their behavior throughout the community-based project:
   ___ I understand that I am responsible for my own personal health and safety.
   ___ I have insurance (if agency requires specific coverage for volunteers).
   ___ I understand the waivers I sign.
   ___ I have thought of risks involved in this community-based project. For example:
     • What are clients' special needs?
     • In case of accidents, what is unsafe?
     • What can I do to reduce risks by my own behavior, clothing, and preparation?
     • What behaviors fall outside my job description? (Example: Is it okay to transport clients?)

4. Students should understand these legal issues:
   ___ **Negligence** involves a mistake, lack of attention, reckless behavior, or indifference to the duty of care to another person. A reasonable person should have been able to foresee the possibility of injury. (Example: wet spot on the floor, child climbing on top of a table)
   ___ **Intentional or criminal misconduct** involves potential harm caused by a volunteer. A volunteer is responsible for any harm caused to an organization or individual if the harm resulted from intentional or criminal misconduct on the part of the volunteer.
   ___ **Invasion of privacy** involves confidentiality. I know and understand what the confidentiality policies of my partnering organization are. (Example: Client histories and personal records are confidential.)
### Exercise 2.10: Pre-Service Checklist of Student Rights

As a means of facilitating a practical consideration of the rights you have in working with your community partner, complete the following checklist prior to your first actual workday. Read the following statements and initial on the line adjacent to the statement, indicating that you understand and have received adequate information about that item. If you have not received adequate information, put an asterisk (*) on the adjacent line and inform your instructor or appropriate college administrator.

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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I have received a description of the work I am expected to perform and have committed to doing that work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I have received or am currently receiving proper training for the work I’ve committed to doing, or I understand that my training is on-the-job and will be supervised as I go.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I understand how I will receive supervision and feedback for the work that I do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>I understand the channels of communication through which I should express my concerns about the work I am doing, the ways I am being treated, or breaches of my service plan or other agreements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I understand that I may expect to work in an environment that is reasonably safe and free from sexual and other forms of harassment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>I understand that I may not be discriminated against on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, ability, sexual orientation, and/or other protections offered by my college/university and/or community partner.</td>
</tr>
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Chapter 3

Becoming Community
Moving from I to We

VICKI L. REITENAUER

The Low Road

What can they do
to you? Whatever they want.
They can set you up, they can
bust you, they can break
your fingers, they can
burn your brain with electricity,
bring you with drugs till you
can't walk, can't remember, they can
take your child, wall up
your lover. They can do anything
you can't stop them
from doing. How can you stop
them? Alone, you can fight,
you can refuse, you can
take what revenge you can
but they roll over you.

But two people fighting
back to back can cut through
a mob, a snake-dancing file
can break a cordon, an army
can meet an army.

Two people can keep each other
sane, can give support, conviction,
love, massage, hope, sex.
Three people are a delegation,
a committee, a wedge. With four
you can play bridge and start
an organization. With six
you can rent a whole house,

eat pie for dinner with no
seconds, and bold a fund raising party.
A dozen make a demonstration.
A hundred fill a hall.
A thousand have solidarity and your own newsletter;
ten thousand, power and your own paper;
a hundred thousand, your own media;
ten million, your own country.
It goes on one at a time,
it starts when you care
to act, it starts when you do
it again after they said no,
it starts when you say We
and know who you mean, and each
day you mean one more.

Marge Piercy, from The Moon Is Always Female

SERVICE-LEARNING invites you to bring who you
are, what you know, and what you can do into the
classroom and the world beyond (the wall-less class-
room) in applying your whole self to creating commu-
nity change. In the process, what you discover in the
intersection of “you” and “not-you” will shape and
transform your understanding of yourself and your
place in the world, if you let it. Putting who you are
and what you know into practice will change who you
are and what you know and enlarge your understand-
ing of yourself and the world of others who are both
different from and similar to you. In forming com-
munity with others (other students, the instructor, the
individuals who comprise your community partner),
LEARNING THROUGH SERVING

you increase the possibilities for creating transformation, as you experience deeply the principle of the whole being more than the sum of parts. You are welcomed into a learning experience in which a community addresses real-world challenges in a way that an assortment of individuals cannot, and “it starts when you say We/ and know who you mean, and each / day you mean one more.”

Putting “Community” into a Community-Based Learning Course: A Case Study

One April morning, a group of students found their way to a large room on an extension campus of Portland State University (PSU) located in the city’s western suburbs. I was the instructor for the course, and I arrived early, influenced by stories of the horrendous traffic jams I would likely encounter and by my own desire to have plenty of time to get lost in the confusing building. There turned out to be very little traffic and I managed to find the classroom pretty easily, and then there I was, where the students would soon be as well: in a big room rich in technology but short on the kind of setup that allows for full participation and interaction by both students and instructor.

I spent my extra minutes shifting the movable tables into an approximation of a circle that we could all sit around. Then, one by one, the students made their way in: ten in all, participants in a degree-completion program (a program in which students returning to the university while working full-time can accelerate the completion of their education). Most of the students were familiar with each other already. Throughout their time in the program, many had taken the same classes or, at the very least, had taken classes with someone who was now enrolled in this class. There were hellos and some hugs, there was catching up to do (What did you end up getting in that soc class?), there were the attempts at connection where hints of it existed (Weren’t you in that history class that I dropped last term?), articulations of the threads binding us together and the spaces where those threads would be attached. That is to say, some of us knew each other, some of us knew about each other, and all of us would find out a whole lot more about each other in the weeks ahead.

Coming into that first class, the only thing these students knew for sure was that they had to be there (or at least in another course similar to this one, as PSU requires most of its undergraduate students to complete a service-learning course in the junior or senior year) and that their being there would involve stepping out of the classroom in some way to work in their community. They didn’t know what the work would entail, or what it would look like, and neither did I. In a course called Change for the Common Good, I believed it would be important to figure out first what those terms meant to all of us in this context. In other words, how would we, students and instructor, define “common,” articulate “good,” and see ourselves as agents for positive change within that shared understanding? Essentially, I was teaching the course as an exercise in collaborative group process. The syllabus contained objectives and course assignments designed to deepen our capacities as a collective decision-making body. Also, rather than being from a single disciplinary major, these students represented academic programs in science, social science, arts, and humanities. The course was truly multidisciplinary. We would collectively have to determine how best to apply our individual skills and knowledge to effect change for the common good.

So we began, with activities and exercises and readings and multiple conversations intended to bring us together, to attach and tighten the threads that bind, to move all of us from I to We: that is, from experiencing ourselves solely as individuals to understanding that, in community-based learning, the success of any one student is connected to successful engagement with others—other students, faculty, community partner. How might we experience and act from this place of shared investment in and responsibility for our

★ Exercise 3.1: Defining Community

How do you define “community”? Have you experienced yourself to be a member of a community in any way before? In what ways have you experienced belonging in a community? Are there communities to which you could belong, but choose not to? If so, why?
learning? One early activity helped each of us investi-
gate our own preferred learning environments, so that
we might intentionally cocreate a class that included
all of us (exercise 3.2).

Identifying Group Action for
the Common Good

Since the students themselves were charged with iden-
tifying and pursuing a community partner with whom
to work, we then turned our attention to the commu-
nity outside our classroom and our perception of its
needs. It didn’t take long for a few proposals for our
service project to surface. Someone had a contact with
the Boys and Girls Club, which needed some painting
and cleanup done at its site. Another student knew
someone with the Latino Family Services Coalition,
which had been approached by the City of Hillsboro
and the Hillsboro Police Department to engage young
artists to create a mural celebrating the growing Latino
population in the county. Guests from both potential
community partners visited our class and discussed
the ways we could make a difference in the commu-
nity it served, ways we might create change for the
common good.

After the visits, a definite enthusiasm emerged
about the mural project. We imagined how powerful
and satisfying it could be to mentor a group of artists
who would transfer their private visions into the pub-
lic view. We thought about all of the persons who ride
the commuter train into Portland every day—from
which they would be able to see the mural in its home
on the wall of the police station—and how the results
of our hard work would live on in the community. We
considered how the project would require an extensive
range of skills—from art and design to marketing and
public relations—and how we believed that those
skills were represented in our class. While this project
seemed to outshine the others that were under consid-
eration, there was by no means immediate consensus
that we should proceed in this direction. Some stu-
dents expressed worry that the project was enormous
in scope and impossible to complete in the weeks we
had available to us. Others felt reluctant to enter into
such potentially intense relationships with the young
artists. Still others had concerns that they would not
be able to work effectively with others who were so
different in many ways from themselves, especially
with respect to culture and language.

We talked about the project. We dialogued—pas-
sionately yet civilly—remembering our earlier discus-
sions about the need for all of us to “practice active
listening,” “agree to disagree, using ‘I think’ and ‘I feel’
statements,” “solicit others’ opinions,” and “practice the
Platinum Rule of treating others how they
want to be
treated.” We dialogued and dialogued. Many students
said that they did not want to move forward until every-
one was on board with the project. We listed the pros
and cons; we mocked up a timeline and a detailed task
list (led by two of the students well versed in project
management); we did “go-arounds” (during which the
students took turns speaking with no interruption) of
our thoughts and feelings about the project.

Ultimately, a clear path emerged: Although not
everyone was equally enthusiastic about the mural
project, everyone agreed to work on it. And so the
consensus decision was made: The students would in-
deed work with the group of young artists to guide
and mentor them through the completion of a mural
on the theme “Latino Heroes.” After articulating this
shared goal—the completion of a fifteen- by forty-foot

Exercise 3.2: My Ideal Learning Environment

Complete a seven- to ten-minute freewrite on the theme “In my ideal learning environ-
ment . . .” What qualities are present in those learning environments in which you thrive
and experience a sense of inclusion?

When you think about service-learning in general and your current experience in particular
(as you now understand it), in what ways do you see the qualities of your ideal learning en-
vironment represented? What about this experience will suit your preferences well, and what
will be challenges in this kind of course?
mural—we set about figuring out how to use our wisdom, experience, talents, and gifts to get the job done. We also discussed how students might choose to engage with the project so that their academic skills and knowledge would grow and expand during their time in the class. Students created an ALPS (Action Learning Plan for Serving) for themselves, and then we collectively developed a class ALPS. While the ALPS was modified over the course of the project, this strategy helped us to define common goals, timelines, and responsibilities.

### Moving from I to We

We next deepened our conversation about what it would mean for a predominantly female, non-Latino class to work with a group of predominantly male, Latino artists. In our class two of the ten students were Latino and spoke Spanish; eight were non-Latino with a range of fluency in Spanish. Eight of the students were female, two male, and the instructor was a non-Latino female. Eight of the nine artists were Latino and six were male, including the non-Latino artist. The artists, who generally were referred to as ‘at-risk youth’ in their schools and the social service agencies of which they were clients, were more positively called “at-promise” by our community partner, who described how terminology and labels can put artificial psychological and sociological limits on individuals.

Before taking on the question of how to relate in an encouraging, non-oppressive manner with those we would serve, we first had to understand what each of us would bring into our learning community. We needed to more fully explore the I in creating the We. We needed to know: How had each of us been influenced to become who we are? How were we similar to each other, and how were we different? How might that affect our work with the Latino Family Services Coalition and especially the young artists with whom we had committed to work? How might we understand our own histories more deeply so that our preferences, our biases, our gifts, and our ways of being might be made more available to us to be used in the service of others and for our individual and collective learning?

The reflection exercise 3.3 helped us move more intentionally into the kinds and ways of knowing that most powerfully affect our ideas of ourselves and our relationships with others. First, each student wrote a reflection journal entry responding to the assignment’s

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### Exercise 3.3: Who Am I and What Do I Bring?

First, describe your background or identity on the basis of:

- Race/ethnicity
- Gender
- Spirituality
- Ability (physical/mental/emotional)
- Socioeconomic class
- Age
- Physical appearance
- Sexual orientation
- Other identifier(s)

What have been some sources of strength for you, growing up as described above?

What have been some difficulties for you, growing up as described above?

How has your background or identity affected your fit in this university, and how do you imagine it will affect your fit in this classroom and in the work we’re doing with those we are serving?

prompts, and then we practiced active listening in class during a “go-around” to hear a part of each student’s story. Each student was free to share any portion of his or her story in an uninterrupted way; the listeners’ job was simply to hear each speaker’s understanding of him or herself, without response.

**Learning through the Service Project**

With the insights gained through these activities and a plan to meet the artists interviewed and selected by our community partner, the students moved forward. Nico headed up the student team that would work directly with the artists to help them translate their visions onto the mural, while David designed and built the massive, movable mural structure. Susan and Sandra first helped assemble the structure, primed the wood, and created a studio for the artists in a county-owned warehouse, and then made sure that a steady supply of drinks and food was available for all. Carmen and Lydia offered their project management skills in the form of a tracking device for the tasks involved before turning their attention to winning publicity and additional funding for the project. Tracie inspired the artists by talking with them and picking up a brush when needed to move the painting along. Mercedes, Linda, and Julia interviewed each young artist, wrote biographies, and created a memory book of the experience for all participants.

We worked long hours through a hot summer. The mural evolved from an idea to a design to a pile of boards and metal to an enormous expanse of canvas ready for the application of paint and sweat. Over the weeks of our course, we all watched the shared vision of a group of artists emerge in vibrant colors and heroic shapes. Some newspapers and television news reporters came out to the warehouse to interview artists and students. As a result, how much this project mattered to us increased exponentially, a fact expressed in students’ weekly reflection papers. Many students reported eagerness to return to the artists and the project at hand and a desire to impact the artists positively beyond the completion of the mural.

The artists, too, asked about absent students, checked in if someone was late, and sought out conversations about a range of issues such as painting or family, finishing high school, or dreaming about college. It mattered that this work was being done. And it mattered that this particular group of people were doing it together. In many ways, the unfinished mural was already creating a common good by connecting us across gender, age, language, ethnicity, and culture.

Then one night, just a week before the scheduled public unveiling of the mural in a ceremony that Carmen and Lydia had helped to organize and publicize, a representative of the Hillsboro Police Department (the non-Latino male assistant chief of police), which had originally commissioned the mural from the Latino Family Services Coalition, visited the warehouse when several students and artists were working together. When he saw that there were various religious figures on the mural—the Virgin of Guadalupe, Jesus, Padre Miguel Hidalgo, Mother Theresa—he demanded that the artists paint over them. The assembled group didn’t quite understand what he meant; wasn’t the original idea that these artists were free to paint their vision of their heroes in whatever way they chose, so long as they did not use gang imagery in that depiction? Yet here was an official telling them, essentially, that their choices had been wrong. Their vision must be changed.

**Conflict within the Community**

The assembled group thanked the assistant chief for his input, asked him to allow them to get back to their work, and continued. They resisted. No one wanted to stop painting what was becoming a masterwork of culture, history, and the human possibilities of all who were involved with it.

There were plenty of upset feelings about the incident across the community: the artists felt manipulated and misled, the students felt angry, the instructor felt concerned, the community partner felt betrayed,
the police department personnel felt worried about public reaction. Through discussions inclusive of all those working on the project, it was decided that the community partner, the Latino Family Services Coalition, would talk with the police department regarding their concerns about the mural. The Coalition was the community organization directly connected to both the police department, on the one hand, and to the group completing the mural, on the other.

The students and artists took their collective anger and indignation and put it right back into their work. If the mural was impressive before, it became spectacular in the days that followed. The artists created on canvas what their heroes—the original figures as well as the Aztec snake and eagle, artists Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera, the local school counselor and teacher Luz Maciel Villerreal, the actor Cantinflas, Emiliano Zapata, Cesar Chavez—had lived their own lives to foster: the enactment of social justice in the world, the practice of putting who we are and what we know into action on behalf of others, and then letting our knowing be, in turn, enhanced and changed by that practice.

The mural was finished without compromising the original artistic vision of the painters. The images that the assistant police chief objected to were still there to be revealed in the unveiling, during a community celebration that took place on a beautiful day in mid-August, with all of the artists and all of the students present to witness the appreciation of the gathered crowd. The press was there, too, lured by the way the mural had turned from a feel-good story into an “issue.” The assistant police chief also appeared, thanking everyone for their effort while explaining that a final decision about the future home of the mural had not yet been made. After speeches and the buildup of anticipation, the cloth covering came off and there it was: a testament to the power of individuals to come together into more than the sum of their parts, to render what was believed to be impossible not only possible, but necessary and human and real.

Getting to **We**

The mural example exemplifies the complex dynamic of moving from *I* to *We* in the midst of creating change that can also raise controversy. The service-learning course certainly tested students’ knowledge and skills in new and unanticipated ways. Students learned that being a leader in the community is not as easy as reading books and taking exams.

A framework that was helpful to us in reflecting upon our experience and that may be helpful to you is the Social Change Model of Leadership Development (Astin & Astin, 1996). The authors examine factors that, when present, help individuals to develop into transformational leaders, that is, persons who are able to create positive change in the world through collaborative interaction. By this definition, all students in community-based learning classes are poised to learn and practice **leadership** in service-learning classes, as

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**Exercise 3.4: Situation Analysis**

Consider your responses to the questions below. If possible, discuss them with others in your class.

- Why, in your view, did the assistant chief of police insist that the religious images in the mural be painted over? What factors may have motivated his demand? How should the persons affected—the artists, the students, the community partner, the instructor—respond to this demand, ideally?
- Taking a broader view, how do you perceive the “I” of individuality intersecting and overlapping with the “We” of community? How are the “I” and the “We” separate and separable? How do you understand the multiple levels and layers of “I” and “We,” using this incident as an example?
- Considered in the light of this situation, do you think anything might have been missing from the course-constructed **ALPS**? How might the **ALPS** be modified now, as a result of this situation?
these classes are, by definition, opportunities to positively impact others.

According to the Astin and Astin (1996), a leader is one who is able to effect positive change for the betterment of others, the community, and society. All people, in other words, are potential leaders. Moreover, the process of leadership cannot be simply described in terms of the behavior of an individual; rather, leadership involves collaborative relationships that lead to collective action grounded in the shared values of people who work together to effect positive change. (p. 16)

A leader is a change agent (one who creates change) working in an active, collaborative process with others. More than likely, you will find yourself being a change agent as you engage in the community-based learning experience on three levels of involvement: the individual, the group, and the community. If you consider the course just described, we all came to the class as individuals. As we began to formulate course goals and identified our collective talents, we became members of a group cocreating a shared learning environment with common objectives and strategies. Finally, we engaged as a class community with the community outside the university’s walls, a community in which we were all asked to apply our talents, skills, and capacities to the express task of making positive change.

Each level of leadership informs the others: that is, individual students impact the group dynamic and process, and that dynamic and process affects each individual; the group works in concert to effect positive change in the community, which then in turn affects the group; and each individual connects with the service activity in the community and is then shaped by that direct experience as well (figure 3.1).

Let’s further explore this model as a method for reflecting on service-learning processes. Within each of the spheres, particular values, understood and practiced by participants, enhance the potential for individuals to bring about positive change. These elements are the “Seven Cs” of leadership development:

- **Consciousness of self**, in which an individual is aware of his or her own beliefs, values, attitudes, and emotions that motivate the individual to action.
- **Congruence**, or thinking, feeling, and behaving with consistency, authenticity, and honesty towards others.
• **Commitment**, the psychic energy that motivates the individual to serve and that drives the collective effort.

• **Collaboration**, to work with others in a common effort.

• **Common purpose**, which involves performing that collaborative work with shared aims and values.

• **Controversy with Civility**, which recognizes two fundamental realities of any creative group effort: that differences in viewpoint are inevitable, and such differences must be aired openly but with civility if the group is to accomplish its task effectively while honoring individual group members.

• **Citizenship**, or the process whereby the individual (a citizen-learner, in the case of service-learning) and the collaborative group become responsibly connected to the community through the service activity.

Each of these seven values can be placed in the sphere in which it operates (figure 3.2):

Notice how each of these values, practiced within its sphere of influence, both enhances and is enhanced by the practicing of the values in the other spheres; in other words, the arrows connecting the individual to the group to the community point in both directions. A service-learning course asks that its participants learn through serving on multiple reinforcing levels, and it promises that one’s ability to lead will be expanded if that work is done in authentic collaboration with others, producing collective action for change.

### Reflecting on Individual and Group Change

It took all the members of the community service project Change for the Common Good—students, instructor, and the community partner and its individual participants—to envision, create, and complete a compelling physical representation of the strengths of community. In addition to the literal figures represented in the painting, there is also invisibly present the process that the class went through to decide on the project. There is the particular grouping of artists

![Figure 3.2. Leadership and the seven Cs](image)
selected to share their visions and the work they did first to bring these visions into single focus and then to apply them to massive boards. There is the assistant chief of police and the department he represents, acting out of his interpretation of the common good. There is the crowd of family and friends and neighbors watching a mural unveiled on a beautiful Sunday. None of us knew that would be where we were headed when we began, but we took one step and then another, committed to knowing ourselves and each other, and ended up in new and exciting territory, each of us changed and each of us having effected change. The end point could not have been reached with any other configuration of persons making their human choices in a collective way. This outcome required that all those persons be there, in it, watching the change that resulted from that effort and simultaneously being changed.

When I reread my reflections I could see myself changing as the project evolved. I found that at the beginning I was not sure of myself, the kids, and the team. In my computer science courses we have worked as teams on programming problems, but technology is a completely different environment. And I chose my major partially because you get to work alone a lot. Now I had to be a mentor, with kids totally different from me. But I found myself really wanting to know more about them and their family and culture. I saw myself listening to their stories, giving them advice, phone numbers of people they could contact for work and school. I even spent a Saturday at Raymo’s house getting his computer connected to the Internet. He told me I'd inspired him to consider pursuing a career in graphic design.

In hindsight, there are definitely some things we could have done better. Perhaps most importantly, we should have included the police department on initial discussions and kept them posted on progress. I assumed the community agency would do this. But I think that this should have been a part of our rights and responsibilities discussion, and a part of our ALPS. I really think that if we had formed a dialogue with them earlier on, they would have been open to understanding the cultural importance of the figures instead of being reactive. As a communications major, this lesson will stay with me. Being a leader means fully collaborating even as you hold to a community vision.

In the very beginning of this project there was no doubt that I really did not see how doing a community service project was going to be the culmination of my college career. So, I entered the project somewhat angry at the hoop I had to jump through for my degree. Then Carmen and I decided to help the group process along by offering to do a presentation on planning projects. This was a real shift for me. I could see the connection between my business major and the course. But even more of a shift was when I finally met the young artists. I felt my heart connect to the project. I then understood how I could help to create community change.

Exercise 3.5: Identifying the Seven Cs

Reread the case study that opens this chapter. Identify those elements of the narrative that speak to each of the Seven Cs: Consciousness of Self, Congruence, Commitment, Collaboration, Common Purpose, Controversy with Civility, Citizenship.

- Outline in writing where you find evidence of these values in action in the case study. What specific activities supported the development of the values, and in what ways?
- Conversely, how did the development of the values inform the continuing work and decision making on the part of the community involved in the project? From this case study and from your reading about the Seven Cs, what information seems immediately applicable to your own work as a citizen-learner?
In the spirit of the above quotation, it seems fitting to end this chapter with another student reflection that aptly captures how a typical university classroom became a launching pad for a wall-less classroom where university meets community, where a blank canvas takes on color and form, where I becomes We. May your own learning and serving experience be just as rich.

Remember, this is the greatest project you have ever done.
Remember your passion.
Remember the look on the students’ faces every day we worked together.
Remember the handshakes that turned into hugs by the end of the project.
Remember the stress you felt, and the joy of your accomplishments.
Remember the love and spirituality the mural represented.
Remember the hurt feelings you had by the words that came from your mouth and the mouths of others.
Remember the bonds that grew between so many people, so many people from different places in their lives.
Remember your heart both soaring and breaking as you walked away from the warehouse for the last time.
Remember the pride in our work and the pride in the community.

Key Concepts

| change agent | commitment | consciousness of self |
| citizen-learner | common purpose | controversy with civility |
| citizenship | community | leadership |
| collaboration | congruence |

Key Issues

• In what specific ways is the service-learning “classroom” different from those in traditional courses?
• Why is it important for students to develop the Seven C’s in a community-based learning environment?
• How do service-learning experiences exemplify the phrase “the whole is greater than the sum of the parts?”
• What are the possible gains that an individual student might take away from a learning and serving experience?
• What are the possible gains that the community receives?
PART TWO

Learning the Landscape, Learning the Language

As you participate in your learning-through-serving experience, you will come to understand yourself and others in new ways. In this section of the book (chapters 4 and 5), we provide you with information and exercises for interacting with diverse groups of individuals in order to maximize your effectiveness and empathy as a learner and server.

KEY SYMBOLS

🌟 Exercises of utmost importance to complete (working either on your own or in a group)
💡 Optional exercises (strategies for gaining deeper insights into the issues)
❓ Exercises that provide further resources and information in your quest for understanding community problem solving and change
MOST SERVICE-LEARNING COURSES involve some level of group work. In this chapter we will examine several aspects of group dynamics, particularly as they relate to “getting the work done” in service-learning experiences. We also include two “Spotlights on Service,” which highlight the challenges of bringing your teamwork into collaboration with a community partner, and we offer strategies for addressing these challenges in your collaboration. Even if you are engaged in a service project alone, you will still benefit from the information in this chapter, since work in almost every volunteer organization or employment situation requires you to collaborate with others. The ideas outlined here will assist you to be as successful and effective as possible.

“Good Groups” / “Bad Groups”

You may relate to the reaction of the students above: You just don’t trust group projects. Even though most students say that they do not “hate” all group projects, many are still leery of these assignments because they have had a wide range of experiences in them—with the “bad” tending to be much more memorable than the “good”!

This chapter explores the value of group work, particularly as it relates to service-learning. Why do professors assign group work? What makes for a productive group experience? What causes a group project to “go sour”? To prepare you to engage with these questions, reflect for a moment upon your own previous experiences in groups using exercise 4.1.

As part of a service-learning project exploring college student adjustment issues (Collier & Morgan, 2003), Portland State University students participated in a series of focus groups in which they were asked about their group experiences in college. Here are some of their responses; see if you recognize any similarities to your own.

Personally, I don’t mind group work. In some cases I actually prefer it, but it all depends on the nature of the class.

I don’t like group projects if you have too many group leaders, because some people are very task-oriented.
LEARNING THROUGH SERVING

Exercise 4.1: How Am I in Groups?

On one side of a sheet of paper, describe a positive experience that you have had working in a group trying to solve some problem or accomplish a task. Then, on the other side of the same sheet of paper, describe a negative experience that you have had working in a similar group. Ideally, these should both be experiences working with school-based groups, but if that is not possible, any relevant group experience will do. If you need more room for your answers, use another sheet of paper. For each experience, answer the following questions:

• What was the nature of the group?
• How big was the group and who was in it?
• What was the problem or task the group was trying to address?
• What was the final outcome?
• Were you satisfied with the outcome? Do you think other group members were satisfied?

Finally—and this is the “one-million-dollar question”—What part did YOU play in each of these groups with regard to bringing about the final outcome?

After you have finished this exercise, take a minute to read over your answers and think about your responses. Do you tend to act the same way in most of the school-based groups you participate in? Why do you think you have acted in the ways that you have?

Exercise 4.2: Connecting to Your Own Experiences

The student focus group participants, quoted above, identified three issues that sometimes arise in group experiences:

1. Managing roles within the group ( . . . too many group leaders . . . )
2. Equity and fairness concerns ( . . . one or two people end up carrying the whole group . . . )
3. Individual evaluation based on group product ( . . . my grade is dependent on somebody else . . . )

Think back to your earlier responses about your own group experiences in exercise 4.1. Do you see these concerns reflected there? Did you identify any additional group issues? List them in the space below.

1. ____________________________________________________________________
2. ____________________________________________________________________
3. ____________________________________________________________________
Despite the difficulties, researchers have also identified several benefits of working in groups, including increased productivity (Eby & Dobbins, 1997), access to a wider range of information (Liang, Moreland, & Argote, 1995), and better decision making (Stasser, 1992). An old adage asserts that “two heads are better than one.” In your reflection above, were you able to identify this benefit—the ability to combine multiple perspectives on a topic to solve problems—in your previous group experiences?

Recent research suggests that faculty and students often enter learning environments with divergent learning goals—that is, the outcomes the faculty believes to be important, as compared to those that students value. There are two different types of goals related to student learning. 

*Content goals* have to do with completing specific assignments (for example, a term paper or an essay exam) and earning a grade in a course while developing knowledge about the particular course content addressed in that class. 

*Process goals* have to do with acquiring high-order skills (for example, critical thinking and interpersonal skills) that can be applied by the student in a range of other contexts beyond the immediate course.

According to Collier and Morgan (2003), students typically focus exclusively on content goals; as a result, they may see group projects as barriers to realizing their individual goals, such as getting a good grade in a class. Professors, on the other hand, believe that both levels of learning goals can be realized through group projects. They often view the ability to work successfully in groups as an overarching skill that students can apply across situations beyond any single course (and in a variety of work environments). Professors identify enhanced problem-solving abilities, increased appreciation of multiple perspectives on issues, and a greater likelihood of becoming active learners as benefits to students from participation in group projects.

As you progress through this service-learning experience, think about the ways in which your own skills are developing precisely because of the collaboration you are engaged in with others. How are your communication skills improving? What insights about the course content are coming from your peers instead of your professor? How are you collectively pooling your talents and knowledge to meet community needs?

So far, you have identified qualities that distinguish a good group experience from a poor one (through reflecting on past group experiences) and gained insights into what professors are trying to accomplish when they assign students group projects. In the next few sections, we explore how groups develop, as well as some of the issues that groups must address in order to be successful. To illustrate key issues, we will follow the development of two hypothetical groups from the same service-learning course, groups we call the *Mudslingers* and the *Visionary Skeptics*.

**Exercise 4.3: Marshmallows and Spaghetti**

If you are working in a group as part of a class, request that your instructor allow you to have fun with the following activity. If you are working on your own, consider getting a group of friends together for some friendly competition.

Create teams of students (no more than five per group). Each group receives one package of spaghetti and one package of marshmallows. (You may also want to cover the floor with newspaper). The goal is to build the tallest tower possible out of the marshmallows and spaghetti. Allow fifteen to twenty minutes for the exercise.

Afterward, explore the following questions together:

- How well did the team work together?
- What helped the group pursue its goal?
- What roles did you observe group members playing as you constructed your tower?
- What would you do differently if you could begin again?
The Development of a Group: Getting Started . . . and Beyond

The kinds of groups that are formed as part of a service-learning experience are generally task-oriented groups in which members begin interacting with each other as strangers and go through a series of identifiable stages to form a working team. Researchers like Tuckman (1965) and Fisher (1970) initially identified these stages and developed what is called the **Phase Model of Group Development**.

Let’s explore this model by beginning with our two groups on the first day of their service-learning class.

**Phase 1: Forming**
The first stage of group development, *forming*, describes the beginning of a group’s process, in which the primary goals are to get to know the other group members and to clarify the group’s task. Members of a “forming” group have to make several major decisions:

- What is this group about? What is the task to be accomplished?
- Does each person want to be a member of this group?
- Who are the other people who make up the group?
- What is each person’s place in this group?

At this stage, each person is checking out the other group members, trying to determine if he or she can count on the others and how it will be to work with each of them. Conversation among group members in the forming stage tends to be polite and not too revealing, because members of the newly formed group do not have a great deal of shared history to build upon. One way that forming groups can start to develop the closeness and interpersonal trust that will be needed to successfully realize the group’s goal is by doing some kind of activity together—like getting together after class for a cup of coffee, going to a movie, or even just talking with each other about personal interests.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Mudslingers</strong></th>
<th><strong>Visionary Skeptics</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>On the first day of class, when the instructor assigned students to work together on a team project, two of the students in this group—Mandy and Julian—tried to get permission to work individually. When the instructor denied their requests, Julian picked up his books and walked out of class. Mandy sat with the group, but she spent her time working on her homework from her previous class. None of the other group members—Natasha, Angelo, or Jorge—had any ideas about what the group was supposed to do next. When the class was over, everyone left, without making a plan for when the group would meet again.</td>
<td>On the first day of class, when the instructor assigned students to work together on a team project, two of the students in this group—Bill and Anita—initially complained that they hated group projects. When the other students in the group—DeWayne, María, and Tiffany—started kidding them that “we’re all in this together,” both Bill and Anita laughed and agreed that, since the instructor was not “caving in” to requests for individual projects, maybe it was better to get busy on this team project. María suggested that the group get to know one another by having each member share one “unusual” thing that he or she liked to do for fun. Everyone cracked up when DeWayne talked about his pet boa constrictor that he liked to take to the mall. After the initial sharing, Bill suggested that everyone come to the next group meeting with ideas for how best to organize their project. The group agreed to meet the hour before the next class. When the class was over, they all went out for coffee, and to talk some more about DeWayne’s snake.</td>
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Phase 2: Storming

In many ways, the *storming* phase is the most complicated stage in the development of a group. Conflicts surface in this stage that were not apparent during the introductory, forming stage. Issues of power arise within the group, and personality clashes can occur as the members focus their attention on the details of interaction within the group as well as the task at hand. One of the reasons that conflicts start to emerge visibly during this phase is that group members are becoming more comfortable with each other. With this increased comfort comes a greater willingness for individuals to express their true feelings and views compared to the polite, relatively nonconfrontational communication of the forming stage. Members of a group in the storming phase must address a new set of questions:

- What is the best approach for completing the group's assigned task?
- What are the different jobs that need to be done to accomplish the group's task?
- Who is doing what in the group?
- How can we make sure the workload is divided equitably?

A group's ability to successfully resolve the initial conflicts that arise during the storming phase has been identified as essential to developing subsequent group feelings of cohesion and cooperation (Whelan & McKeage, 1993). In some group situations, members may feel they are helping the group develop by avoiding the conflict that seems inevitably to occur during this phase. This is actually a serious mistake. Successful groups—that is, groups that work together to realize their shared goals—are those that are able to weather the “storm” and emerge intact on the other side of this stage.

Phase 3: Norming

The *norming* phase represents a shift from the earlier emphasis on competition and the presentation of diverse perspectives in the storming phase to an emphasis on trying to reach consensus on rules to govern how the group operates. Much more attention is paid to group *processes* (as opposed to group *products*). The norming phase reflects the group’s willingness to regulate itself and to establish specific guidelines for how discussions will proceed and how decisions will be made. When a group progresses to the norming stage, it does not mean that all conflicts and issues that arose during the storming phase have been resolved. One of the defining characteristics of a group in the norming stage, however, is a noticeable increase in the levels of cooperation and willingness to compromise in order to help the group accomplish its goals.

Phase 4: Performing

The *performing* stage is when the real work of the group starts getting done. A set of working guidelines for how the group will operate is in place, and attention now shifts to accomplishing the assigned task. Of course, as a group moves more deeply into completing tasks, challenges to accomplishing the group’s work often present themselves. Harris and Sherblum (1999, pp. 60–61) identify a four-stage problem-solving process that they suggest helps a developing group accomplish its goals effectively.

1. Defining the problem

   **Do**
   - make sure pertinent information is shared among group members.
   - make sure that everyone is clear about the nature of the task to be completed.

   **Don’t**
   - assign blame or try to determine who is at fault regarding problems that arise.
   - discuss solutions at this point.

2. Generating possible solutions

   **Do**
   - brainstorm solutions, no matter how “off the wall.”
   - encourage participation by all members of the group.
   - set a time limit and stick to it.
   - generate as many possible solutions as the time allows.

   **Don’t**
   - edit, evaluate, or criticize any of the solutions.
   - settle on the first good idea that surfaces.
• spend too much time on any one person or
  good idea.

3. Evaluating solutions
   Do
   • review a list of potential solutions and elim-
     inate any that now have no support within
     the group.
   • anticipate the consequences of each poten-
     tial solution.
   • encourage members to combine solutions.
   Don’t
   • let the discussion get sidetracked into de-
     bates about the pros and cons of a single
     solution.
   • assess value too quickly.
   • quit until you have clear consensus.

4. Creating an action plan
   Do
   • generate some alternative “how-to-do-it”
     scripts before choosing an action plan.
   • make sure specific tasks are assigned within
     the group.
   • make sure that time frames are set up.
   Don’t
   • state roles and tasks in general, unmeasur-
     able terms.
   • forget to include some method of follow-
     up so that the task actually gets completed.

One way to increase the likelihood of this hap-
pening in your group experience is by continuing to
develop your individual “Action Learning Plan for
Serving” (ALPS) that you began in chapter 2. If you
haven’t already done so, compare your personal ALPS
(exercise 2.6, from page 27) with those of the other
members of your group. Make sure you all agree on
your understanding of the community partner’s
goals for this project, even though you each may ex-
pect to have different individual learning and serving
goals.

After the group is clear about what the task is and
what the group hopes to get out of the project, use
Exercise 4.4: Jobs List to help divide the work equi-

tably, and Exercise 4.5: Timeline to ensure that the
project is completed within the allotted time frame.
In chapter 9, you will revisit and build upon these
worksheets to help you evaluate the impact of your
service project.

You might also use these exercises directly with your
community partner and/or its clients. For instance,
you could use the same set of worksheets that you
have employed in this service-learning course to as-
sist high-school students to create a new community
recycling program. Remember, you may be forming
groups on multiple levels in multiple locations dur-
ing your service-learning experience. Check with
your instructor, and/or decide as a group what action
plan strategy works best for you. Just make sure to
create a plan!

In addition, exercise 4.8 on page 63 will provide
you with a tool to facilitate your group’s evolution
through the four stages of the Phase Model. Starting
with your initial meeting, use the checklist often to
identify the steps your group takes in this class as you
prepare to engage in your service project.

Let’s revisit our two groups from earlier in this
chapter in order to see how their group formation is
progressing.
Who's Doing What?:
Group Norms and Group Roles

At this point, you have completed several group exercises. You may have noticed that your group has developed some basic guidelines for working together, such as not interrupting each other, making decisions by majority vote, and encouraging everyone in the group to participate. These are examples of norms, or guidelines for interaction in a group, that let group members know how they are expected to behave. Group norms don’t come about because one person wants things a certain way. Group norms are developed based on agreement within the group and are maintained and enforced by the group as a whole.

While norms delineate expected behavior within a
**Exercise 4.4: Jobs List**

What are the key components of this project? List all the jobs that need to be done to complete the project. Be as specific as possible. Divide big jobs into smaller components. Link each specific job to the partner, learning, and serving goals from Exercise 2.6: Action and Learning Plan for Serving (ALPS), from page 27. Plan on returning to and revising this list as your project progresses.

Don't forget that you will also need to assess your achievements. Decide now on some ideas and processes for determining the success of your service efforts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>What needs to be done?</th>
<th>How long will it take?</th>
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<table>
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<th>Evaluation process</th>
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<th>How long will it take?</th>
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group, a **role** refers to the part a specific group member plays within the group. Robert Bales (1950) was one of the first to systematically examine the different roles that people play in groups, and how certain combinations of roles were essential to successful group functioning. He divided group roles into two general categories: roles that help the group accomplish a task and roles that contribute to the social and emotional well-being of the group. **Task roles** have to do exclusively with getting the group's work done. **Maintenance roles** promote solidarity and help maintain good working relationships within the group. (See appendix 4.1 on page 65 for a description of specific task and maintenance roles.)

In addition to both task and maintenance roles, there are also **organizational roles** within any group. In order for you to successfully complete your service-learning project, there are a certain number of critical functions that must be performed. You may notice that when individuals successfully fulfill these different organizational roles, they tend to utilize several of the task and maintenance roles. Among these organizational roles are the following:

- **Leader:** In order to get started, a task group (like the ones in this service-learning experience) needs a leader to get the process going, someone who will take responsibility for chairing the meetings. The leader's job is to make sure everyone in the group is clear about the aim of the current meeting, to introduce each topic the group is to work on, and to summarize discussion or decisions. This can be a difficult job. It is not the leader's job to try to get the group to do what she or he wants done.

- **Notetaker:** The group needs someone to keep a record of what goes on and is discussed in meetings, who is supposed to do what tasks, and the time and place of the next meeting. This person should also produce an outline of the meeting notes and distribute them to the rest of the group. It is essential to have written documentation of your group's activities; if the notetaker is absent, someone else must step up and take notes for that meeting.

- **Progress Tracker:** Your group will need someone to keep track of how different parts of your group project are progressing. This person makes sure that each group member is keeping to the agreed-upon timeline for her or his part of the project. This person also keeps track of the overall progress of the project.

---

**Exercise 4.5: Timeline**

Every project has deadlines. It is critical to the success of your service-learning project that you finish each step of the project in a timely manner. One way to ensure that things get done on time is to construct a project timeline.

**Note:** Whether you are working alone or in a group, feel free to customize this activity to fit your particular project.

**Step 1:** Take a large sheet of paper and draw a horizontal line across the page, dividing it into the days or weeks that correspond to the time you have to complete your project. On the extreme left side of your sheet of paper, list all of the subtasks that make up the project in the order they will have to be addressed.

**Step 2:** Next, for each of the subtasks, draw a horizontal line representing when the subtask will start, how long it will last, and when it will end.

**Tip:** It is a good idea to start with the total project deadline and work backwards. You will probably have to modify your timeline several times before you have a project schedule that works. Not all subtasks are the same. You will find that it is sometimes possible to work on more than one subtask at the same time. Other subtasks can be started only after preceding ones have been completed.
• **Timekeeper:** In class-related group projects, there are almost always time limitations. It is critical for the success of the group that someone keep track of the time. Before the group begins a new task or starts a new discussion, the timekeeper asks “How long should we allow for this?” The leader or the whole group decides how much time is appropriate. The timekeeper then tells the group when that amount of time has passed. It is also useful for the timekeeper to point out when the allocated time is almost finished (“We’ve used ten of the fifteen minutes we said we’d use to talk about this, so we’ve only got five minutes left to wrap things up”).

• **Process Observer:** This person pays attention to what is going on (the process) as opposed to what is being talked about (the content). If the group starts drifting away from agreed-upon norms of respect and civility, the process observer’s job is to bring this to the attention of the group so that they can change the way they are working. It is very important that this person avoids seeming critical or judgmental and concentrates on describing what he or she observed as well as offering positive, constructive suggestions for change. (Gibbs, 1994, pp. 21–22)

These organizational roles do not necessarily have to stay the same for the duration of your group project. In the beginning, one possibility is to allocate the different roles to the individuals who want them. A second approach would be to assign the roles to specific group members based on who seems best qualified from past experience. You may also feel more or less affinity with some of these roles based on personality and learning style differences.

Remember, if you do not assume one of the organizational roles, there are still task and maintenance roles for you to play within the group. It is essential to the group’s success that each member take on one or more of those roles in contributing to the group process and project.

To further explore your own part in exercise 4.6, see Exercise 4.9: How Am I in This Group? on page 64.

---

**Exercise 4.6: Group Roles**

Your group should discuss how best to approach the service-learning project connected with your class. To do so, follow these four steps:

1. Make sure each person has read the descriptions of the different organizational, task, and maintenance roles. Decide who is going to play each organizational role in your group.
2. Go ahead with the discussion of your service-learning project. The people who have taken on organizational roles should try to perform their roles well without disrupting the meeting.
3. Each member of the group should take notes about how well each of the roles was performed. Jot down instances when you recognize yourself and other group members demonstrating different task and maintenance roles.
4. Have a post-meeting discussion where you talk about how the meeting went with group members performing the needed organizational roles. As a group, come up with at least three suggestions for how you will make sure these functions are performed even more efficiently at the next meeting.

• ___________________________________________________________________
• ___________________________________________________________________
• ___________________________________________________________________
We have seen how groups require their members to play a wide range of roles in order for the group to function effectively. One positive consequence of a smoothly functioning group is that members start to appreciate and feel closer to each other. That closeness is called **group cohesion**, and it is the focus of the next section of this chapter.

**Group Cohesion**

In most of my group projects I usually take the role of smoothing things over when something goes wrong. Actually, though, we were pretty lucky in this class because I think most of the people in our group knew what they were doing when it came to getting things accomplished in groups. We had the attitude that, how can we go out in the community and work with kids on things like following through, when we can't even work on it in our own little group?

For group cohesiveness to develop, individuals must first experience a sense of belonging to the group. **Group cohesion** refers to a variety of factors that encourage members to remain united and committed to group goals. Luft (1984) suggests the following characteristics as differentiating a collection of individuals from a group:

- Group members share a common goal or goals.
- Regular interaction takes place among group members.
- Individuals perceive value in their group membership.
- Differentiation of tasks emerges with time.

One of the most important ingredients for developing solid group cohesion is trust. During the normal ups and downs of group work and problem solving, members must be able to trust that their colleagues will work in the best interest of the group, even during (and, some would argue, especially during) times of conflict and disagreement. The following actions increase trust in groups:

- Openness to others’ views, even when those views are not initially understood
- Flexibility in the face of rapidly changing conditions and different working styles

**Spotlight on Service**

When community members begin working with your group, additional issues may arise concerning who performs which roles.

**Situation 1:** Community members may be unclear about the group norms and expectations for group member contributions.

**Tip:** Offer community members an overview of your group’s development and working style, using the worksheets and activities you have completed as a guide. In addition, get feedback from all group members (students and community partners) at the end of every meeting regarding each member’s perceptions of group effectiveness. Ask for suggestions for future meetings.

**Situation 2:** Established roles and working dynamics may be temporarily interrupted; for example, task leaders may find themselves sharing their role with a task-oriented community member.

**Tip:** Review and summarize the results of **Exercise 4.6: Group Roles**, on page 54. Ask community members if they would like to add their perspectives on the usual roles they take in groups. See if the group needs to build in some flexibility (for example, multiple task leaders who need to play other roles occasionally). If appropriate, alternate roles at each meeting (by taking turns being task leader, timekeeper, note taker, process observer, and so forth).
**Exercise 4.7: Revisiting the Seven Cs**

Chapter 3 introduced the Seven Cs of Leadership Development: Consciousness of Self, Congruence, Commitment, Collaboration, Common Purpose, Controversy with Civility, and Citizenship (pages 39–40). You've already reflected on opportunities in which you have been supported to develop the Seven Cs. Now focus on one or more of the actions that increase trust, as outlined above. Recall a previous group situation in which those actions did not manifest themselves within the group. What about the group process prevented their development? How might the actions and behaviors that increase trust be supported by the values of the Seven Cs? How, specifically, might you as an individual implement the Seven Cs in this group experience? What are the implications for trust and group cohesion when each of the Seven Cs is consistently practiced within the group?

- Willingness to take responsibility for group goals and tasks
- Ability to endure times of ambiguity and frustration with the group
- Capacity to disagree while maintaining loyalty to the group

If this suggests to you that work is involved in building and maintaining group cohesion, you are correct; cohesive groups don't happen by accident. Research on group cohesion demonstrates that this kind of work is well worth the effort. For example, some positive outcomes associated with group cohesion include group member satisfaction, increased motivation, heightened perseverance toward accomplishment of group goals, cooperation, open communication, and more effective listening (Donelson, 1999). Additionally, the more you learn about yourself and others and the more you are able to increase appreciation for diverse working styles, learning styles, and experiential and cultural perspectives, the more prepared you are to engage in the community.

Group cohesion can also result in less positive outcomes, however. Irving Janis (1983) developed the term groupthink, which he defined as “a deterioration of mental efficiency, reality, and moral judgment that results from in-group pressures” (p. 322). Janis originally used the term to explain major fiascoes in group decision-making processes. As he analyzed several cases of major policy decision making in U.S. history, he found that concurrence-seeking behavior in cohesive groups can become so dominant that members fail to adequately consider alternative courses of action. Group interactions become increasingly characterized by muddy thinking, poor decision making, and carelessness. Symptoms of groupthink include the following:

- Collective rationalization: Warnings and negative feedback are discounted.
- Perception of group morality: There is an unquestioned assumption that what the group does is right, good, and moral.
- Stereotyping other groups: An inaccurate and negative view of “the adversary” is created.
- Pressure to conform: Group members are pressured to conform to group opinion, and dissident views are discouraged.
- Mind-guarding: Group members actively protect the group from outside ideas that may contradict the group opinion or ideas.
- Surface agreement: There is an illusion of agreement, but individual doubt is not voiced to other group members.

Building a cohesive group pays big dividends when it comes to group performance. Even more important, cohesive groups are better able to deal with the problems that can tear other groups apart. When a group is experiencing difficulties, these issues can often be traced to some form of communication problem. Let’s check in on our two groups of service-learning students and see how they are dealing with some of these issues.
### Spotlight on Service

**Situation:** In service-learning courses, groups might experience pressure to engage in *group-think* behaviors when community perspectives and student perspectives on issues clash, when the pressure to meet community project deadlines becomes overwhelming, or when the students feel unclear about or removed from community partners’ expectations.

**Tip:** Include *assumption chaser* as one of your group member roles. This group member should routinely ask questions such as “What are we assuming?” and “Have we considered enough alternatives to this before we make our final decision?” Consult experienced outsiders (on and off campus) who are impartial and have a background in the subject area of your service experience. Finally, set time aside routinely during meetings to briefly reconsider your working notes from previous group meetings, with special attention to decisions that have been made.

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<th>Mudslingers</th>
<th>Visionary Skeptics</th>
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<td>The deadline for presenting a final project draft is swiftly approaching, and all five members of the group are able to attend the group meeting for the first time in three weeks. “Okay, so last time Natasha said that we should just divide up the work into pieces and so we did,” begins Angelo. “That isn’t what I said,” interrupts Natasha. “Yes, you said that whoever wasn’t here would just have to take what they got,” said Angelo. Natasha, red-faced, replied, “No, I meant that we would all have to just get going on it whether we could talk about it or not.” “Look, you’ve been trying to take over this project all term, so why don’t you just admit it?” shot back Angelo. Mandy, Julian, and Jorge sat silently. Mandy was staring out the window and appeared uninterested in the conversation. Finally, Julian broke the uncomfortable silence. “Did everyone else read that e-mail that you, I guess it was Angelo, sent out? Because I didn’t get it. It was totally unclear what we are supposed to be doing.” Natasha flashed back, “It wasn’t unclear to me, but then I’ve been committed to making some progress during group meetings.” “Hold on,” Julian broke in. “Let’s not rehash the past, let’s just figure out what we’re supposed to do and just do it. Get it over with.” Mandy continued to stare out the window.</td>
<td>The deadline for presenting a final project draft is swiftly approaching, and the group is feeling some stress. Lately, disagreement has surfaced over some of the project content, and two group members had been out with the flu for a week. When the five members finally met, Tiffany began by asking DeWayne and Maria whether they were feeling any better. “Not completely,” replied Maria, “but we need to get this back on track.” DeWayne agreed. “Why don’t we go back over where we left off,” he suggested. “The e-mail update was helpful, but we can’t decide just based on that. Maybe someone could read the notes about the different ideas we had when we last met as a group, and then the other three of you can let us know what you did while we were gone.” “So DeWayne,” said Anita, “Are you saying you want to make sure we understand the different ideas and people’s reasons? Then Tiffany, Maria, and I can show you the Web material we got last week. After that, I think we’ll need to make some decisions one way or another.” Everyone laughed when Maria suggested that DeWayne’s snake could decide which direction to take. Finally, though, the group decided to compare the content areas to the original project goals to see whether some ideas made better sense than others.</td>
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</table>
Communication in Groups

At the beginning of this chapter (exercise 4.1, on page 46), you reflected on positive and negative experiences that you have had in task or problem-solving groups. Take a look at your responses to that activity: How many are related to communication in groups? For example, did any of the issues involve negotiation of conflicting perspectives, approaching another group member about his or her group behavior, assumptions about others' intentions, or working across different communication styles?

More than likely, communication was central to many of the issues that you identified in that exercise. When group process breaks down, it is often blamed on a “lack of communication.” We often assume that, if communication was happening as it should have been, then problems with group process could have been avoided. Yet it is more often the case that a great deal of communication was occurring, but perhaps not in a manner that contributed to group cohesion. Some communication habits that have served well in other contexts may need to be reconsidered in the context of problem-solving groups. In service-learning courses, we may need to expand our group communication skills to include ongoing contributions from other groups in the class, as well as perspectives of multiple constituencies on and off campus. In the context of service-learning, it is important to consider that awareness of communication dynamics (and the resulting impact on group process) has implications not only for the group itself, but for potential community partners who are depending upon the commitments you have made to the project. Therefore, adopt the notion that mistakes in communication will be made by all; this is to be expected as skills are expanded and tested. Remind the group that “competence is what you do when you make a mistake” (Smith, 1995).

Although we often picture speaking skills when we hear the word “effective communication,” one of the most important group communication skills can be practiced with the mouth shut. Listening actively and respectfully to others is itself an important contribution to effective group functioning, yet it is very difficult to do consistently. One reason is that active listening is hard work. To illustrate why, consider the difference between active listening and other kinds of listening in the box below.

In any given situation, we move from active listening to minimal and inefficient listening and back again without awareness that we are doing so. Successful group process often depends upon group members’ commitment (remember the Seven Cs!) to the focused efforts of maintaining open and active listening. This requires a heightened awareness of the kind of listening going on throughout group meetings.

Timmons (1991) suggests some additional ideas for improved listening:

- **Reduce distractions.** We often have more control over distractions than we know. Bring yourself back to the group discussion when you begin to drift away. Commit yourself to being fully present for the next five minutes (and when five minutes is up, recommit your-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Active Listening</th>
<th>Minimal Listening</th>
<th>Inefficient Listening</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening for main and supporting ideas; giving appropriate feedback; checking the accuracy of your inferences and assumptions; listening for content as well as intent and feelings; attempting to understand from the other's point of view.</td>
<td>Listening to words and sounds but not actively trying to understand beyond surface meanings; “tuning out” after hearing just enough to grasp main ideas; attempting to grasp main ideas in the context of your own point of view, or in order to get your needs met.</td>
<td>Listening now and then; mentally composing a response while others are speaking; waiting to take control of the conversation; thinking of other things besides the current conversation; offering little or no feedback; attempting to confirm a preconceived idea of others’ messages, feelings, or intent.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Write down questions you have as you listen. Rather than interrupting before the speaker has finished, jot down notes about anything you don’t understand. For example, “What did she mean by community awareness?”

Set aside time in the group where listening, by itself, is the end goal. This is a special time when group members can speak without censure or interruption. At this time, the purpose is not to discuss agreement or disagreement over ideas, nor is the purpose to debate or convince others of the merits of particular ideas or issues. Rather, the primary purpose is to listen appreciatively for an understanding of another’s experience, ideas, or points of view (regardless of whether you agree or disagree). The increased understanding and group awareness often results in improved decision making when the group turns its attention to other forms of listening, such as listening for the purpose of evaluating various proposals for action.

Regularly discuss what you have heard and learned during group meetings. We retain more when we confirm what we have heard with others. We also organize and process information more effectively by collaboratively summarizing with others.

Keep track of your own contributions to the group. When you have commented two or three times, decide to listen for a while even if you have a pertinent comment (write it down if you are afraid you will forget). Chances are, someone else has a pertinent comment as well and may need the “space” to step in. If you must comment, phrase your comment as a question to invite contributions from others: “I’d like to know what others in the group think about . . .”

How well are our two groups practicing these techniques? (See page 60.)

### Free-Riders and Other Equity Issues

Earlier in this chapter, students commented about possible issues that can arise in group projects, often emphasizing task equity and other concerns related to fairness. One student directly expressed this in the statement, “One or two people end up carrying the whole group.” Perhaps you have experienced this challenge in previous group work. One consequence of having one or two persons feel like they are carrying the entire group is the deterioration of relationships within the group, which causes a marked decrease in group cohesion. Another consequence is that the project might not get finished with the level of quality originally anticipated due to a loss of buy-in from the overworked members—not to mention the loss of the perspectives of the absent group members. Overworked students may reach the point where they will no longer compensate for the lack of work (or the inferior quality of work) they perceive coming from other group members who are not “pulling their weight.” Absent group members may pull away from the project even more as they feel ostracized and undervalued by overfunctioning members. In order to successfully complete your service-learning project, you’ll need strategies to deal with free riding—the dynamic in which some group members are not doing (or are not perceived to be doing) their fair share of the work.

One tool that will help you identify individual contributions within your team is Exercise 4.10: Group Member Work Tally, located on page 64. You might use Exercise 4.4: Jobs List from page 51 to fill out the work tally. You may note that the reason the tally sheet distinguishes between “Who initially agreed to be responsible for the subtask?” and “Who actually did the task?” is that, as we know, plans often change over the duration of a long-term project. While there is generally no problem with group members swapping one task for another, using a tally sheet helps give all members of the group an accurate picture of who actually completed which project tasks. Not only will using tools such as the “Jobs List” and the “Group Member Work Tally” make clear the specific steps necessary for successful subtask completion, but it will also provide the group with more accurate information about individual members’ contributions to the total project. To ensure that all members invest in the idea that the group must work equitably together to accomplish its goals, it is essen-
tial to address the issue of work equity. In order to discourage “free-riders,” incorporate discussion and acknowledgment of group members’ individual contributions, and develop a shared understanding of the project performance standard, as an ongoing part of your group’s process.

### Groups Revisited

Before concluding, let’s take one more look at our two groups of service-learning students.
Neither Mandy nor Julian was in class on Monday. Angelo, Jorge, and Natasha worked late to get the final report ready for the class project presentation on Friday. On Wednesday, both Julian and Mandy were in class. After the instructor reminded all the groups that it was required that each member of the group present some part of the final report, Mandy and Julian immediately asked Natasha, “Which part of the report do you want me to present?”

She assigned Mandy the introduction and Julian the neighborhood history sections to present, while Angelo fumed. The final in-class presentation was a disaster. Mandy read the introduction from the folded page of notes that Natasha had given her on Wednesday. Julian kept mispronouncing the street names in the neighborhood. The community partner looked very unhappy, and the instructor seemed to be embarrassed. As class ended and everyone was leaving, Natasha said to Jorge, “I pray that I will never again have to do another group project with any of these losers.”

Angelo turned in one copy of the final report to the instructor—without any graphics or illustrations—on the following Monday.

The group was working smoothly as they wrapped up the group project assigned in their service-learning class. Maria made sure the group stayed on the timeline. They finished the oral history of their neighborhood and put all the stories together in a final report, complete with DeWayne’s drawings. At the final in-class project presentation, Tiffany introduced the project, and then each of the other group members told one of the neighborhood stories.

At the end of the presentation, Bill and Anita made sure that the community partner got a copy of the final report. The following Saturday, all of the Visionary Skeptics—DeWayne, Maria, Tiffany, Bill, and Anita—met again in the neighborhood in which they’d done their oral histories and distributed copies of the report to the residents who were part of the project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mudslingers</th>
<th>Visionary Skeptics</th>
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<tr>
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The researchers Harkins and Jackson identified social loafing as the tendency for persons to put out less effort when working with others than they do when working alone. Social loafing occurs within group efforts when people feel that their individual contributions cannot be identified and that they cannot be singled out for blame or praise for their efforts.

To eliminate social loafing, two conditions are required:

1. Each individual’s output must be identifiable. It must be clear who has done what on the project.
2. Ongoing reflection and evaluation must be present. Group members must believe that their individual outputs can be evaluated against the work done by other group members.

Evaluation requires a standard for comparison, also known as a performance standard. Clarifying the performance standard and accompanying evaluation for each of three different sources—the authority (in our situation, the course instructor and/or the community partner), the individual, and other group members—can reduce the likelihood of social loafing. Further, if individual efforts are compared against the efforts of others in the group as part of a team environment, there is less likelihood that social loafing will occur.

Take a moment to consider how you have found yourself in certain situations to be a social loafer. What factors present in the group environment allowed you to put less effort into the work? Conversely, how have you handled others who are social loafers? What sorts of safeguards can you implement in your current group to prevent this dynamic from developing?
Throughout this chapter, we have examined multiple aspects of working in groups in community-based learning settings. We hope you have gained insights about why instructors assign group projects; the potentially positive and negative outcomes of group projects; how groups develop; the importance of group roles, group cohesion, group communication, and group equity of tasks; and means of evaluating group work.

Completing service-learning experiences, however, does not just mean forming connections with other students. You will be (or already are) interacting with community members. To complete a project successfully, it is necessary for all students to understand their relationship with the community from both their own and the community’s perspective. The next chapter explores multiculturalism, intercultural communication, the politics of difference, and the implications for community engagement.

### Key Concepts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>active listening</th>
<th>norming</th>
<th>role</th>
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<tr>
<td>content goals</td>
<td>organizational roles</td>
<td>social loafing</td>
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<td>forming</td>
<td>performance standard</td>
<td>social thinking</td>
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<tr>
<td>free riding</td>
<td>performing</td>
<td>storming</td>
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<td>group cohesion</td>
<td>Phase Model of Group Development</td>
<td>task roles</td>
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<td>groupthink</td>
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<td>maintenance roles</td>
<td>process goals</td>
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### Key Issues

- Why do instructors assign group projects? What is the value of group work?
- How do groups develop?
- How does work get done in groups?
- What must be done to keep a group together?
- How can we make sure each member does a fair share of group work?
### ADDITIONAL EXERCISES

#### Exercise 4.8: Facilitating the Development of Your Group

Refer to this checklist often to keep track of your group's progress.

**FORMING:** Getting off to a good start.

- We have taken some time to get to know each other as individuals.
- We have clearly communicated our expectations of how the group should operate.
- We have a clear idea of each group member's expectation for commitment to the group and have developed guidelines for dealing with any barriers to getting work done.
- We know something about each member's preferred method of working in a group.

**STORMING:** Using strategies to promote productive (not destructive) conflict.

- We have done at least some of the above activities to facilitate forming.
- We acknowledge that we do not all share the same perspective on issues, but, even when we disagree, we are able to articulate our disagreement while treating other group members with civility and respect.
- Whenever possible, we try to resolve disagreements face-to-face, rather than by e-mail.

**NORMING:** Reaching consensus as to how we will operate as a group.

- We have devised mutually acceptable, effective guidelines for running group meetings and decision making.
- We have established a “Jobs List” detailing what needs to be done and who will do it.
- Each group member has clarified with the instructor, the community partner, and other group members answers to the following questions:
  - What are the steps in my part of this project?
  - What are the deadlines?
  - What should my piece of the project look like in the end?
  - What resources are needed to complete my part of the project in a timely way?
  - How will I know if I have met the community partner's expectations?

**PERFORMING:** Getting the actual work done.

- We have gone through the problem-solving process and developed an action plan to accomplish our group's assigned task.
- We have clarified with our instructor the expectations for the format and content of our group product.
- We are clear as to how the grade for this project will be determined, as well as who will assign the grade for the group product (instructor, community partner, or both).
Exercise 4.9: How Am I in This Group?

Whether you played one of the five organizational roles (leader, note taker, progress tracker, process observer) or not, reflect on your own actions in the group discussion. Answer the following questions, referring to the Group Roles Checklist on page 65 as needed.

- What task roles did you play in the group discussion?
- What maintenance roles did you play in the group discussion?
- Were there any times during the discussion when you thought “someone should do something” (a specific task or maintenance role), but you hesitated to do what was needed? Describe those moments. Why do you think you hesitated?
- If this group was having another discussion on a related topic, which task and/or maintenance roles do you think you would play? Why?

Exercise 4.10: Group Member Work Tally

List all the jobs that need to be done to complete this project based on your group’s earlier “Jobs List” (exercise 4.4 on page 51).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task/Subtask</th>
<th>Who initially agreed to do it?</th>
<th>Who actually did it?</th>
<th>How long did it take?</th>
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## Appendix 4.1: Group Roles Checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task Roles</th>
<th>Examples of behaviors</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Creating</strong></td>
<td>Initiates plans, proposes new ideas or goals, defines group’s position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elaborating</strong></td>
<td>Expands on ideas of others, provides examples, clarifies and develops earlier points in the discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Integrating</strong></td>
<td>Organizes and coordinates the group’s work, puts together parts of different members’ ideas into something new</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reviewing</strong></td>
<td>Summarizes the group’s work or discussion to the current point, reminds group of previously mentioned items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evaluating</strong></td>
<td>Critiques ideas, suggestions, or action plans; proposes standards by which to evaluate information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Documenting</strong></td>
<td>Keeps records of the group’s work, prepares reports, serves as secretary or group historian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consensus testing</strong></td>
<td>Seeks verification that a group decision has been reached, makes sure an apparent group decision is acceptable to all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Information sharing</strong></td>
<td>Presents data, facts, and other evidence relevant to the group’s task; seeks additional information as necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Opinion giving</strong></td>
<td>Expresses personal beliefs, provides an interpretation of the facts from a personal perspective</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maintenance Roles</th>
<th>Examples of behaviors</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Encouraging</strong></td>
<td>Expresses appreciation for others’ contributions, shares positive feelings about other group members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reinforcing</strong></td>
<td>Expresses support for another group member’s idea or suggestion, agrees to follow another’s lead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mediating</strong></td>
<td>Promotes harmony within the group, reduces tensions, suggests a compromise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gatekeeping</strong></td>
<td>Suggests taking turns in a discussion, gets the floor and makes sure less outspoken members are heard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Process observing</strong></td>
<td>Points out the ways in which the group is or is not working together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tension relieving</strong></td>
<td>Breaks tension within the group through the use of humor, encourages informality, helps new members feel at ease</td>
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</table>
To be honest, I didn't think I had a lot to learn about diversity from taking a service-learning course. I'm a business major, and we work in teams all the time. I've had lots of experience working with people who are different from me.

Truly, though, I am amazed at what I learned. Before, we'd get some random assignment to complete as a team, and we'd finish it, one way or another. In this class, though, we were doing something real for the community. It was a much bigger proposition than just doing something for a grade. I had to figure out how to work well with people whose experiences and perspectives were totally different than mine. I had to figure out the differences between what it means for me work collaboratively and what it means to others. And I was surprised to find that I had a lot to learn from the practice of joining with others to address a community problem.

The biggest surprise was the basic realization that recognizing and respecting our differences actually helps collaboration. We were all far more creative in this course. What I mean is, before in groups we usually competed with each other, but it doesn't make very much sense to compete with each other in a situation like this, because competition gets in the way of using all our skills and different ways of looking at things to get the job done.

—Michael, community-based learner, working on a marketing plan for a Meals on Wheels program

Perhaps you are like the student quoted above, engaging in this service-learning environment with a lot of prior experience working with other students in team settings. Even if your only team experience has come through the work you are currently undertaking in this class, after reading the last chapter you have begun to think about the diverse roles and responsibilities that exist within a group, and you have practiced some strategies for working effectively with others. At the very least, you have probably started to think about the many factors that affect group dynamics; clearly, any collection of people yields lots of differences in personal preferences, styles, and ways of being and doing in the world.

Where do these differences originate? Is there a deeper, more meaningful way to think about both the differences and similarities that exist among people that can offer clues to greater understanding of yourself as an individual student? Might these insights further your own knowledge base and skills for operating in a diverse world, for connecting with team members and classmates in your course, and for positively impacting the larger community you are serving?
Service-learning experiences are opportunities for bridging a variety of cultural ways of being and doing. This chapter offers resources to frame your experience in order to expand your capacities for working effectively with those who are different from you, and to recognize how to act on commonly held desires for creating positive change in the world. Further, we explore how our different perspectives are actually keys to maximizing the innovative problem-solving capacities that exist in any community setting. We look at the ways that our notions of “service” are culturally based and seek a common language for serving and learning with respect and integrity.

What’s Culture Got to Do with It?

Culture is the creation of learned and shared values, beliefs, and behaviors in a community of interacting people. Each of us constructs a multicultural identity from the many cultural influences that impact us, including nationality, ethnicity, race, age, gender, physical characteristics, sexual orientation, economic status, education, profession, religion, and organizational affiliation.

In your service-learning experience, you may be working shoulder-to-shoulder with people who are culturally different from you. When we talk about cultural differences, we don’t simply mean varieties of art and music, but rather different ways of thinking, of communicating, and of applying our distinct values to our actions. In our multicultural world, it is virtually impossible to work side by side with classmates and a community partner and not encounter differences related to culture. In other words, community-based learning is an intercultural context.

Sometimes this means collaborating with an intercultural team, a group whose members are quite diverse. Other times you may be working alone but engaging with persons from backgrounds so different from your own that you may not be able to comprehend their perspectives. You may find that you are the only person from your own culture present in a given situation, and you might experience a sense of isolation as you immerse yourself in this new environment.

Each of these scenarios requires intercultural competence, the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in a variety of cultural contexts. To be interculturally competent, you need to cultivate a mindset (analytical frameworks for understanding culture), a skillset (interpersonal and group skills for bridging differences) and a heartset (motivation and curiosity to explore cultural variables). These three essential components of competence support your learning with others in the community (Bennett & Bennett, 2004).

The mindset gives you knowledge and academic understanding of other cultures through information about attitudes and behaviors. The skillset builds on that knowledge base by enhancing your intercultural abilities, including your capacity to listen, to solve problems, and to empathize. And the heartset, the interest and concern for others, provides the motivation to continue the effort even when things get complicated and challenging.

As you ponder your own cultural background and that of others, the main characteristic needed to guide your learning is cultural humility, that is, respect for the validity of other peoples’ cultures (Guskin, 1991). We are frequently tempted to see the perfectly obvious superiority of our own way of looking at the world, of conceptualizing a task, or of resolving a conflict. Cultural humility instead requires us to recognize that diverse worldviews are equally legitimate. It suggests that we suspend our value judgments, question the primacy of our own orientation, and realize that we may not even know what is really going on in an intercultural context. While this can be a major challenge, it is a prerequisite for getting along with other cultural groups.

A second step in becoming interculturally competent is to develop cultural self-awareness, the recognition of the attributes and patterns of your own culture. Each of us processes many layers of cultural patterning. At one level, you belong to a national culture, or what some call a “passport culture,” referring to the country of your citizenship. For some individuals, this is easy to identify. However, if you grew up in Mexico, moved to Canada, and now live in the United States, this becomes a more complicated aspect of your cultural identity.

As part of your developing cultural self-awareness, you may become more conscious of your ethnic heritage, including your relationship to the geography and history of the place your family originated, and how much of that culture they (and you) continue to identify with. Ethnic heritage is often more important than national culture, since so many countries consist of powerful groups with unique identities,
groups that may resist assimilation into the dominant culture. Some of these groups are pan-national, such as Arabs, Kurds, and Roma, whose communities stretch across borders; some of them are within a national border, such as groups within the United States, including African Americans, Latino Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, and European Americans. Each of these designations suggests the ethnic background of the individual, as well as the national culture. Particularly notable in the United States is the designation of European American, a group that frequently forgets that it has an ethnic identity.

Stop and think for a moment: What is your ethnic identity? It may seem—particularly to those of European American heritage—that European American patterns are, well, just the way things are done. Only by bringing ethnicity into consciousness can we become aware of that bias.

There are other levels to cultural identity. Regional cultures influence our communication interactions. For example, those from the southern United States may use speech patterns and behaviors dissimilar to those who grew up in New England. Socioeconomic class and education impact our values and beliefs as well. Gender culture, the many ways we are acculturated to our roles as men and women (and even the binary description of that designation), affects our cultural beliefs and individual choices. Other cultural influences include religion and spirituality; sexual orientation; physical, psychological, and learning abilities; organizational culture; and, on college campuses, even departmental cultures.

Some aspects of your own cultural identity are probably more important to you than others, for example, your gender culture or your ethnic heritage. However, you create your multilayered, multicultural self through the choices you make about how these cultural influences affect who you are. Culture is not a “thing,” but a dynamic process in which you interact with family and community influences to reflect the cultural being you choose to be in the context in which you live, study, and work.

Let’s take a look at your concept and experience of “service” through the lens of culture with exercise 5.1.

What does all of this mean to you, as you work in a community to serve and to learn? It suggests that you have to understand who you are culturally before you interact across cultures. If your sense is that other individuals are doing things that are weird, indecipherable, or unacceptable, this feeling might be tempered when you realize that you are viewing the situation from your own cultural worldview and that the other persons’ perspectives are entirely different.

⭐ **Exercise 5.1: Cultural Dimensions of Service**

In this activity, you will explore how you have come to define and understand what “service” means to you by examining your own cultural definitions. Begin by drawing (or otherwise indicating) yourself in the middle of a large sheet of paper. Around this figure, make notes about what service means to you and what kinds of service to others you have been engaged in, inside or outside a school setting.

Next, draw figures around you and connected to you, representing important persons in your life from whom you have learned about service. These could be parents and grandparents, siblings, other relatives, friends, mentors, schoolmates, teachers, professional colleagues, and others. What kinds of service have these persons been engaged in? What do you believe “service” means or meant to them?

Now, consider these persons and relationships through the lens of culture. Who among them shares one or more aspect of your cultural identity? How do those cultural groups to which you experience belonging understand “service”? How is that reflected in your drawing?

Conversely, who among these persons has had a distinctly different cultural experience from yours? How did these cultural differences affect your relationships with those persons and how they understand “service”? 
from yours. Recognizing this, you can make a choice to practice cultural humility in order to learn more about the cultural worldview of those who are different from you.

Recall Exercise 3.3: Who Am I and What Do I Bring on page 36. In this activity, you explored your current understanding of your identity in relation to a variety of racial and cultural factors (race and ethnicity; nationality; gender; language; spirituality and religion; physical, mental and/or emotional ability; socio-economic class; age; physical appearance; and sexual orientation). These identifiers are lenses through which you perceive the world around you, which in this course includes your teammates and classmates and your community partner. Let’s deepen your reflection on this theme with exercise 5.2.

### Exercise 5.2: I and We and You and Us and Them

#### Step 1: Reflect

Reread your earlier reflection on “Who Am I and What Do I Bring?” (exercise 3.3). Think again about the ways that your current understanding of your identity positions you to experience this community partnership. Use the following prompts to focus your thinking about who you are in relation to the others with whom you are working.

- How do the multiple expressions of your identity impact the way that you perceive your community partner as an organization and the work that it does?
- How does your identity impact the way that you perceive other people, including your teammates and classmates, your community partner contacts, and the people served by your partner?
- How does your identity orient you toward effective interactions with others, and how does it challenge effective interaction?
- How might you use your perspective to further your investigations into creating effective working relationships with your team, your classmates, and your community partner?
- How might you learn from the perspectives of others? What particular perspectives would be most valuable for you to encounter?

In preparing your reflection, consider breaking out of the confines of the traditional narrative reflective form. Write a story or a poem or a dialogue. Paint, draw, or collage a picture. Compose and record some music. Choose to be as honest as possible in this reflection, which might mean that you record “negative” or contradictory thoughts and feelings as well as those that seem “positive” and clear.

#### Step 2: Step Back

After creating your reflection, take some time to review it and consider what it communicates to you. Then answer the following questions in writing:

- What is it like for you, this process of considering identity and its effect on your perceptions of others?
- What thoughts and feelings emerge as you consider these questions?

#### Step 3: Reflect Again

After your next service experience in the field or class session, reread your responses to the questions in both step 1 and 2 above. What does your reflection reveal about you as a person, a student, a community-based learner? How does this connect to your cultural background? How does it connect you to your team, your classmates, and your community partner?
With an ever-evolving understanding of yourself as a cultural being, it is important to be aware of the pitfalls of stereotyping others. A *stereotype* is a “hardening of the categories,” a process of developing rigid ways of thinking about individuals from other cultures, as if those individuals represent some statistical “norm” of their culture group. We frequently base such unjustified ways of thinking on having met a single person from a culture or having been exposed to media representations of a culture’s patterns.

A *generalization*, on the other hand, is a lightly held hypothesis based on research about patterns of behavior in the other culture, a hypothesis that we never act on until we have confirmed that it is appropriate for the individual we have met. Thus, if we default to the notion that all men like sports or all Asians are quiet, we are simply stereotyping. However, in interactions across cultures, it is often useful to have hypotheses in mind that we hold tentatively until they are confirmed. In your community-based learning experience, it may have already proven useful to you to be exposed to some generalizations about the groups of persons and the cultural realities they embody to help guide your interactions. In another of his journals, Michael, our community-based learner from the opening of this chapter, described an experience he had of using generalizations to help him relate respectfully to the community he served:

I was riding with one of the Meals on Wheels volunteers on her rounds delivering lunch to persons who are elderly and disabled. I figured it was good to get hands-on experience of what they do before I started working on the marketing plan. I wasn’t too nervous about dropping off food with the older folks, because I hang out a lot with my grandfather and his friends, but I don’t know any people with disabilities. The last thing I wanted to do was hurt somebody’s feelings.

I guess the volunteer must have sensed my nervousness. She said that generally the disabled people with disabilities she serves on this route seem to really appreciate it when she makes eye contact and connects with them. She said it can be helpful to be on the same level with people who are in wheelchairs, for example. Like everybody else on the route, they like it when you can spend a few minutes talking, since we might be their only visitor for the day.

When we showed up, the lady there was very happy to see us. She was in a wheelchair, so I sat on a sofa facing her as I told her how I was a student from the university working on this project for the Meals-on-Wheels program. I have to admit I was surprised when she told me a little bit about the career she had had in advertising. On a whim, I asked her if she might be willing to give me some feedback on the plan before we turned it in, and she said she’d be happy to.

At our group session, I told my teammates about meeting this woman who is not only a client of our community partner but also has done the same kind of work we’re doing. Now they want to meet her too. I think getting to know her is going to have a definite impact on our final product in a number of ways.

Conversely, you may have also experienced the negative impact of stereotyping, in which the unexamined views you have held about different cultures have worked against your successful interaction with others. Exercise 5.3 asks you to consider both generalizations and stereotyping in the context of your particular service-learning experience.

### Building Intercultural Sensitivity

As each of us experiences cultural differences, we tend to react to those differences in fairly predictable ways. These reactions are based on our worldview and reflect how we think, feel, and behave in the presence of unfamiliar cultures. We can look at the typical stages individuals move through as they acquire cultural self-awareness, learn to identify and appreciate cultural differences, and, eventually, adapt to others as a process of building intercultural competence.

This process has been described in the *Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity*, a framework that explains the development of increasing sophistication in our experience and navigation of differences.
LEARNING THROUGH SERVING

( J. M. Bennett, 1993; M. J. Bennett, 1993; J. M. Bennett & M. J. Bennett, 2004). The model begins with three ethnocentric stages, in which our own culture is experienced as central to reality in some particular way. The latter three stages of the model are termed ethnorelative, in which one's own culture is viewed in the context of other cultures.

**Exercise 5.3: Deconstructing Stereotypes**

You may choose to complete this activity in a variety of ways: You might create a collage, using visual and/or word images clipped from magazines and newspapers to create a representation of those persons you are serving in your community partnership. Or you might pay particular attention to the ways that those you are serving are shown in the broadcast media, including film, television, and the radio, by watching and listening to several shows and making notes about what you see and hear. After you have spent some time intentionally engaging with the images in popular media that connect with the group of persons you are serving, respond to the following questions:

- How do these images represent stereotypes about the community you are serving?
- How are the stereotypes about this group reinforced in the media? How do the media negatively portray this group?
- How are the stereotypes about this group challenged in the media? How do the media positively portray this group?
- How do these images connect with your own experience of this group, and how are they different? When you look at these images, do they help you to see the faces of the individuals you are serving, or do they obscure the faces of those individuals? How?

**Stage One: Denial of Difference**

Individuals who view others through the denial filter either neglect to notice differences at all or think in extremely simple categories. Those who are just beginning to explore cultural differences are often unaware that they have a culture or that certain privileges exist in their world that don’t exist elsewhere. They are per-

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**Figure 5.1. Development of Intercultural Sensitivity**

From Bennett & Bennett (2004)
plexed when asked about their own cultural filters and are unconcerned about the impact of cultural differences on their lives. The following journal entry was completed by a student named Jennifer, whose service-learning experience involves working at a large family planning clinic in a multicultural community:

After learning about cultural patterns in the readings, I expected these patients to be really different from me, and so I’m quite surprised at how smoothly things are going. I’ve really not met anyone yet who seems that different from me. After all, healthcare is healthcare, no matter what culture you’re from. And we all speak the same language, so I figure if I’m just myself things here will continue to be fine.

Stage Two: Defense against Difference
When individuals become aware of cultural differences in more powerful and penetrating ways, they may slip into the defense posture, where their worldview is polarized into us/them distinctions (“Now that I’ve noticed they’re different, I recognize they’re bad!”). Individuals thinking in this way may criticize others or assert the superiority of their own culture. One intriguing variation on the defense perspective is what is called “reversal,” which involves denigrating one’s own culture and exalting some other culture’s ways of being and doing. (“The Native Americans live in harmony with nature, not like us dominant Anglos,” says the Anglo student.) While this may superficially seem to be more culturally sensitive, in fact it is nevertheless still dualistic and a defensive reaction to exposure to difference. The object of the defense has simply shifted.

The following journal excerpt is from Todd, a journalism major, completing his community-based project writing for an small alternative press that focuses on the needs of the Latino community. Although he is not a member of this community, he is deeply interested in the impact of addiction and is conducting a research project about heroin treatment in the community he is serving.

My visit to the treatment clinic went really badly. I ran into some super-defensive, antagonistic people who clearly didn’t grasp why I was there. They were even hostile. I can’t understand why they didn’t see I was there to help. Man, when these people are angry, they really let you know it. If they had taken more time to get to know me, they would have realized I was on their side. I’m beginning to wonder if we ought to be helping them at all, if they’re going to be so rude.

Stage Three: Minimization of Difference
Those who have achieved the minimization worldview typically feel they have arrived at intercultural sensitivity, since, in most contexts, suggesting that we are all the same despite surface differences is a vast improvement over the cultural biases that normally exist. However, this is perhaps the most complex strategy for avoiding cultural differences. Indeed, if we believe that deep down, we are all alike, then we don’t have to do the difficult work of recognizing our own cultural patterns, understanding others, and eventually making the necessary adaptations. This stage is thus characterized by the assumption that we are similar in some universal context, whether physical or philosophical. “It’s a small world, after all.”

Maria and her team from the business administration program are working to develop a database and Web site for a new minority-owned small business for their community-based learning project. In her journal, Maria writes the following:

It’s so great to realize that the people here care about the same things we do in my culture. They want their businesses to make money, too! So values really ARE universal! They seem to eat different foods, and dress a little differently than I do, but deep down, we obviously share a common worldview. Partly this is technology that is bringing us all together, and partly it’s basic human motivation. It sure makes the work easier this way.

Stage Four: Acceptance of Difference
As we become increasingly aware of our own culture, we begin to recognize how truly distinct other cultures are from our own, and we understand this distinction as difference without judging it to be “bad” or “less developed.” This movement into the stages of ethnorelativism reflects our capacity to acknowledge our own
cultural filters and suspend our judgments temporarily in order to understand others. In a sense, for the first time, we may see the complexity and validity of the other culture’s worldview.

Individuals who are operating at the acceptance stage are initially interested in behavioral differences (“They use chopsticks and we don’t”), and move into more complicated observations (“I’ve noticed that Mariko observes our group conversation for a long time and thinks carefully before offering her comments”). Ultimately, those at acceptance are able to decipher—and accept—profound value differences. However, it is essential to note that this does not mean agreement or preference for those values, but rather acceptance of the reality of the other culture’s worldview. In addition, people at the acceptance stage will not expect that people in other culture groups will share their worldviews.

In the community, therefore, those in acceptance do not assume they are bringing “answers” or “help,” but are more likely to understand that they are operating as “colearners” in the community environment. For instance, as part of her service-learning requirement for her degree, Natacha is volunteering at her local AIDS hospice.

When I arrive at the hospice, I now know I am entering a different world. I realize, for the first time, that while I thought I was doing this work to help them, I’m the one who is learning, changing, growing. Sometimes it is really difficult for me, since some of the patients are gay, and I’m not really sure I understand everything I should about their culture. Still I try to be respectful of their strength, their humor, and, especially, their patience in teaching me how to be more useful. Sometimes it seems as if we are building a bridge between our ways of viewing the world.

Stage Five: Adaptation to Difference
The necessary motivation to move to adaptation occurs when we need to be effective in our interactions with others in order to get something done. It is no longer enough merely to have the mindset (to know about a culture). Adaptation requires the alignment of a mindset with a heartset (motivation to continue engaging with difference) and skillset (skills for engaging with difference), as well. Bringing all of these elements together helps one develop empathy, the premier capacity of an interculturalist. Empathy is the capacity to take the perspective of the other culture, to shift frames of reference, and to act in the context of the other’s perspective. Based on our appropriate frame shifts, we can adapt how we interact, a process called “code-shifting.” We may adapt our greeting rituals, our problem-solving strategies, or our apology patterns as part of a reciprocal learning experience.

Those at the stage of adaptation may wonder: “Do I have to abandon who I am to be interculturally sensitive?” For instance, “Do I have to give up being a feminist while I work in a church-based soup kitchen?” It may help us to understand that intercultural sensitivity is an addition to your personal repertoire of behavior, not a subtraction. You are who you are, but with adaptive intercultural expertise. You maintain a commitment to your own values and strive to make personal decisions in accordance with them, while understanding that others do the same from within their own cultural perspective. And you take on the challenge of creating an intercultural context large enough for all of these perspectives to coexist.

Kichiro is part of a class team designing a community-based learning project. Not only is the project located in a multicultural area of town with which he is not familiar, but his team also includes members from six different ethnic groups:

Stage Six: Integration of Difference
The natural outcome of sustained, in-depth intercultural adaptation is multiculturality, the internalization of multiple cultural identities. This may result
when individuals intentionally make a significant, sustained effort to become fully competent in new cultures. This adaptation may occur for nondominant group members to a dominant or colonial culture, or persons who grew up in multiple countries, or long-term sojourners who have lived for extended periods of time in other cultures. It may also occur for individuals who consciously live in ways that bring them into full participation in two or more cultures simultaneously.

This multicultural identity allows for lively participation in a variety of cultures but may result in an occasional sense of never really being “at home.” Home has become everywhere: Your sense of who you are as a cultural being becomes quite complex. The multicultural person brings many perspectives to every task, numerous ways to solve problems, and multiple possibilities for shifting codes. While multiculturality is certainly not a prerequisite for deeply effective and respectful collaboration across cultures (which becomes increasingly possible as one develops one’s mindset, skillset and heartset), engagement in such collaborations may ultimately inspire a person to desire and strive for this degree of intercultural competence.

Soraya is a chemical engineer who has lived in other cultures most of her life. For her senior seminar community-based project, she is working on an environmental task force dedicated to saving the local river basin. In her journal, Soraya wrote the following:

I enjoy this task force because I can use the many cultural frames I have to try to solve problems. In each culture where I have lived, people resolve challenges differently. While I can shift from one frame to another, I still know who I am. I feel most comfortable bridging differences and acknowledging all the parts of the multicultural me.

A Step Further: Investigating Power and Unpacking Privilege

Becoming both interculturally sensitive and interculturally competent is fundamental to working successfully with others who embody different cultural ways of being and doing. These differences may be clear and overt, or they may be quite subtle. Adopting a stance of cultural humility, as a preliminary step, allows us to remain open to the many expressions of human ways of being and doing that have their foundation in the rich diversity of cultural forces.

To go a step further, we may choose to investigate the ways in which some groups have historically been and continue to be disadvantaged both socially and politically. This is referred to as marginalization—the exclusion or separation of individuals and groups of people from access to power, opportunities, and resources afforded to others. As you consider your community partnership, think about ways that mar-
ginalization currently manifests within the community you are serving. In other words, how is the social and political reality you are engaged with in your community partnership informed by racism (exclusion based on race and ethnicity), sexism (exclusion based on gender), classism (exclusion based on socioeconomic status), heterosexism (exclusion based on sexual orientation), and other forms of discrimination? Further, what can each of us do about these social injustices, while we are members of this class community and after we leave this particular community setting?

Giroux (1983) and Solorzano (1997) claim that “marginalized” persons can become empowered agents for change beyond the boundaries of socially and politically imposed separation. This insight is especially important with regard to students’ experiences in service-learning courses. In fact, marginalized persons—those who find themselves outside the centers of power—may be more likely to instigate change since these persons may have less to lose and more to gain by doing so. While systems and organizations may have historically disenfranchised and isolated some groups of people, true hope for improving social conditions resides (at least in part) in collaborating with those who best understand that isolation and exclusion through their own lived experience. For many of us as community-based learners, understanding how we may have experienced marginalization in some aspects of our lives as well as access to power in other aspects will help us understand more precisely how we may collaborate with others to bring about the change we all, as collaborators, desire.

In a well-known and widely available article, author Peggy McIntosh writes about her awakening to the fact that she experiences privilege, or unearned benefits, on the basis of her white skin (McIntosh, 1988). McIntosh writes that, although she did not ask for these benefits, she receives them simply because she is a member of a dominant group. Further, she was not taught to investigate these privileges or even to recognize that they exist, because, while we may understand that racism is something that puts others at a disadvantage, we are generally taught not to see that the privilege that stems from having white skin puts white people at a distinct advantage:

> My schooling gave me no training in seeing myself as . . . an unfairly advantaged person. I was taught to see myself as an individual whose moral state depended on her individual moral will. My schooling followed the pattern my colleague Elizabeth Minnich has pointed out: whites are taught to think of their lives as morally neutral, normative, and average, and also ideal, so that when we work to benefit others, this is seen as work which will allow “them” to be more like “us.” (McIntosh, 1988, p. 1)

In her article, McIntosh gives many examples of the ways she benefits by her membership in the dominant racial group in the United States. Among other things, she includes everyday benefits related to being and doing in the world, such as “I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed,” as well as deeper social issues, in that “I can be pretty sure that if I ask to talk to ‘the person in charge,’ I will be facing a person of my race,” along with broader political issues like “I can remain oblivious of the language and customs of persons of color who constitute the world’s majority without feeling in my culture any penalty for such oblivion” (1988, p. 1).

Because the way that privilege works is often so tricky to understand, so slippery, and generally so invisible and complex, it can be difficult for those of us who experience privilege to fully understand that we hold it and how it may act as a barrier to our successful work across cultures. Because of the complex nature of identity—the fact that most of us experience some degree of privilege stemming from some aspect of our identity that aligns with a dominant culture—we are all charged with investigating the ways that we do and do not have access to power, and how that power is connected to certain social and political benefits.

Take, for instance, a student of working-class background who is of the first generation in his family to go to college. Perhaps this student is you or sits beside you in your community-based learning course. Because he is the first among his family to attend an institution of higher education, in his first days on campus he may find it an enormous challenge to navigate the complicated systems in this new environment: how to register for courses, how to sign up for a library card or a meal plan, or how to approach a professor with a request to be added to a class. Given the lack of experience his family has had in this regard, he may have to do much more work to understand these systems than someone from a middle- or upper-class background who has
been informed by her parents or siblings about what to expect and how to negotiate it. Not only is the first-generation college student disadvantaged in this scenario, but the student with a family history of college attendance holds privilege relative to that status. This student didn't ask for the benefit, most likely doesn't even know it exists, and certainly is not a bad person for holding this privilege, but the privilege exists and benefits her regardless of her awareness of it.

Another way to think about privilege comes from the work of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1977), who describes cultural capital as specialized or insider knowledge not available equitably to all. If we understand “capital” in the way economists do, as a synonym for “wealth,” we begin to see how particular cultural experiences may become more highly valued than others, because these experiences transfer the kinds of attitudes and knowledge that give their owners greater access to power and resources. The first-generation college student described above did not have the same cultural capital as his classmate to “spend” in his first days at school, and so had to extend additional amounts of his time and energy to figure things out. Similarly, we may think about cultural capital as it applies to the persons we are serving in our community partnerships, and how limited access to particular kinds of highly prized and useful information may keep entire groups on the margins.

As learners who are serving, we are charged with exploring the ways in which privilege attaches to membership in certain groups in order to better understand the cultural dynamics at play in our community partnerships and to continue to develop our intercultural competence. Helpfully, McIntosh (1988) offers a list of ways in which she has identified her white-skin privilege, which we will use in exercise 5.5 as a way to investigate privilege.

**Conclusion**

Let us return to our starting point: with Michael, our community-based learner, reflecting on how his collaborative partnership brought out more creativity than he had ever experienced in a group setting. Asked to speak about the learning he gained around intercultural sensitivity, power, and privilege, Michael had this to say:

*At first, I have to admit, I was defensive about all this privilege stuff. As a white male who grew up...*
in a middle-class household, it seemed that this was about bashing me and people like me for having had a good upbringing. It seemed at first that I was supposed to pretend to be someone I wasn’t, or apologize for who I am and be ashamed of it. After being in this course, though, I am gaining some new perspectives. It’s not that I’m supposed to deny that I have access to privileges because of my position in the world, but that I should become aware of them so that I’m more effective at communicating with people from different backgrounds. I realize now that I can make a choice to use my privileges for the benefit of both myself and others. I realize that I’m privileged to be in college, and I have the opportunity because of it to connect this community organization up to new marketing strategies for their Meals on Wheels program for the elderly.

One thing in particular my professor said has really stuck with me. You know how we’ve all learned the Golden Rule, to treat others the way we want to be treated? She said that, in intercultural relationships, we should use the Platinum Rule [M. Bennett, 1979] instead: “treating others the way that they themselves want to be treated.” To do that, we have to really get to know each other. And to really get to know people, we had better get pretty good at communicating despite our differences.

Like everything else, “service” as a concept and practice is informed by our complex cultural identities and the privileges we hold (and do not hold) relative to those identities. We end this chapter by asking you to go deeper still, into the heart of your motivation for doing service and the impact that motivation may have on others. Remembering McIntosh, who said that unexamined privilege may lead us to see our own positions as “neutral, normative, and average, and also ideal, so that when we work to benefit others, this is seen as work which will allow ‘them’ to be more like ‘us’” (McIntosh, 1988, p. 1), be cognizant about how we may frame our culturally informed positions on service so that they may orient us to serve from a place of being agents for social justice and social change, for the benefit of us all.

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<th>Key Concepts</th>
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<td>How do your mindset, skillset, and heartset orient you toward effective intercultural communication?</td>
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<td>How might generalizations help us familiarize ourselves with cultures that are new to us? How do stereotypes hinder our understanding?</td>
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<td>How do power, marginalization, discrimination, and privilege affect individuals, relationships among classmates, and community partnerships?</td>
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Exercise 5.6: Serving Justly

Reflect on all of the information, reflections, and activities you have engaged with in this chapter. How has this chapter informed your ideas about yourself as a cultural being? How has it encouraged you to develop your intercultural sensitivity and competence as a community-based learner? How do you understand your ideas about service as issuing from your cultural being? What stance can you adopt as a community-based learner and worker that respects the cultural differences you encounter while also creating positive change for the common good?
PART THREE

Facilitating Learning and Meaning-Making Inside and Outside the Classroom

The goal of part 3 (chapters 6–8) is to highlight multiple venues for understanding the community-based experience—when things are going well and when things are not going well. Specifically, how can you use reflection to construct meaning and knowledge from your experience, what can be done if the community interaction is a disappointment or is failing, and how can the context and content of the course itself provide direction and insight?

KEY SYMBOLS

🌟 Exercises of utmost importance to complete (working either on your own or in a group)
💡 Optional exercises (strategies for gaining deeper insights into the issues)
❓ Exercises that provide further resources and information in your quest for understanding community problem solving and change
Reflection in Action

The Learning–Doing Relationship

PETER J. COLLIER AND DILA FRUZ R. WILLIAMS

I have realized that it is often difficult for people to explain why they believe a certain way. What I have been forced to do in the writing assignments is just that. This process of writing down my views and patterns of thinking took nearly every drop of energy I had.

IN THE PRECEDING CHAPTERS, we have encouraged you to complete a variety of reflection exercises on a range of topics from “What Is Citizenship?” to “How Am I in Groups? What, exactly, is the process of reflection? How can you as a student train yourself to reflect at deeper and deeper levels in order to maximize your learning and the ways that your learning can inform and impact your life?

Several service-learning researchers (www.compact.org/disciplines/reflection/index.html; Eyler, Giles & Schmiede, 1996) have identified the characteristics of successful reflection:

- **Continuous**: Reflection must take place before, during, and after the completion of the service project to be fully useful.
- **Challenging**: Effective reflection involves pushing ourselves out of our comfort zones to make new connections between concepts and to think in new ways.
- **Connected**: Successful reflection can serve as a bridge between the service experience and our discipline-based academic knowledge.
- **Contextualized**: Effective reflection is framed in a manner that is appropriate for the context in which the service experience takes place.

We’ve designed the activities in this book to engage you in reflection that is continuous, challenging, connected, and contextualized. In this chapter, we’ll take a closer look at the process of reflection and the necessary components of deep reflection.

**Why Reflect?**

Why is there so much emphasis on reflection in service-learning classes? Reflection serves as a bridge for the back-and-forth connecting between what you as a student learn in class and what you are experiencing in the community. Reflection, within the context of a service-learning class, helps you integrate what you have been absorbing through the course content with the community external to the college campus.

Engaging in reflective practices has been linked to other benefits for students. Mabry (1998) found that, for students in twenty-three different service-learning courses, those who participated in reflection exercises attributed more learning to the service experience than
students who participated in the service project but not in reflection exercises. Eyler and Giles (1999) also noted the positive impact that reflection had on academic outcomes for college students. Furthermore, researchers have found that written reflection about emotional events can serve to reduce anxiety and depression (Pennebaker, 1990; Bringle & Hatcher, 1999). In an experimental study in which students wrote for four consecutive days on either traumatic events or superficial topics, Pennebaker, Kiecolt-Glaser, and Glaser (1988) found that students who engaged in reflection on traumatic life events had more favorable immune system responses, less frequent health center visits, and higher reports of subjective well-being. These researchers found that the most important factor that distinguished persons showing health improvement from those who did not was a greater ability to include causal thinking, insights, and self-reflection in their stories. Taken together, research studies suggest that activities that promote personally and academically meaningful reflection on service-learning experiences may result in both intellectual and health-related benefits.

Connecting Reflection to Service-Learning

Psychologist Irwin Altman (1996) identified three distinct kinds of knowledge: content knowledge, which involves the rote learning of facts (for example, that the capital of the state of Oregon is Salem); process knowledge, or skills that involve learning how to do something (like how to search a library database); and socially relevant knowledge, which connects one’s personal perspective with content within particular social contexts (for example, how to effect social change through activism). Traditional teaching methods typically produce content and, sometimes, process knowledge. Service-learning, however, involves a kind of teaching and learning that promote both content and process knowledge, as well as developing socially relevant knowledge in students. The key to making this happen is reflection.

I was extremely myopic prior to this class. I had no concept of any of the issues facing today’s educator. Now I feel informed and knowledgeable and I believe that there ARE some contributions I can make to society. I know that my work as a teacher is not only to educate the particular class that I am working with at any given time, but to model excitement about learning and a real passion to be of use in the world.

Building upon ideas originally developed by the pragmatist philosopher John Dewey (1933), within the context of service-learning classes we define “reflection” as “a person’s intentional and systematic consideration of an experience, along with how that person and others are connected to that experience, framed in terms of particular course content and learning objectives.” Successful service-learning involves reflection—again, an “intentional and systematic consideration of an experience”—before, during, and after the actual service experience. Toole and Toole (2001) posited reflection as being a central feature of the Service-Learning Cycle. As you read about the stages of this cycle, think about how your service-learning experience and the reflection you have done throughout the experience fits into these stages. You might thumb through the previous chapters of this book to match the exercises you’ve already completed to the stages. Figure 6.1 illustrates the stages.

Pre-Service Reflection: Reflection plays a critical role in the initial steps of a service-learning project. Already, you have engaged in reflection on your own (and possibly as part of a group) as you identified your service-learning experience and planned for its accomplishment.

1. Identifying a project: You completed reflection exercises to increase awareness of important community issues in order to provide a useful frame for determining which community concern you would focus on and which specific project you would undertake.

2. Planning and preparation: You completed reflection exercises to try to imagine all the potential problems that could arise with the project as well as possible solutions to each problem that could serve as contingency plans for dealing with unexpected issues related to the project, thus aiding you in the planning and preparation processes.
Reflection during Service: Reflection will continue to be crucial for the success of your service-learning experience.

3. Meaningful Service Experiences: You will have opportunities for reflecting on how to connect course concepts and academic discipline knowledge with the service experience, along with your own personal reactions and insights.

4. Observation: During and immediately after the service experience, you will be guided to describe the project in its social context, as well as your personal reaction to being part of the service experience.

5. Analysis: Additional reflection assignments will help you go beyond description and reaction, to applying academic knowledge and course concepts as a means of better understanding the service experience.

Post-Service Reflection: Reflection will help you further your analysis of the current situation and make larger assessments of what you have accomplished.

6. New Understanding: You will complete reflection exercises that promote an increased sense of self-awareness about how your understanding of community issues has broadened and deepened as a result of the service-learning class.

7. New Application: Reflection exercises will encourage you to assess and evaluate the accomplishment of your learning and serving
goals and to review the lessons of your service experience with a “bird’s-eye view” perspective. These then will lead you to the identification of issues and/or social contexts where the lessons of your current service-learning experience can be applied to other community engagements to produce positive results.

Models of Reflection

As we noted earlier, reflection is the means by which your service experience is linked to learning and learning is manifested as meaning. John Dewey was one of the first thinkers to recognize the important role that reflection plays in learning. Dewey argued that reflection, or reflective thinking, is the key to whether any experience is “educative,” meaning that it involves learning (1933). Reflection connects the world of observations and facts with the world of ideas. For Dewey, reflective thinking is what moves a person from mindlessly drifting through life to connecting the current situation with past experiences and knowledge as a means of achieving a desired goal. That goal may be as fundamental as trying to make a more informed decision about whether and how to best offer your services to communities in the future.

Reflection, for Dewey, goes beyond experience. He believed that to really understand an experience, it is imperative to understand how you were connected to or affected by it. As you reflect upon your service-learning experiences, it is important that you place yourself in the middle of the process of connecting the current situation with past experiences and knowledge as a means of achieving a desired goal.

Kolb (1984) built upon the foundation of Dewey’s work on reflective thought in developing the Experiential Learning Model (figure 6.2). Experience is the cornerstone of this model, and learning is viewed as a process by which knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Kolb developed a cyclical model of experiential learning that involves a repeated pattern of “grasping” or comprehending an experience followed by “transforming” that experience into knowledge. This model provides us with a conceptual framework for understanding the organic process of learning through serving.

Figure 6.2. Kolb’s Experiential Learning Model

Adapted from Kolb (1984)
The stages of Kolb’s Experiential Learning Model can be explained using the example of Tina, a student engaging in a hunger awareness publicity campaign at her local food bank. As Tina first begins to spend time at the food bank, she realizes that this service experience is different and distinct from other school or everyday occurrences. In what Kolb calls the **concrete experience** stage of the model, Tina comprehends that this is something fundamentally different from anything she has ever experienced before. If we were to read Tina’s journal, she might write an entry like the following:

> I never imagined I could have an experience like this as part of a class. My time working at the food bank is drastically different from writing a term paper in another class or even just watching people shop at the food bank on the weekend.

Next, Tina enters the **reflective observation** stage of the model, as she begins to reflect upon her personal reactions to the concrete service experience.

> I’m getting more used to it now, but sometimes working at the food bank and seeing so many people come in day after day after day—many of whom look a whole lot like me and my friends and family—is pretty overwhelming. I always assumed that people who didn’t have enough to eat simply weren’t working hard enough to earn a living or were spending their money stupidly. That just doesn’t seem to fit the people I’m meeting.

The initial observation and description of the service experience has now been transformed into something that is personally relevant through the intentional process of reflection.

In the third stage of the model, **abstract conceptualization**, Tina ties in course-related and other previously acquired knowledge and theories to redescribe the service experience from a conceptual rather than a descriptive perspective. Tina might write,

> Based on the materials we studied in class on social inequalities and political issues within our state, my service experience at the food bank is more than just a field trip; it is an opportunity to examine firsthand how what appears to be an individual social issue—for example, hunger—is really the result of societal-level structural inequalities. To think that individual people going hungry in my state is connected to political decisions that have adversely affected independent farmers in our region—frankly, I never understood or really cared about that before.

Finally, during the **active experimentation** stage, Tina uses her new understanding of the service experience developed during the abstract conceptualization stage to stimulate an application of her new understanding of this situation within the context of a set of options for her personal choices in the world.

> If hunger in our state is better understood as being caused by societal, rather than individual-level factors, can this same perspective provide me with insights into understanding other problems, such as homelessness and illiteracy? What are the connections between these issues? How might I make sense of these things too?

This experimentation in new settings leads the student back to the beginning of the model—a new concrete experience—and the cycle begins again.

The different aspects of the learning process that make up the four stages of Kolb’s model have also been linked to four different learning styles. Each learning style is defined by the stages of the learning process that immediately precede and follow it, and each represents a different set of skills that a student may acquire.

Before we go on, let’s take a minute and revisit the “Marshmallows and Spaghetti” exercise from chapter 4 (exercise 4.3, on page 47). As you recall, in this exercise each group received a package of spaghetti and a bag of marshmallows. The goal of the exercise was for the group to build the tallest tower possible out of the marshmallows and spaghetti. Now we will illustrate the different learning styles associated with Kolb’s model by linking them to the different roles team members may have played in the exercise. (If you didn’t complete this exercise, try to imagine what type of learning style most resembles yours.)

**Diverger:** Kolb describes this learning style as emphasizing **concrete experience** and **reflective observation**. A diverger’s strengths include imaginative ability and awareness of the meaning of a situation. A diverger is capable of viewing a problem from a variety of per-
Exercise 6.1: Reflecting on Community Partnerships Using Kolb’s Experiential Learning Model

The following reflection exercise uses the stages of Kolb’s Model to frame your service-learning experience and help you better understand your interactions with your community partner.

Concrete Experience: Typically, in service-learning classes, the kinds of community partnerships that you experience will involve multiple constituencies—your university, local government and nonprofit agencies, citizen groups, and students. First, think about a situation from your current service-learning class involving other “players” from your community partnership. Next, describe an interaction between yourself and at least one other player from that partnership. As you describe the interaction, make sure to include what you observed, what you and others said, and any nonverbal behaviors that you noted. Try to reserve judgment and be as neutral in your description as possible.

Reflective Observation: How do you feel when you reflect upon the interaction you described? Did the interaction turn out the way you expected it to? If not, what was different? What do you think the community partner expected from the interaction? Reflect upon the assumptions you brought with you about the other people in this relationship before this interaction occurred. What assumptions do you think the community partner had about you?

Abstract Conceptualization: Using materials from this service-learning course and knowledge gained from your academic major, how would you explain the nature of this community partnership? What concepts or theoretical models might help explain both the outcomes of this interaction, as well as the underlying processes? Specifically consider the following:

- What influence does culture have on this interaction?
- What influence does power have on this interaction?
- How does your understanding of service impact this interaction?

Active Experimentation: How have your plans for relating to future community partners changed as the result of your current service-learning experience? Has the experience changed your personal understanding of “service”? If so, how? How will your current understanding of “culture” and “power” impact your interactions with community partners in the future? What would you do differently next time?

Diverger: The learning style might be very active early in the process, coming up with multiple ways that the team could approach the problem—for example, the team could stack marshmallows on top of each other like a tower, or it could connect pairs of marshmallows like tinker toys using a piece of spaghetti, or it could build a pyramid by constructing a wide base of marshmallows supporting vertical pieces of spaghetti that would support a smaller second story platform of marshmallows with more vertical pieces of spaghetti that finally reach a point. Divers tend to excel in situations that call for brainstorming and the development of alternative ideas and strategies. Divers possess good data-gathering skills, tend to be sensitive, and are interested in people.

Assimilator: The emphasis in this learning style is on reflective observation and abstract conceptualization. An assimilator is very comfortable using inductive logic, in which one works from observations to make theory. In the exercise, a student who favors an assimilator learning style might take a more active role in determining personal perspectives and then organizing these multiple views into a meaningful description of what’s going on. In the exercise, a student who favors a diverger learning style might be very active early in the process, coming up with multiple ways that the team could approach the problem—for example, the team could stack marshmallows on top of each other like a tower, or it could connect pairs of marshmallows like tinker toys using a piece of spaghetti, or it could build a pyramid by constructing a wide base of marshmallows supporting vertical pieces of spaghetti that would support a smaller second story platform of marshmallows with more vertical pieces of spaghetti that finally reach a point. Divers tend to excel in situations that call for brainstorming and the development of alternative ideas and strategies. Divers possess good data-gathering skills, tend to be sensitive, and are interested in people.

Assimilator: The emphasis in this learning style is on reflective observation and abstract conceptualization. An assimilator is very comfortable using inductive logic, in which one works from observations to make theory. In the exercise, a student who favors an assimilator learning style might take a more active role in determining.
The emphasis in this learning style is abstract conceptualization and active experimentation. The accommodator might declare that the pyramid structure is the most architecturally sound and therefore should provide the team with the best chance of creating the tallest structure. Assimilators are particularly valuable in situations that call for the development and creation of theoretical models. Assimilators tend to be more interested in ideas for their own sake than the application of those ideas to practical situations.

Converger: The emphasis in this learning style is on abstract conceptualization and active experimentation. A converger’s strengths include the abilities to problem-solve and make decisions and the willingness to search for the practical uses of ideas and theories. In the exercise, a student who favors a converger learning style might focus on the question, “What is the best way to put a pyramid together?” and would be actively involved in construction decisions with the project. The converger will wonder if it will provide more support to use two pieces of spaghetti rather than one to connect the marshmallows on the larger base level to the marshmallows on the smaller second story. A student favoring this learning style tends to perform well in situations where there is a single correct answer and the group task is to identify the “best” solution for a particular problem. Convergers are comfortable using deductive logic, in which they use theory to explain real-life occurrences; they prefer dealing with technical tasks and problems rather than social or interpersonal issues.

Accommodator: The emphasis in this learning style is on active experimentation and concrete experience. An accommodator’s strengths lie in doing things, carrying out plans, and getting involved in new experiences. A student favoring this learning style will do well in situations that require a willingness to adapt to circumstances in order to successfully complete a task. In the exercise, a student who favors an accommodator learning style might become active only at a late stage of the actual building process as the exercise time limit is approaching and the team is struggling to make the pyramid design stay together. The accommodator might help modify the pyramid by putting in additional stability supports to prop up the structure so that, while it no longer looks like a pyramid, it is fairly tall and stays together until the assignment is “judged” by the instructor. Accommodators learn best from hands-on experiences. These individuals are pragmatists—concerned with what works—and are willing to throw away a theory if it means a better way can be found to address a problem. Accommodators tend to rely on people much more than on analysis, but are sometimes perceived by others as pushy because of their focus on getting things done.

We should note that, while Kolb recognizes that individuals typically prefer one learning style over others, he also proposes that, to achieve real learning, students should develop some competence with all four styles. In most traditional learning experiences (such as lecture-format classes), students with assimilator and converger learning styles—styles that emphasize “thinking” activities—seem to be most comfortable. Interestingly, one of the strengths of service-learning classes is that they provide students preferring accommodator and diverger styles—styles that emphasize “doing” activities—with a more compatible learning environment. Kolb maintains that experiential learning involves both “thinking” and “doing,” and, regardless of where you “start” (in terms of your preferred learning style) and which teaching approach is used (such as experiential activities in community collaboration), it is imperative that you visit all the stages in the cycle in order to fully integrate the learning experience.

Deep Reflection

You may already have had many course experiences in which you have been asked to reflect. Many instructors assign journals, for example, as a tool for students to record their thoughts and feelings about what they are learning or to write less formally about various subjects. Effective reflection in service-learning classes, however, needs to go deeper than most traditional notions of reflection, beyond a surface description to what anthropologists call a “thick” description (Geertz, 1973). **Thick descriptions** capture the richness of detail in what is observed, as well as the personal connection between the individual and the experience. We propose that deep reflection in service-learning experiences is composed of three components: *observation, personal relevance, and connection.* To practice deep reflection, you will need to pay attention to all three elements; no one component alone or pair of components is sufficient to connect “thinking” with “doing” in the service experience.
In eighteen years of schooling, I have never really questioned events around me, how I fit in, and how those events affect the way I fit in, until now. Now it seems like that is the major work of this course: to make connections, to understand how one thing is related to another, and how I am related to all of it. The following descriptions offer ideas for how to practice reflection that is deep and thick. The students represented here were part of a service project to weatherize the homes of low-income and elderly residents. In the quotes that follow the descriptions, listen to how the students have articulated their own deep reflection:

**Observation:** Describe what you experienced: the setting, the community agencies, and the individuals with whom you interacted:

First off, I found it weird to winterize at the beginning of summer. Our class is meeting during the hottest time of the day, so it can be pretty brutal to be stuck in some attic feeding insulation into the wall. And it takes a good long while, too. But I guess with 200 homes to weatherize a year, the Community Energy Project must spread out the projects throughout the year in order to finish them. Yesterday we helped an elderly woman in a trailer park in Northeast. She and a friend of hers went on and on about how fortunate she was to have these services for free and how we were a wonderful gift.

**Personal relevance:** Connect the service experiences to your own reactions and responses. How did you feel? Use “I” statements when talking about your feelings:

It was great for me to see the elderly woman’s appreciation for our team and to have her say such nice things to us. I think she appreciated having young people around for a while. I realized that until I volunteered my time with the Community Energy Project, I didn’t really have an understanding of what it feels like to make a difference in somebody’s life, so that’s good. But to be completely honest, as good as it was to have somebody appreciate our work, I just wanted to get out of there, to cool off and take a shower, and get back to my familiar life. I know I’ll be ready to do some more houses next week, but for now I need some time to think about things.

**Connection:** Frame your observations and personal reactions in a context provided by relevant course readings, research, or other materials. How does the content of this service-learning class provide an inter-
In this class we've been reading about the qualities of effective leadership. I never knew that many, if not most, of the most skilled leaders have made a dedicated commitment to volunteering at some point in their lives. I never thought that there might be particular things I can learn through sacrificing my own time to benefit others, and that this could benefit me in the future. I have been forced to do volunteer work for other leadership classes, but I never truly understood why. Now I know it's because it brings out our true leadership skills. It makes us learn to work with others to accomplish the same goals, and it helps us to be learn how to be less selfish, which is a very important characteristic of leadership.

This class has exposed me to concepts that were not previously evident in my educational experience. They may have been present, but through ignorance, not caring, or whatever, I was not aware of them. Although my awareness of the issues presented in this class has developed over the years, never have I personally grown and become more aware of these issues than in the last eleven weeks. At times that growth has been exciting, at times frustrating and agonizing. This class has inserted so many questions into my mind.

As in the case of the student quoted above, deepening our reflective capacities tends to leave us with even more questions than we had when we began reflecting. If we remember back to the whole purpose behind reflection—to offer us a tool for making meaning of our experiences so that we may recognize and use the learning those experiences promise—and to the work of Dewey and Kolb, this is as it should be. In other words, the whole point of reflection is to lead us into an informed understanding of ourselves, others, and the world in which we are all called to participate as lifelong learners and doers.

We encourage you to discover your own best setting and environment for reflection and to develop your own best practices of reflection. Here is a list of tips, offered by student service-learners, to help guide your reflective engagement:

**Tips for Successful Reflection Experiences**

- Seek out quiet moments. Talking—and being talked to—can be distracting.
- Be attentive to and mindful of the present moment.

### Exercise 6.3: Reflecting on Reflection

Take a moment and return to Exercise 4.9: “How Am I in This Group?” on page 64. Look at both the reflection questions and your responses. This exercise walked you through all the elements of what we call “deep reflection.” The first two questions asked you to describe the situation that you participated in: “What task roles did you play? What maintenance roles did you play?” The third question asked you to go beyond a description of the group activity and connect yourself to the experiences: “Think about why you did not act in a certain situation.” Finally, the last question asked you to connect this experience with what you had already learned about group roles: “In a future group experience, which roles would you play and why?”

Reread your responses. Based on your experience since you first completed this activity, is there anything you might now add? What new insights have you gained in the past few weeks of this course? How did completing this reflection help you to achieve a deeper understanding of your relationship to teamwork than you might have experienced without it?
• Practice acute observation. Work to decipher the clues in the world around you.
• Figure out what matters most for the task being considered.
• Make a conscious effort to focus on the experience you’re reflecting on.
• Permit yourself to feel emotional.
• Go beyond your “self” and your personal perspective.
• Use the lens of your past experiences to make links to the present.
• Recognize—and think about—the tension between being attached and involved and then stepping back to gain a detached perspective of the situation.

Modes of Reflection

Now that you have read more about the reasons you are asked to reflect in service-learning courses and the ways that you may direct yourself as a reflective thinker, we offer ideas for different modes of reflection. Your professor may have already selected the type of reflection activities you will complete. If not, discuss with him or her the various options. The activities may also be used alone as you process your learning-through-serving experience. Figure 6.3 identifies four primary modes of reflection—telling, activities, multimedia, and writing—along with a few representative examples of each type.

Because each type of reflection exercise has different strengths, the decision about which mode of reflection to use should be based on two major factors:

• What is the context of your current class?
Perhaps your instructor has very deliberately structured and assigned reflective activities for you and your classmates based on her expertise and experience with service-learning courses. Even if the benefits of completing the reflective assignment in the way she has indicated are not apparent to you, follow her guidelines. In fact, you might deepen your own reflection on the assignment by investigating your ideas about why the instructor chose to frame the assignment in the way she did. What impact does this framing have on you? What did you learn as a result of completing this reflection in this way? How might you use this particular reflective assignment to understand your experience more fully? What questions do you now have as a result of having completed this reflection?

Figure 6.3. Modes of Reflection
• **What is the best means for telling the story of your service experience?** Whether or not your instructor has assigned reflective activities for you and your classmates, you may choose to practice reflection both formally and informally beyond the scope of those assignments. In creating your own reflective opportunities, you may experience greater freedom in using new and different modes of reflection than you have in past courses. Sometimes photos, drawings, collages, or videos may capture the essence of a service experience with much greater clarity than written words. Remember, whatever form your service-learning reflection takes, the underlying elements of deep reflection—observation, personal relevance, and connection—need to be present.

**Telling**

Reporting our insights orally to others is a great way to deepen our understanding of those insights. Storytelling remains one of the most important ways that humans transmit information to each other. The benefits of storytelling, however, don’t only apply to those listening to the story; the teller, too, has his or her understanding enhanced through the act of communicating it to others.

In a formal way, oral presentations can offer several advantages in service-learning courses: providing students with opportunities to practice their public speaking skills, allowing the use of nonverbal behaviors to reinforce an emotional message, and providing the starting point for dialogue between different stakeholders in the service project. Other less formal examples of “telling” reflection activities can include talking casually about the service experience with classmates or with others outside the service-learning experience.

**Activities**

Activities, projects, and other forms of “reflection through action” can also offer some specific advantages in meaning-making. Often, these sorts of exercises speak to a variety of learning styles, help to develop groups, and allow forward momentum to be built into the project.

If you are interested in exploring these experiential ways of reflecting, you might choose to spend time, on your own, in the environments experienced by the persons you are serving. For example, if you are tutoring refugees in basic English-language skills, you might spend a day attempting to read a newspaper or follow directions in a language you do not know. If you are writing grant proposals for a camp for stroke survivors and their families, you might spend time living as if you had limited use of language or movement. If you choose to reflect in this very experiential way on your role as a service-learner, remember chapter 5 and the importance of behaving and interacting with integrity around the differences between you and those your service impacts.

**Multimedia**

Collages, drawings, photo or video essays, and other forms of multimedia reflection offer additional advantages for the reflector through incorporating multiple learning styles, serving as excellent tools for capturing subtle emotional truths, and providing great opportunities for creative expression. If you choose to explore multimedia reflection, you might collect objects from your service site to create a visual representation of your community-based experience. (Be careful about the use of confidential materials, making sure to get permission before collecting any items.) Consider writing a piece of music to capture the essence of your service to the community. You might also paint a picture that captures the community-based experience or that expresses your vision of how the community will be changed for the better by your collaborative efforts.
LEARNING THROUGH SERVING

Writing
For many students in service-learning projects, the predominant form that their reflection takes is written. Written reflection techniques offer several unique advantages compared to other modes: They provide an opportunity to practice and refine writing skills, challenge us to organize our thoughts in order to make coherent arguments, and generate a permanent record of the service experiences that can be used as part of future learning activities.

Written reflection can take a variety of forms, including directed assignments, in which a writer responds to topics framed by an instructor; portfolios, in which a student compiles multiple pieces of evidence to demonstrate what he or she has learned; and journals, which might track the evolution of thought throughout a period of time. In this service-learning course, your instructor very likely has assigned you written reflections. In addition to these assignments, you might choose to engage in self-directed writing activities to fully mine the depth of your community-based experience.

While journals can take a variety of forms, certain types have distinctive characteristics and focus. For example, the “Newsflash” exercise above is a directed writing assignment and may be thought of as a structured journal, a format that most closely resembles a series of directed writing assignments. In assigning a structured journal, your course instructor or campus service-learning coordinator will provide you with topics or key questions to focus each specific assignment and may leave room on each journal page for her feedback.

A critical incident journal takes a completely different approach. Instead of the instructor telling you what the important topics are to reflect upon, you, the student, are asked to identify a “pivot” or “turning point” in your own service-learning experience. Reflection is focused on this key situation or event in which a decision was made, a conflict occurred, or a problem was resolved. This can help to focus your attention on the idea that not all events have equal significance in realizing the goals of a service-learning project and encourage you to identify those particularly meaningful events.

A role-taking, or shift-in-perspective, journal differs from either of the previous types because, even though you are writing in the journal, you are asked to take on the perspective of some other participant in the service experience. Instead of asking you to reflect on the meaning of the class service experience to you, this format encourages you to reflect upon key questions and aspects of the community issue being addressed from a different perspective—for example, community members or the director of the community agency you are partnering with—rather than as students. Such perspective taking can enhance compassion and acceptance of others.

Finally, a triple-entry journal is a format that works very well for promoting “deep reflection.” In it, you will reflect upon three distinct issues in each journal entry by (a) describing what happened during your service experience, including what was accomplished as well as things that puzzled you (observation); (b) analyzing how aspects of course content apply to the service experience and how these theories and concepts help you understand what occurred (connection); and (c) applying the course materials and the service experience to your own life, particularly with regard to how you will approach similar experiences in the future (personal relevance).

Why Reflect? Revisited
We reflect to understand where we have been, what we have experienced, and where we go from here. In this chapter, we went beyond a mere definition of “reflection” to investigate its theoretical underpinnings and underlying processes. You have learned why reflection may be especially important for community-based learners and have investigated multiple modes for practicing reflection. You have expanded (and will continue to expand) your reflective capacities by starting with the activities assigned by your instructor and developing a more fully self-directed and continuous commitment to practice reflection on your own.

While most reflection techniques focus on the
positive outcomes of service experiences, others, such as the critical incident journal, draw attention to the fact that learning through reflection can occur even "when things go wrong" in a service-learning class. Chapter 7, "Failure with the Best of Intentions: When Things Go Wrong," explores the issue of dealing with unexpected challenges in the community setting in greater detail.

### Exercise 6.4: Triple-Entry Journal

Use the format from the sample triple entry journal (appendix 6.1, p. 97) to reflect upon your next several experiences at your service project site. Make at least two complete entries during the course of the week, preferably directly after a meaningful interaction or event. At the end of the week, go back and reread your entries. Do they accurately capture what you experienced? How do these entries compare with your previous journaling efforts?

### Key Concepts

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<th>Service-Learning Cycle</th>
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### Key Issues

- How does reflection promote learning?
- How do differences in learning styles affect learning?
- What is necessary to turn simple description into deep reflection?
- What are the strengths of different modes of reflection?

### Additional Exercises

#### Exercise 6.5: Telling the Tale

Pair up with another classmate who was not part of your team in “Marshmallows and Spaghetti.” In two minutes, tell your classmate the story of your experiences building the marshmallow and spaghetti structure. In the next two minutes, answer any questions your classmate has about the story you just told.

Reverse roles. Repeat the process, with your classmate now telling you about her experiences.

For a final two minutes, discuss together how having to respond to questions about your story affected your own understanding of the experience.
Exercise 6.6: Showtime

Have each team from “Marshmallows and Spaghetti” sit down together for fifteen minutes to develop a five-minute skit about the group’s experiences building the tower. Everyone on the team must have a role in the skit, and everyone must play another person.

When it is your team’s turn, present your skit to the rest of the class. How is your own understanding of your experience affected by taking on another student’s role? How is your understanding affected by observing other teams’ skits? What insights have you gained by watching this reenactment of the activity?

Exercise 6.7: Every Picture Tells a Story

Along with the other members of your team from the Marshmallows and Spaghetti exercise, gather magazine and newspaper photos, cartoons, advertisements, pieces of text, and even your own drawings that relate to your group’s experience completing this building exercise. Put together a group collage on a large piece of poster board. When presenting the collage to your class, have each member of the team explain how at least one section of collage relates to his or her personal experience with this group project. How does the group’s reflection on building the marshmallow and spaghetti structure, as shown in the collage, relate to your own understanding of your experience? Did the experience of making the collage itself reinforce any of the group’s dynamics from “Marshmallows and Spaghetti”? If so, how?

Exercise 6.8: Newsflash

Imagine that you are a newspaper reporter assigned to write a “human interest” article on your team’s experiences completing the “Marshmallows and Spaghetti” exercise. First, come up with a headline for your story. Next, follow the steps of basic journalism as you answer the following questions: Who? What? When? Where? With what results? Finally, pretend that you, the reporter, are interviewing you, the student, and answer two final questions: “What did you learn from this experience?” and “How does this relate to the other material you’ve learned in this course?”

After asking yourself these questions, write that newspaper article. What new insights have you gained about your participation in this activity after interviewing yourself and crafting a news piece from that interview?

Exercise 6.9: Reflecting on Reflection, Revisited

Take a moment and reflect on the process of reflection. From your own personal experiences as a reflective thinker, what, if any, are the benefits of reflection? How do you feel when you reflect upon your service-learning experience? How do you feel when you are able to connect course concepts with what has occurred at your service-learning project site? Which do you think is more important—“doing” the service project or being able to make the connection among course concepts, your personal values, and the service experience? Explain your position.
Appendix 6.1: Triple-Entry Journal

Section 1: Describe the situation.

Section 2: Connect course materials to the described situation.

Section 3: How does the combination of class materials and the service experience relate to your personal life and how you might approach similar situations in the future?
Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;
Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.
I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Robert Frost, “The Road Not Taken”

W e can all relate to the experience of looking back over a long-term project that started with enthusiasm and vision but ended with discouragement, anger, resentment, and despair. It happens to everyone from time to time. When you engage in a community-based project and begin to work with various others, including faculty, students, and community partners, it is not unlike embarking on an unfamiliar road, to which you bring a unique set of skills, strengths, and prior experiences. Some of those prior experiences include situations that went relatively smoothly, some that may have been wildly successful, and others that were not productive. Perhaps some were downright dismal. Consider the following case study in light of previous experiences you may have had with successful (and not so successful) group project work.

Roadblocks and Flat Tires: A Case Study

When entering any collaborative experience, it is necessary (and useful) to spend focused time reviewing what has and has not contributed to success and failure in previous settings. Even if this is your first learning-through-serving course, you bring a wealth of firsthand experience relating to other human beings in a variety of contexts. When you view those experiences—the great, the good, the bad, and the ugly—with “fresh eyes,” your perspective is enhanced and your ability to respond flexibly and creatively expands as well. You may have much more to contribute to the success of this project or course than you ever imagined.

Service-learning is often a journey into uncharted territory. Even with meticulous planning, carefully outlined expectations, and outstanding effort on
“Not again,” thought Darrell. “Not another problem with this class! When were we supposed to meet with the community partners—ten minutes from now?” And here he was, backed up in traffic behind a construction roadblock. The last meeting had been canceled because one of the partners had a flat tire, and the time before that, a problem at the community organization, and the time before that, midterms, and the time before that . . . When would they ever get together all in one place? “Without a doubt,” thought Darrell, “if this weren't a class involving grades, we'd have all given it up by now.”

As traffic slowed to a complete stop, he sighed, leaned back in the driver’s seat, and thought back over the sequence of events of the past several weeks. In the beginning, he recalled, everyone had seemed excited about the work they were doing. The subject matter was interesting, there weren't any tests, there was a lot of hands-on experience working in the community and the chance to do something that real people could benefit from. How many times in school did that happen?

Then, practically overnight, it all seemed to go downhill. The first time Darrell knew something was wrong was when things got heated in his project group. That was the day he and Chun got into it over what the community partners needed. What did they need? Everyone seemed to have a different idea.

"Why don't you ask the partners these questions?" Dr. Davis, their professor, had responded. A good idea, if they would call back. One week, two weeks passed with no response. Then Chun got nervous and began to work on her idea with two others in the group, which further annoyed Darrell. Why was she so closed-minded? Darrell chose not to involve himself. Why should he? No one asked his opinion.

Finally, someone from the community organization left a message with Darrell that the volunteer coordinators had both resigned and that a new interim person would be assigned to work with them shortly. “Now what?” everyone seemed to be wondering. Dr. Davis had given a good pep talk, Darrell remembered. He reminded them how much they were needed at a time like this. The class remained focused on the course material while they waited for further communication, but it felt like the wind had gone out of their sails. The interim coordinator agreed to meet with the students in class, but she seemed overwhelmed and not sure which direction to take. The next day she called back: “I have a project for you to do,” she announced excitedly. By then, Chun’s group and one other faction had devoted a lot of time outside of class to other ideas and were less than excited about jumping in a new direction. Darrell recalled that he had tried the role of peacemaker. “Why don't we just give her idea a chance?” he had wondered out loud to several students before class.

Jay, a student in the “Chun Fan Club,” as Darrell liked to call them, reacted angrily. “You've just sat around, waiting for something to happen and letting us do all the work! Why should you have the right to tell us what to do now?”

After that, Darrell thought, it went from bad to worse. Dr. Davis had arranged for a lengthy discussion with the new volunteer coordinator, reminding the students that they should begin by listening to her ideas and working from there. The session appeared to go okay; to Darrell, at least, it seemed like everyone had listened and been open to the coordinator's ideas. At the community site, however, there had been conflicts over how to begin the project. Some students thought they should take the lead on the specifics of the project, since they had already volunteered for several weeks whereas the new volunteer coordinator had only just arrived. Not surprisingly, she reacted defensively. “It’s the professor’s job to teach the class, it’s the students’ job to volunteer, and it’s my job to supervise the volunteers,” she responded when two students approached her with concerns about her directions. “You need to do what the community organi-
everyone’s part, things can go wrong. The good news is that we can prepare ourselves for and avoid many of the “roadblocks and flat tires” along the way. This preparation occurs in several steps. First, we encourage you to explore some prior experiences in collaborative contexts while considering how those experiences have been framed and defined in terms of “success” or “failure.” Second, we will look at common roadblocks in the service-learning journey. Third, you will have a chance to consider alternative response strategies for negotiating unexpected events and circumstances. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of community-based learning in retrospect, focusing on framing and learning from various experiences at the “end of the road.”

Choosing Directions: The Meaning of “Failure” in Service-Learning

Let’s be honest—the term “failure” doesn’t exactly conjure up the most pleasant mental associations. It may bring to mind visions of a scrawled red “F” on the side of a term paper or exam or the unpleasant group experience you would rather not think about. One of the ways to prepare for these and other potential problems is to understand the dynamics of failure in the context of service-learning. As you read through the following list of typical “failures” in community service contexts, remember that these dynamics do not by themselves cause failure; instead, the challenge of how you react to them may result in perceptions that some aspect of the course has failed (or failed to meet initial expectations). Therefore, when those involved can focus on the underlying dynamic of those events as well as the perceptions of events, the progression to learning from and responding to those events can become clearer. It is important that you frame your experience as opportunities to “learn from” and “respond to” these situations. The intervening variable or event may be out of your control, but how you respond to it is within your control. You have the power to impact the outcome of the entire learning-through-serving experience, influencing your community partners and your classmates through your choices.

Exercise 7.1: Roadblocks and Flat Tires Reflection

- What do you imagine will happen next in this situation?
- What factors may have contributed to the difficulties faced by the students and community partners?
- What might have prevented or minimized the difficulties in this situation?
Some common and familiar dynamics of service-learning failures include the following:

- **Difficulty anticipating the unknown (ambiguity).** Typical “unknowns” in service-learning experiences are (1) reactions of community members to your presence in their lives, (2) what exactly you will discover in long-term research projects for community partners, (3) how your work will be received by stakeholders, and (4) how you will learn the skills you need for the community service project. People react differently to ambiguity in their lives, and the same is true for reactions to unknowns in community-based learning. For example, in the case study at the beginning of this chapter, Darrell preferred a “wait-and-see” approach while Chun and Jay responded by developing their own plans for the project.

- **Responsibility to community need (responsibilities).** In chapter 1, the complementary but competing forces of freedom and responsibility were discussed in relation to the development of educated citizens. A feeling of responsibility to those with whom you work as part of your community experience may at times appear to conflict with your own personal beliefs or competing commitments. As you expand your awareness of the complexity of community needs, you may feel overwhelmed or concerned about whether you are truly making a difference or “doing enough.”

- **Reliance on others whom you do not know well (trust).** Reliance on others for assistance, expertise, direction, and support takes a great deal of effort and goodwill. Trust is an issue throughout the stages and phases of collaborative group effort.

- **Conflicts with students and/or community (controversy with civility).** Remember the “Visionary Skeptics” and “Mudslingers” from chapter 4? Which group had more conflict? Although the conflict exhibited throughout the Mudslingers’ process is no doubt more memorable, the answer is that neither group had more conflict. The type of conflict certainly differed between the two groups, as well as the response strategies used by individual participants in each group. In this chapter we will extend the discussion on the storming phase of group development to include ideas for positive individual orientation toward conflict, as well as strategies for engaging in constructive, rather than destructive, conflict.

- **Flexibility in the face of rapidly changing conditions (adaptability).** Just as people react in various ways to ambiguity, they may also respond differently to circumstances in which plans have to be cancelled, assumptions are challenged, and goals must be revised. According to Schon (1987), flexibility and acceptance of uncertainty are two key characteristics associated with the ability to think creatively in problematic situations. Even if you generally describe yourself as “laid back” when it comes to last-minute changes, there are other factors in service-learning that can impact creative problem solving. For example, you or your classmates may wonder if your grades will be impacted by changes in the partnership or project goals. You or your classmates—not to mention your professor and the community partner—may experience stress, as multiple constituents with competing commitments and busy lives attempt to “re-group” and invest time and energy responding to unplanned events.

- **Unexamined assumptions about the role of failure and success (redefining success).** When we characterize a situation or event as having been a “success” or “failure,” what do we mean? Unless we answer this important question, we may equate our framing of events as “failures” or “successes,” closing off the possibility for alternative interpretations of events. Articulating individual and group meanings for the experience of success and failure sets the tone for productive communication and creative problem solving.

In this section, we have explored the underlying dynamics commonly related to perceptions of success and failure in service-learning environments. It is often the case that more than one dynamic operates simultaneously, making the task of responding flexibly and creatively more challenging. Have you ever en-
countered a situation in which it felt as if no mutually agreed-upon solution could be found, as though you were surrounded by “Road Closed—No Detour” signs? Next, we will discuss common roadblocks you may face in service-learning experiences and offer practical suggestions for framing and responding productively to those events that initially seem insurmountable.

Checking the Map: Common Roadblocks

Conflicting Expectations: Faculty, Community Partner, Students

There are countless reasons why expectations differ in a community-based learning experience. For example, students may be expecting a direct-service experience or an internship, when a project-based experience is

Exercise 7.2: Exploring Success and Failure

Completing this activity will help you see how you have evaluated and “framed” your past experiences. What you learn will help you “re-frame” your current and future learning and serving experiences.

1. Think of an experience in college where everything “came together,” when you said to yourself, “This is what I really enjoy about being a student.” Now think about a time where there was a problem or an unsuccessful experience. Write a few brief notes about those two experiences. Be as specific as possible. What made these two experiences satisfying or unsatisfying?

2. If possible, discuss your responses with one or two other students. Try to derive at least one general statement that seems to sum up your responses. For example: “Successful experiences made us want to continue; unsuccessful experiences made us stop and reevaluate things.”

3. Compare your statement to the following quotes about failure:

   Sometimes a person has to go a very long distance out of [the] way to come back a short distance correctly. (Albee, 1960)

   Failure after long perseverance is much grander than never to have a striving good enough to be called a failure. (Eliot, 1986)

   I have learned that success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which [one] has overcome while trying to succeed. (Washington, 1901)

4. What similarities and differences do you see between your general statements from number 2 and the quotes above?

5. What does “failure” mean to you? What does “success” mean to you? Make a list of those meanings either on your own or in your group.

6. Very often, multiple and conflicting meanings for failure and success exist side by side. For example, failure may be described as “uncomfortable” and “a possibility for growth” simultaneously. Try to complete the following two sentences:

   In what ways does this course allow for success and failure? (For example, the community partners understand that we’re all learning as we go; the course syllabus does not state “You will be graded down for mistakes,” etc.)

   How will you respond to failure? (For example, be open about it, be accepting of others’ errors, set aside time to problem-solve, etc.)

   How will you respond to failure? (For example, be open about it, be accepting of others’ errors, set aside time to problem-solve, etc.)
planned, or vice versa. Community partners may assume that students will carry out their work independently, while students expect more input or supervision from the community partner. Faculty and community partners may discover that they have differing ideas about one or more aspects of the service portion of the course. If you have read and completed the exercises found thus far in this book, you have created a strong foundation for clarifying your own and others’ expectations. However, as you proceed with the course and your community service, you will find that clarifying expectations and assessing progress toward intended goals is fundamental to success. Repeated clarification of expectations will serve to help your group progress and to deepen your personal understanding and commitment to the group, the project, and the community partner. As long as you are interacting with others, you will always be interpreting layers of meanings, some of which will be closer (or further away) from what others intended. Moreover, you need to be vigilant against social loafing, missing deadlines, and not fulfilling promises.

As Edelman and Crain (1993) remind us, “Everything we see and hear is processed through the filter of our own personal history and our own perceptions of a situation” (p. 63). We often assume that we are understood by others until future actions prove that—surprise!—our message was filtered, often inaccurately, in surprising ways. Given the complex nature of communication, Edelman and Crain suggest that team members accept misunderstanding, rather than understanding, as the norm in human interactions. In other words, problems are normal.

When you approach interactions assuming that you’re likely to be misunderstood rather than understood, you need not be surprised or embarrassed or waste time trying to get at the truth of “who misunderstood.” Blaming or identifying who is in error is not a productive part of this process. Instead, accept misunderstanding as inevitable and focus your energies on clarifying expectations and group communication practices for the future. As an additional bonus, this state of mind leads to a more habitual practice of effective listening strategies.

**Changes in the Community Partnership**

In the case study at the beginning of this chapter, the students were caught off guard by a change in staffing at the community organization in which they were preparing to work. There are several types of changes that potentially impact the partnership:

**Staff Change:** Many service-learning courses are associated with agencies in which there is great need for assistance. As a result, there may be change in staffing that occurs during any community partnership. As a result of these changes, community organization staff may be reorganized. Though these staff changes are in no way directly related to the student actions or project, students may feel abandoned or somehow personally offended by staff changes. There may be external pressures or other organizational realities of which you are not aware. If you experience a staff change at some point in your course, you can do many things individually or as a team to make the transition go more smoothly for everyone involved.

If you do experience a staff change at some point in your course, Exercise 7.5: Responding to Staff Changes on page 110 can help to make the transition go more smoothly for everyone involved.

**Infrastructure Changes:** In addition to staffing changes, infrastructure and administrative changes can impact community-service activities. Examples of these changes include revisions to organizational procedures and policies, job descriptions, and hours available for volunteering, among others. Infrastructure changes are often made for specific reasons but may also have unintended consequences. If unintended consequences impact you, you can address this by communicating honestly, openly, and constructively.

First, immediately discuss the situation with the appropriate person (instructor, students, and/or community partners. Another good source may be your college’s community service or volunteer office for some advice on how to handle the situation.) Let’s say that you are serving at a community organization where a decision has been made to cut back on volunteer hours. You are very upset by this, because you feel that the volunteers were not consulted and that the decision shows
very little regard for your (and other volunteers') perspectives. You could ask,

Why were the hours cut back so much? Do volunteers really matter around here or don't they? Don't you know we have families and jobs outside of this place, in addition to school?

Alternatively, you might say,

Since volunteer hours have been restricted to Tuesday and Thursday, I'm only able to be here for part of the hours that the clients are actually here, since I have to go to work on Thursday afternoons. I really want to be able to keep supporting the community organization and continue interacting directly with clients. What suggestions do you have in this situation?

The second response is more specific, speaks from the student's perspective, does not assume that the community organization was automatically aware of unintended consequences, shows goodwill, and invites others to collaborate in generating a solution. Most likely, the person in the organization will not feel defensive or attacked. Remember, a result of making the comment should not be, “These volunteers are more hassle than they are worth,” but, rather, “I'd like to address these volunteers' issues so that they can continue to contribute to the organization.”

Perception of Need or Community Issue
Most service-learning courses are working toward a common goal in collaboration with the community. Ideally, the “common goal” is a result of input from all involved—community, faculty, and students. In our work with community-based courses, we have observed that perceptions of the problem to be solved, issue to be addressed, or “common goal” change over time. Often, as multiple constituencies work together in community-based settings, they learn from one another. As part of this multilayered, complex learning process, it is not surprising that views of issues evolve and change.

Look closely at the picture in figure 7.1. What do you see? Most people initially see a duck, and then, with time, perceive a rabbit. With more time and practice, it is easily possible to perceive both at the same time.

Learning in partnership with community is somewhat like this: You are framing, reframing, and defining what you see as you move through the process. Metaphorically, you may begin by seeing mostly “ducks” in the beginning and then move to “rabbits.” For example, what all participants perceive as the major goal of your volunteer work may have subtly shifted as the work progressed. What is important to the partnership is that these changes in perceptions are articulated and clarified regularly; otherwise, as the partnership continues, you may be proceeding on assumptions as different as ducks are from rabbits.

Conflict within the Student Team
In chapter 4, you read about the distinct phases of group development: forming, storming, norming, and performing. This model assumes the inevitability of conflict; in fact, conflict is understood to play a necessary and productive role in the process. It should be noted, however, that “having a difference of opinion” is not the same as “experiencing conflict.” Let’s take some time to define conflict and address the components of conflict. Folger, Poole, and Stutman (1995) define conflict as “the interaction of interdependent people who perceive incompatible goals and interference from each other in achieving those goals” (p. 404). When two individuals working toward the same goal perceive that the other is “the” deterrent to achieving that goal, then conflict arises. The critical element is not the conflict, in and of itself, it is how these two individuals approach and deal with the conflict that is the most important factor.

There are two primary approaches to conflict: destructive and constructive. The following chart artic...
ulates some of the basic behaviors associated with each conflict style.

Let's focus our attention on approaching conflict civilly and constructively. Since constructive conflict involves focusing on the source of the conflict, identify the source. In student working groups, differences over goals, priorities, and approaches to the project are common sources of conflict. First, look at the following checklist and identify which of the elements may be acting as roadblocks to constructive conflict either in your own group and/or within the community organization. Then, read the suggestions for working through the conflict constructively.

**Exercise 7.3: Assessing Your Journey**

Completing this activity will help you assess your learning and serving thus far so that you can adjust your framing of roles, responsibilities, timelines, tasks, and objectives, if necessary. This activity can be done on your own (for example, in a reflective response that may be shared with the course instructor) or can be completed and discussed in class.

Revisit **Exercise 2.6: Action and Learning Plan for Serving (ALPS)** from chapter 2 (page 27), and/or use **Exercise 4.4: Jobs List** and **Exercise 4.5: Timeline** from chapter 4 (pages 51 and 53) as guides for thinking about these questions:

- How are you doing individually? As a group? Are you on track to achieve your goals? What evidence do you find to support your perception of your progress?
- What adjustments need to be made?
- How do those changes connect with other aspects of your learning in this course?
- What evidence do you have of your success so far?
- What lessons have you learned about the elements of success?
- How will you sustain success toward your goals?

Examples of **Destructive Conflict**

- Open hostility: Attacking or undermining others' ideas
- Subtle hostility: Lack of cooperation or withdrawal
- Imposing and forcing solutions on the other

Examples of **Constructive Conflict**

- Listening to opposing views with the goal of feeling empathy and understanding
- Discussing the nature or source of the conflict (a person's position on something rather than the person him or herself)
- Welcoming various possible solutions

To explore conflict patterns in your own life, see **Exercise 7.6: Identifying Your Conflict Patterns**, on page 111.

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To explore conflict patterns in your own life, see **Exercise 7.6: Identifying Your Conflict Patterns**, on page 111.
We don't have clear tasks or objectives for our group or the individual members of our group. We are not clear about what has been decided. (Adapted from Gibbs, 1994)

What seems to be the sources of this conflict?

- Our individual differences over project goals or priorities
- Our misunderstandings over each others’ intentions
- Our competition for control
- Our personality clashes that we don't resolve
- Our differences over methods to achieve goals
- Our individual frustrations over roles in the group and the opportunity for all members to make an impact
- Our perceptions that someone is at fault or undermining
- Our positions (conclusions individuals have reached)
- Our interests (reasons for taking one position over another)
- Our talking behind each others' backs instead of addressing the sources and the continuing conflicts

2. Listen carefully to others’ views on the nature of the conflict. It is possible that the conflict stems from more than one source.

3. Work together to focus on the source(s) of the conflict, rather than the people involved. This may seem difficult. What if a difference in personality is one of the issues? Rather than focusing on the individuals who clash, explore the nature of the clash. Does one perceive something about the other's intentions that may or may not be accurate? Is the personality difference actually related to differences in approaches to interaction or the roles and responsibilities that have been assigned to the individuals? Can the group, without assigning blame to any one person, be helpful in exploring these differences and generating alternative approaches toward moving forward with the project?

4. Demonstrate that everyone's views have been understood. Work for understanding at this stage, not agreement. You can accurately summarize everyone's views on the source of a conflict without necessarily agreeing with those views. Ask questions often to clarify your assumptions about the exact nature of others’ views on the root of the conflict. Remember, “understanding” does not necessarily mean that you agree.

5. Identify any common goals and mutual interests that underlie various participants' views on the conflict. For example, in the “Roadblocks and Flat Tires” case study, Darrell, Chun, and Jay were all concerned about doing the best job possible for the community partner, but they used different approaches. Darrell assumed that waiting to hear more about the new coordinator's needs would be the best approach, while Chun and Jay wanted to begin on their own. Had they discussed the nature of their conflict, they might have discovered that it involved differences in methods for reacting to staff change, rather than Darrell's laziness (Jay's assumption) or Chun's closed-mindedness (Darrell's assumption).

6. Generate possible solutions based on common goals and mutual interests, with specific, achievable tasks for all participants. More than one solution may be appropriate, based on participants' diverse needs. For example, Darrell and Chun might have decided on two solutions: (a) carefully assess needs based on the new volunteer coordinator's perspective, and (b) begin developing a student proposal. By working on these approaches together, removing incorrect assumptions about intentions, Darrell could function as the initial contact with the new coordinator while Chun took the lead on the student proposal. Eventually the project could merge both efforts.

Conflicts with Community Partners
In addition to conflict within the student team, conflict with community partners may arise. When approaching conflict with community partners, it is crucial to create a climate of support, goodwill, and mutual benefit. For example, students may unintentionally misread...
community partners’ assumptions about their role in the project. The community partner may mistakenly have stereotypes about student commitment, student work ethic, and student intent. These assumptions can easily cloud everyone’s perceptions and lead to assumptions about behaviors, creating a defensive climate. Defensive climates prevent listeners from focusing on the message and increase the likelihood that they will focus on defending positions, rather than attempting to understand your views.

The climate that you help to establish will set the tone for all the communication behaviors that ensue. You have the power to create an environment that fosters supportive communication or that breeds defensive communication among interactants. The next section represents a communication process for responding to common challenges in ways that encourage collaboration, empathy, and reciprocal learning.

**Reading the Signs: Redirection around Roadblocks**

In the previous discussions, we addressed communication strategies for achieving constructive and productive outcomes and ways to create a more supportive communication climate. The following section addresses a sequential process for moving from “recognizing a roadblock” to “redirecting around a roadblock.”

**Does the Map Fit the Territory?**

Language (whether written or spoken) may be understood as a map (Korzybski, 1921). Imagine a map of the United States. The map includes all the variables that make up a particular area, and these variables are exhibited in relation to one another. In the case of the roadblocks, we must ensure that “the map fits the territory” rather than making the territory fit the map. This reminds us that our written and spoken language gives us information about the situation which allows us to see the greater picture (map). The more accurately we portray each communication variable (parts of the map), the better we will understand the entire situation (the overall map). In order to achieve this, we must continually assess and reassert, for accuracy, the parts of the map (Russell, 1999). It is always possible to act based on inaccurate maps, especially when we proceed without checking our perceptions of maps given to us by others and misread maps based upon prior assumptions or what we would like to believe about the territory, accurate or not. The following strategy, adapted from Lieberman (1996), offers a concrete process to monitor our assumptions, our listening, our language, and our behavior for continued development in self-knowledge and working with others across differences.

**The D-U-E Process**

The **D-U-E Process** is a framework for understanding cultural or personality differences that may be roadblocks to effectively listening to or working with another individual or group. **D-U-E** stands for the following:

- **Describe** what you observe
- **Understand** cultural or personality differences
- **Encourage** communication

**Step 1: Describe.** Self-talk loaded with evaluative statements or adjectives (“She is inconsiderate and pushy”) is one indicator that you need to apply the D-U-E Process. Think: Is the map I am creating of this person’s behavior an accurate representation of events or my inaccurate interpretation of those events? The first step is to pause for a moment and describe to yourself as specifically as possible your reasons for your evaluations (interpretations). For example, a person’s behavior may seem “inconsiderate and pushy” to you because (descriptively) she begins speaking before you have completed your sentence and because she speaks very quickly, without much vocal inflection. The description you would think to yourself would be “This person is speaking before I have finished my sentence.” It doesn’t evaluate her behavior as “good” or “bad”; it merely describes her behavior.

**Step 2: Understand.** The second step is a reminder to think about possible cultural or personality differences that lie below the descriptions you generated in step 1. For example, rules for interruption, rate of speech, and vocal inflection vary from culture to culture and between various groups within cultures. In the example in step 1, let’s imagine that the person who interrupts and may seem “inconsiderate and
pushy” comes from a part of the United States where the average rate of speech is much faster than the area in which you were raised. How might that influence your perception of her, and, possibly, her perception of your speech?

**Step 3: Encourage communication.** If you take the second step of the process seriously, you will often arrive quite easily at the third phase of the D-U-E Process, and you can begin to focus on the what, or the content of the message, and focus less on the how, or the manner in which the message is presented. You can also paraphrase the speaker’s message, demonstrating your understanding, and save much time that would have been wasted had you allowed cultural or personality “noise” to interfere with your understanding.

It may seem like a great deal of work because it is not something you are normally used to doing. Yet the whole process takes only a few seconds and can dramatically affect your response to others and your ability to comprehend their meaning.

**The View from Yesterday: Making Meaning at the End(?) of the Road**

Throughout this chapter, we have asked you to consider a variety of meanings for and responses to “failure with the best of intentions.” We have explored typical dynamics of failure, common roadblocks to community partnerships, and strategies to see with “fresh eyes”—framing, re-framing, and responding to unexpected events. Negative situations can truly allow for tremendous learning. Eyler and Giles (1999) investigated the process of understanding and applying knowledge in service-learning and concluded that students’ ability to work well with others led to an increased sense of personal efficacy, leadership capabilities, and self-knowledge. All of these outcomes comprise the knowledge and skills for effective civic engagement and your ability to create positive community change. Chapter 3 recounted a story in which students were able to successfully analyze and respond to initial “failures” to utilize their knowledge and skills to create a renewed commitment to success. In the end, success was defined not only by what was accomplished, but also by the ability to remain committed in the face of difficulty that provided a powerful conduit for the development of personally meaningful and connected knowing.

Service-learning is a journey into uncharted territory. We hope that you will make this an ongoing journey, as you continue to build upon what you have learned and increasingly translate that learning into action even after you graduate. The commitment to continued growth, self-awareness, community awareness, and social change may not always be the easiest road, but we, along with Robert Frost, whose poem began this chapter, invite you to take the “road less traveled by,” as it truly can make “all the difference.”

<<< Exercise 7.4: Redirecting around Roadblocks

Completing this activity will assist you in using the D-U-E Process. Record your responses in writing so that you can easily refer back to them in the future.

Think of a recent situation with another person or persons in which the D-U-E Process might have been helpful (for example, a conflict or misunderstanding).

**Describe:** What were your interpretations of others’ behaviors in this event? How did you respond? Specifically what about their actions (in the form of description) led you to interpret events as you did?

**Understand:** How might their actions have been interpreted (understood) differently?

**Encourage Communication:** How might you have interacted with this person to encourage ongoing communication?
**Exercise 7.5: Responding to Staff Changes**

Completing this activity will give you the tools to respond, should there be unexpected organizational changes in staffing with your community partner.

First, review the “Roadblocks and Flat Tires” case study. Then write down or discuss in class your answers to the following questions:

- In “Roadblocks and Flat Tires,” the volunteer coordinator resigned unexpectedly. What do you notice about the reactions of the students? The faculty?
- What led up to the eventual conflict at the community organization? How might this have been handled differently?
- Generally, what do you think a student can do to achieve a smooth transition during and after a staff change with the community partner?
Exercise 7.6: Identifying Your Conflict Patterns

Completing this activity will assist you in identifying conflict patterns that you may have established in your own life. Set some time aside and write down your responses to the following questions. It may be helpful to share insights from your responses with your student team, if possible. Together your group (or class) can give one another feedback on developing constructive conflict patterns.

- Think of a conflict that you have had with another individual.
- What do you think was the overarching goal that you were both trying to achieve?
- What was your recommendation for achieving that goal?
- What was the other person's recommendation for achieving that goal?
- How did you respond to the other person's recommendation? For example, did you just disagree and say that the person was wrong? Did you listen to the other person and talk through his/her perspective? Looking at the behaviors in the chart on page 106, specifically identify which of the behaviors you exhibited.
- How do you think your behavior exacerbated or resolved the conflict?
- Do you think your behaviors were primarily destructive or constructive?
- If your behaviors were primarily destructive, how might they have been more constructive?
- Think of one or two other conflict-based situations that involved you. Go through the same process as you just did with the first situation. Are you beginning to see a pattern in how you approach and resolve conflict? If these patterns tend to be more destructive than constructive, identify patterns you would like to change and patterns you would like to adopt.

Exercise 7.7: Roadblocks and Flat Tires Reconsidered

In contrast to the outcome described in the case study “Roadblocks and Flat Tires,” which opened this chapter, create an alternative case study, one in which Darrell, Jay, and Chun are able to respond to conflict constructively, creating a supportive climate for listening and communication.
It's 8 p.m. on a Friday. I would certainly rather be out with my friends tonight. Instead, I'm stuck inside a warehouse counting cans of soup for the food bank. What a boring service project.

I never thought that paying tuition meant I would have to measure manure piles. It's gross. What do I care if a cow poops two feet or two miles away from the creek?

I have blisters on my hands from pulling ivy away from the library building. Shouldn't I be inside reading to kids or something? Wouldn't that be a lot more valuable?

Sometimes it’s hard to see the connections between our service-learning tasks and larger social and political issues. If we are dealing with cans, animals, or buildings, it might be difficult to understand how these relate to hunger, water rights, or urban renewal. Yet, most community concerns are multifaceted as well as interdependent.

Consider this example: A state in the Midwest had to cut custodial services to all public facilities, including libraries. The laid-off janitors and groundskeepers made use of local food banks for their families while they were seeking new employment. Unfortunately, milk and milk products such as cheese were in short supply in the wake of a court battle over watershed contamination. The case had pitted farmers against environmentalists and resulted in a farmer protest in the state capital, where hundreds of gallons of milk were poured into the streets. This led to a public outcry against senators and legislators, who were blamed for inept budgeting processes. The representatives, in turn, pointed the finger at voters for rejecting a recent initiative to raise property taxes in order to enhance the state revenue.

Given the above scenario, you may ask what you, your class, or your school could ever do to make a difference. As the anthropologist Margaret Mead (1971) is quoted as saying, however, “Never doubt for a moment that a small group of individuals can change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” By stocking shelves in the food bank and discussing family needs and sources of donated support, you may gain greater insight into hunger issues and state economic policies. By interacting with farmers and hydrologists, you might learn of the complexities of sustaining family-owned farms and the preservation of drinkable water downstream. By working with architects, historians, and urban planners in the preservation of an old library, you may come to view differently the relationship between libraries, literacy, and juvenile crime.

So, are we saying that serving soup to the homeless...
is not enough? Yes. Is picking up litter on a beach just the first step? Yes. Is tutoring a third grader to read a good thing in and of itself? Yes. To go a step further, we are challenged by colleges and universities to do more than just single acts of kindness. The whole idea behind service-learning is to learn. We must try to use our service-learning experiences to expand our understanding of the underlying issues that create community problems and to find the solutions individually and collectively.

Transformational Learning

In chapter 7, you read about service-learning as a journey, one that is sometimes fraught with disappointment and frustration. So, too, every journey provides us with new vistas. When we journey into new experiences, we may notice that things don’t look the same as they did a week ago, yesterday, or even an hour ago. Many educators have referred to this phenomenon as a shift in consciousness. Indeed, Mezirow (2002) calls the process transformational learning.

Transformational learning involves far more than memorizing facts or reciting information. It is deep learning where new knowledge becomes personally meaningful and connected to community. In other words, our experiences give us new insights and new skills that allow us to interact differently with our world. In chapter 5, we learned that being interculturally competent involves a mindset, a heartset, and a skillset. Similarly, transformational learning uses these competencies to ask critical questions, to engage in reflection, and to identify strategies for leveraging change. It means living conscientiously, knowing that everyone’s individual actions in some way affect the lives of others. Thus, the essence of transformational learning is using your talents and skills (including your academic knowledge) to make your community and your world a better place in which to live, work, and play.

Ways of Knowing

Engaging in transformational learning involves knowing your own preferred styles of taking in and processing information. This is called ways of knowing (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986), which are closely related to learning styles (Kolb, 1984; see chapter 6). For example, some students are especially skilled at doing research and writing papers. Others are best at interviewing community members or providing counseling assistance. There are those who excel at organizing tasks and developing project timelines, while others are artistically and visually creative.

You might think these are just differences in personality, and that is true to some extent. How we act and interact, however, is intricately connected to how we learn. Some of us would rather research and analyze the latest crime statistics, while others would prefer to talk with prison inmates about their own experiences. Some of us are more concerned with

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**Exercise 8.1: The Menial and the Meaningful**

1. Whether you are working alone or in a group, make a written list of five to seven menial tasks that you have performed as a part of your community-based experience (e.g., making copies, setting up appointments).
2. Connect these tasks to the larger goals of the project. How are these rather simple tasks helping to meet the intended outcomes of the project?
3. Connect the project goals to larger societal or political issues (e.g., does removing graffiti assist a neighborhood in community-building?).
4. Identify the specific capacities needed to create positive community change. How does addressing these issues require a mindset, a heartset, and a skillset? How does transformational learning result from the application of these capacities to the issues at hand? How might your community work and class learning facilitate a renewed sense of meaning for and with your community partners?
how our community project affects the people involved (regardless of what gets accomplished), while others of us want to make sure the project is efficient and effective (maybe even at the expense of some people’s feelings).

What is the right answer or approach? All of the above. The more we can understand our own ways of knowing, the better we will be able to contribute to community problem solving. In turn, this may give us more patience and empathy for those with whom we are working who may be different from ourselves. Ultimately, that is one of the most distinguishable characteristics of transformational learning.

Complete Exercise 8.2. Notice that the last set of questions requires us to think beyond the logistical details necessary for completing a successful project. Indeed, at the end of the evening, the students were very successful in raising over six thousand dollars for the high school programs. In terms of long-term impact in the community, were the students successful? Was community change created, or was this merely a “Band-aid” approach to a bigger problem?

Critical Inquiry

Transformational learning means using our ways of knowing to deal with issues directly in front of us (for example, money needed for new band uniforms) and to ask challenging questions as a part of critical inquiry into the economic, societal, and political sources of community problems.

Critical inquiry is comparable in many ways to critical thinking and active reflection. When you are engaged in critical inquiry, you ask yourself and others questions like the following: What are the internal and external influences keeping an organization in crisis? With whom and where does the power for change reside? Are there issues of privilege, oppression, or discrimination involved? What specific strategies (or leverage points) could create opportunities to make a positive difference? What values and beliefs are important to the organization? What does the individual need? What does the group need? What does the community need?

As opposed to simply being cynical, negative, or
snide, critical inquiry is less about making judgments than being a means for understanding underlying and connected issues. In the case in exercise 8.2, lacking art or theatrical supplies is merely a symptom of larger administrative and economic problems. Critical inquiry asks why: Why is there no money for supplies? Critical inquiry asks who: Who is empowered to make decisions about how funding is distributed? Who is responsible for managing the money? Is this an individual management problem? Is this a problem of the funding stream from the state? Both? Critical inquiry asks when, how, and where: Did these issues first arise at the school district level, or have federal priorities shifted funding from providing holistic education to meeting standardized test requirements? Critical inquiry asks, Is there a relationship between spending money on computers and learning outcomes? How does this compare with the learning outcomes realized by spending money on a field trip to the local history museum or the production of a play at the school?

In some educational realms, this inquiry approach is referred to as deconstruction. For example, a community problem such as teenage vandalism could be deconstructed by critically examining answers to a myriad of questions, such as the following: Is teenage vandalism simply caused by a few misdirected youth? Is teenage vandalism a consequence of poor parenting? Is teenage vandalism a failure of schools and educational efforts? Is teenage vandalism a result of hard economic times? What are the roots of teenage vandalism? How might we find solutions to the problem?

The intent in deconstructing social issues is to identify and scrutinize layer by layer the elements that support the problem. Once these factors can be identified, then community problem solving can begin.

### Academic Disciplines as Critical Inquiry

In collective problem solving, a valuable tool that works in tandem with ways of knowing and critical inquiry is the lens of the academic discipline. Indeed, business and community members have told leaders in higher education that one of the most important skills needed in its graduates is the ability to communicate across disciplines. If you plan to be an engineer, you may need to be able to talk with environmentalists. If you want to be a botanist, you might work collaboratively with public health specialists. If your desire is to become a lawyer, you may find yourself asking for advice from mental health counselors in assisting your clients.

At some point in your academic career, you will focus on a major area of study. In colleges and universities, disciplines fall into four major categories: science, social science, humanities, and professional schools. We might say that academic disciplines are particular frames of critical inquiry. They are ways of considering issues through specific theoretical frameworks or sets of questions to ask. In science, the scientific method is central to understanding and being able to do science. In English, literary theory is the way English majors think about and look at written text. Bringing multiple disciplinary perspectives to a community issue or need often provides the means for thinking differently and broadly enough to find a strategy or solution (leverage point) that is perfect for that moment and one that an individual working alone would never have discovered. Disciplinary lenses and frameworks can also inform each other. The most groundbreaking work in research is done at the fringes of disciplines, where they meet and mingle with one another. Consider biotechnology,

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**Exercise 8.3: Who’s to Blame?**

- Brainstorm a written list of everyone and everything to blame for the issues addressed by your community partner. Make sure to consider local, county, city, state, national, and even global sources.
- Next, examine this list in terms of categories or patterns. Are there sources that can be linked together, such as economic, political, societal, environmental, geographic, etc.?
- Now, ask some critical inquiry questions about what you see, using the list of critical inquiry questions above as a guide.
- Finally, what can you identify as strategic or key areas (leverage points) for creating change? If possible, discuss your ideas with others working on your project.
medical anthropology, or the genome project. All of these advances demand an understanding and expertise in more than one discipline, in more than one way of knowing and thinking critically.

A significantly challenging aspect of service-learning is discovering how to use and apply the knowledge from your academic discipline in the community. As the learner who is serving, it is very easy to focus directly on the client or project (through tasks that can take great amounts of time and effort), forgetting to apply—reflectively and effectively—your academic learning.

In working with a community health organization, a student who was an English major could not easily identify a strategy for contributing to his class’s project. Then the community partner described the need for information that explained its services to its clients. This student knew how to target written materials to particular audiences and how to write effectively. Because of his suggestions and abilities, the project developed brochures and other media pieces on specific health issues for homeless youth. Moreover, all the students in the course worked collaboratively to create both a computerized tracking system for donated medicines and a business plan for the agency. Pre-med majors, English majors, business majors, and graphic design majors contributed their unique skills and talents to meet the community partner’s objectives and have a positive impact on the health needs of youth at risk for compromised health.

Consider this community situation and think about what you would do: A city transportation authority contacted the engineering department of a local college. Administrators were concerned about the safety of passengers in wheelchairs after a recent accident indicated that their chairs were not being strapped in properly. Engineering students teamed with physics majors and mathematics majors to examine the harnessing systems. In the lab, the operability of the equipment seemed more than adequate. So what was the problem? And how would they solve it?

The students decided they needed information from real-life examples. They asked anthropology students—whose disciplinary background and skills emphasized the value of data collection in real-world settings—to take the bus to school over a period of two weeks and observe how the harnessing systems were used by riders in wheelchairs. The anthropology students noticed that, for bus drivers to assist with the strapping mechanism, they had to hug and touch the passenger from behind. Given social norms against physical contact between strangers, the harnessing could not be connected properly. What seemed to be a mechanical issue was actually a human interaction issue. Still, the entire apparatus had to be redesigned and then tested by employing the insights of psychology, communication, anthropology, and sociology students.

You will be challenged to apply your academic knowledge and skills in unexpected ways. In the case of one service-learning project, faculty and students from a university business school intended to create a marketing plan for a start-up technology company. When the class arrived at the community partner’s site, however, it became clear that the company

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**8.4: The Disciplinary Lens**

Make a list of the skills or critical inquiry perspectives for your major or academic discipline. Next, compare this list with the kinds of activities that your community partner or project needs. Start with the easiest connections and then tackle the more challenging ones. (Try to think differently about the typical activities in a major. If you are a graphic design major, how could you contribute to a cancer survivor research project? If you are a history major, what skills could you bring to a senior activist interview project?) Finally, write a short reflection on how your academic lens will contribute to your service-learning work now and in the future.

If you are working in a group, you might complete this exercise on your own and then compare your responses to others. This will be especially revealing if there are a wide variety of academic majors in your class. You might also replicate the exercise using your skills and knowledge from your academic minor.
needed basic reorganization before any kind of plan was even possible. The students and faculty were faced with the politically sensitive issue of how to work with managers who were not strong leaders and employees who lacked commitment to the organization. Their first step was to develop a corporate vision and philosophy that engaged both the workers and the directors.

Similarly, graphic design students who were invited to design informational signs for a community recreation site found there was great controversy about the signs and whether there was a need for them at all. While students were under the impression that their work was to create a simple design product, what they learned, instead, was that their skills in listening to and negotiating with neighbors were the critical elements of the project.

Getting experience thinking on your feet, reacting in the moment, and managing conflicting values and priorities are part of living and working in the world. Unlike most classes where the “right” answers are filled in on the “test,” the service-learning project will test you to consider multiple approaches.

Community Partners as Sources of Expertise

A key feature of service-learning is the opportunity for students to use their skills and learning in actual situations. Moreover, critical inquiry and conceptual knowledge is very important, and seeing those ideas and concepts in action is crucial for lasting and deep learning to take place. However, a prime source of learning is the community agency itself. Community professionals have a variety of knowledge and skills drawn from their experiences that are uniquely distinct from what can be provided in a college classroom (no matter how knowledgeable the instructor might be). Community partners look to students and faculty to share their academic expertise to address community issues; students and faculty learn through serving the community (with its own expertise) as they turn theory into practice. This symbiotic relationship exemplifies reciprocity. Service-learning establishes a reciprocal learning process between the college and the community.

For instance, education students who agreed to tutor immigrants and refugees at a local support center assumed that their expertise in teaching skills would help participants learn English. What quickly became apparent, however, was that the participants would not always agree to talk with one another to practice their language skills. Frustrated, the education students complained to the community partner that the participants were uncooperative and unwilling to learn. The community partner then provided the education students with a workshop on the cultural, religious, political, and historical backgrounds of the immigrants and refugees. The education students came to understand that it is not just a “small world after all” as they discovered that national, social, and political factors can inhibit engagement across differences.

At times, students may find the expertise of the community partner difficult to accept. Architecture students who were assisting Habitat for Humanity got a lesson in budgeting and urban planning when the project coordinator dismissed all twelve designs for low-income homes because they were impossible to build on the selected site and within financial constraints. A marketing class that developed a slick brochure for a local YMCA’s services was literally sent back to the drawing board by the agency director for using college-level language when the average reading level of their clients was seventh grade.

Such lessons from the community may not feel like the type of reciprocal learning you hoped to gain. Thus, reciprocity (to and from the community) requires openness to new views and a willingness to consider issues from the community perspective.

As a service-learner, ask yourself these questions: Have you been intentional about listening to community professionals’ viewpoints? Have you included community partners in planning sessions and meetings about the project? Have you made explicit the goals and objectives of the project while concurrently attending to the values and motivations of the community partner? In sum, reciprocity involves not just the project’s product, but also the process you used to complete it. Reciprocity is the impact you had on the community and the community had on you.
Being fully aware of the process as well as the hoped-for outcomes may give you additional insights. As with internships or practicum experience, service-learning projects may allow you to explore the professional standards of various career fields. For example, in a project to design a marketing logo for a new construction company, students learned about the culture of the firm, including expectations about work behavior, dress, communication, decision making, and acceptance of critique and feedback.

In another case, students created a CD to help cancer survivors. The project gave the student team exposure to medical terminology and community health needs, as well as experience in software development. Most importantly, students were challenged by their own ethnocentric perspectives. Originally planning to have all information in English, the students realized, in working with a diversity of cancer patients, that they had to identify and include Web site links with health information in multiple languages. In addition, during meetings with physicians and nurses, the students were privy to discussions about healthcare coverage and differences in prevention and treatment options depending on clients’ socioeconomic status. It is this type of service-learning that will be forever memorable, providing you with richer insights and learning about the real world of healthcare than could ever be addressed inside a classroom.

Thus, when academic theory meets actual community issues, a different level of understanding and actions frequently results. The community partner generally has knowledge and expertise that can be integrated into the project and utilized to gain broader insights into community concerns. Working side by side with community professionals, you will learn that social problems are complex and that solutions require thoughtful and intentional involvement and intervention.

Finally, reciprocal learning is frequently gained from working directly with the community clients. Even though our good intentions are to help others, we often receive more than we give. A sociology major reflected in her journal:

I’m so impressed with the perseverance of some of these women [at the domestic violence shelter]. It’s incredible what they go through. Many of them have kids, so they push the courts to act faster, they deal with school administrators, they negotiate bill payments even when they can’t return to their homes safely. Their organization and tenacity is amazing. They’ve taught me to not take anything for granted.

Similarly, an English major who was tutoring non-native English-language learners noted the following from his experience:

Yes, I’m teaching them grammar and sentence construction. They’re teaching me about Vietnamese culture, Buddhism, and a whole different way of being in the world. I’m teaching them about language elements. They’re teaching me about life elements.

Conscious Living

In a service-learning project called “Equalizing Access to Justice,” students at a community college worked with juvenile justice services and marginalized youth. At the end of the course, a history major noted in his journal how he had understood inequities theoretically before the class, but, after witnessing the issues for himself, he now had a more realistic sense of historical racial and ethnic stereotypes inherent in the system.

I always believed that one of the strengths of the American judicial system was to treat everyone equally. That illusion has been totally demystified. My client was a fifteen-year-old Latino who worked hard the last three months with our class. In court, the probation officer hadn’t filed his behavior report, and his attorney met him just five minutes before the proceedings. Just because he had one minor curfew violation, the judge sent him back to detention. I felt so powerless. I knew this was a good kid, but the system saw him as a troublemaker. I’m left wondering if a white kid in the same situation would have been let off.

The understanding of this college student’s experience gave him a transformed view and new conscious-
ness about the reality of those without power and how they have to deal with the policies and procedures of the justice system. For him, history came alive.

Shifting our worldview is an implicit goal of most service-learning courses. Unless we come to see how political, economic, and judicial systems tend to favor one group over another, we will be forever prevented from truly assisting those in need. In a service-learning class working with recent refugees from South America, the students were initially naive about the geography of the region. One student admitted in her journal, “Since the weather is much warmer in Latin America, it’s not so hard to live on less. Being homeless is easier there than it is in the United States.”

Students’ perspectives began to change as they worked with families who had fled to the United States because of political unrest and the lack of citizen rights in their country. The students researched historical and current political events, worked with the community agency to learn about cultural life issues, and held dialogues with their refugee partners. To their surprise, students learned that, to protect corporate interests, the United States had funded a military coup that led to civil war. Now, as they examined the issues through the lives of their refugee partners, students felt a different sense of connectedness and responsibility:

“We tried to see what it was like through their eyes, even though we were from such different places. We learned a lot, but more than that, I think I’m a better person. I’ve got a sense of understanding and being part of a much bigger issue. My government helped create their situation—so, in some ways, I did too. I see now that I need to be more aware and politically involved.”

As part of a summer school project, an industrial technology student participated in a camp for severely disabled children. In working with the campers, the student changed her career direction by taking additional courses in physical therapy so that she could develop equipment to support these children’s ability challenges. She told her faculty member that she had finally found her “true calling.”

It is these personal transformations and a conscious shift in how we view ourselves and our place in the world that service-learning can affect. For many, the feeling that we do not count and cannot really do anything to change things is very different after an experience in the community. The point of these examples is to ask you to think about yourself and how you understand your goals, aspirations, and values. Right now, you may just be thinking about finishing this course. If you’re a senior, you may be dreaming about graduation. For graduate students, the main issue may be finding the right advisor or thesis topic. However, at some point you will be finished with your education and continuing your life beyond college. What kind of life do you want to create for yourself? How do you plan to live consciously? For what do you want to be known?

Summary

Service-learning courses give you practice using theory (academic concepts) in a real setting (experiential learning) to achieve both a heightened sense of consciousness and transformational learning. In this chapter, we have examined the relationships between course content and community issues in order to connect your experiences with the larger world of ideas and issues outside the college campus. Ultimately,
service-learning courses should help you learn how to create change actively and intentionally. In our final illustration, a group of students at Portland State University planned and opened an organic restaurant after a service-learning project on sustainable ecology and the food-service industry. The restaurant currently provides a place where students can find healthful vegetarian meals. The students also influenced the competing food service company on campus to offer alternative food choices and organic fruits and vegetables.

We hope that you consider the social, economic, environmental, and political aspects of your project, using questions like these as a guide:

- What have you learned through your community service project that you would not have learned in a traditional classroom?
- What insights have you gained about your community, your state, and your world as a result of the project?
- How are these issues simultaneously interconnected and interdependent?
- Have you discovered cultural stereotypes and assumptions that influence community interactions and individual lives?
- What new skills, knowledge, and insights can you apply to improving current systems and practices for addressing issues in the future?

The result of your service-learning experience is a broadened understanding of the complexities of community interactions and an informed sense of how to translate your beliefs and values into action. These newly acquired skills and knowledge, which have been reinforced and extended by your academic discipline lens, can then be utilized in your community in countless ways. Further, you know how change is created (that is, the internal and external influences and leverage points). As you are more fully cognizant of issues of power and privilege, you are better positioned to facilitate equity and social justice. In the end, we hope you believe that continuing such connections with community organizations will make your life richer and more meaningful by contributing to a greater sense of the common good.

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<th>Key Concepts</th>
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<td>consciousness</td>
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<th>Key Issues</th>
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<td>What relationships do you see between course content and community issues?</td>
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<td>How can you use your academic discipline to better understand community problems?</td>
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<td>How do abstract concepts and experiential learning inform each other?</td>
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<td>What are the relationships between social and political issues at your community partner site?</td>
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<td>How is your community a source of knowledge and expertise?</td>
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<td>How has this experience expanded your understanding of yourself?</td>
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<td>How has this experience expanded your understanding of organizations?</td>
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Exercise 8.6: Both Sides of the Table

If you are working in a group, break into two smaller groups. One of these will be the “college group,” and the other will be the “community group.” Members of the “college group” will work together to make a list of all the assumptions and plans that you and your faculty had at the beginning of the project. You may consult your notes and reflections from the beginning of the service-learning experience. The “community group” will list all the changes and new perspectives that the community partner brought to the project. When you are finished, compare notes and discuss the evolution of your partnership through the reciprocal learning process.
The goal of part 4 (chapters 9 and 10) is to assist you with evaluating the results of your community-based engagement. Did your efforts with the community actually make a difference to that community and its stakeholders? As for yourself, what skills, knowledge, and values did you gain in the process of connecting with the community? How might you leverage this learning in future efforts to make positive change in your community?

**KEY SYMBOLS**

🌟 Exercises of utmost importance to complete (working either on your own or in a group)

💡 Optional exercises (strategies for gaining deeper insights into the issues)

❓ Exercises that provide further resources and information in your quest for understanding community problem solving and change
Beyond a Grade: Are We Making a Difference?

The Benefits and Challenges of Evaluating Learning and Serving

SHERRIL B. GELMON, SUSAN AGRE-KIPPENHAN, AND CHRISTINE M. CRESS

I had no idea that less than a mile from our university children were going hungry. If we improve the life of even one kid I'll feel like I did something good.

In the quote above, the student contemplates children going hungry and the importance of helping them. While no one would argue with the need to do “something good,” it is important to put our work into context. In assisting others, is it sufficient to provide a single meal, or do we need to work towards finding a long-term solution to hunger?

At this point in your project, you have probably discussed many of these types of issues. For example, you may have researched how many children are in a similar situation in your community. You may have decided during what period of time you could provide assistance (for example, the Thanksgiving holiday). You may have evaluated, individually or as a group, whether it is most valuable to feed a child, hold a food drive, or write a grant to connect families and communities with existing service providers. Moreover, you may have tried to use the theoretical and academic models of your disciplinary major to address these issues.

As you bring your service-learning experience to a close, ask yourself, your classmates, and your community partner about the impact of your efforts and work: Did you do something good? Did your project make a difference? On the surface, these are deceptively simple questions. In all likelihood, you did help. You did do something good. As we’ve learned, however, in previous chapters, service-learning is a complex, integrated approach to learning. As such, it is imperative for you to engage in a strategic and methodical evaluation to determine what effects you have had on the community, as well as to identify how these interactions have affected you. In so doing, you may find yourself reevaluating some of the premises and assumptions that you and your classmates initially brought to learning and serving in the community. In chapter 7, we asked you to investigate your assumptions about “failure” in order to contextualize your progress on the service-learning journey. Similarly, in this chapter, we will help you explore and broaden your definitions of “success” by increasing your knowledge of and ability to use assessment techniques. Specifically, we offer strategies for better understanding the impact of your project by introducing a tripartite framework (concepts, indicators, evidence) for examining and evaluating your experiences. We will also build upon the earlier ALPS work you have completed to make explicit the importance of assessment at the beginning, middle, and conclusion of your service-learning experience.
Did We Make a Difference?

The question “Did we make a difference?” can yield multiple responses. The “difference” may depend upon the perspective of the respondent (student, instructor, community partner, or client). It may also depend upon who or what you are evaluating: a person, a group, an organization, a population, or a pressing societal issue like hunger or homelessness. When we can state that we have had successful experiences working with the community and provide documentation, data, stories, case studies, and other evidence that support this assessment, we not only demonstrate impact, but we position the community organization for even more positive change.

For example, at a high school in a poor neighborhood, the student drop-out rate had risen from 11 percent to 19 percent in just three years. Concerned, the school principal approached an English professor and a math professor at a local community college, and the three teamed up to create an interdisciplinary service-learning project focused on basic academic skill acquisition and student retention. At its most fundamental level, the community college students provided tutoring for the high school students. More importantly, as the high school students improved their skills, they were trained to tutor one another. Within two years, the drop-out rate decreased to 7 percent, and the overall number of students who enrolled in college after high school graduation increased by 18 percent. Impressed by these numbers, a philanthropic foundation gave the school district and the community college a $450,000 grant to continue and expand the program.

While the impact of some projects may not be immediately apparent or the scope of impact may be more limited than you, your classmates, or your professor had originally anticipated, it is still essential to evaluate your accomplishments carefully. Indeed, there are a myriad of outcomes you can examine:

- **Creating and strengthening community partnerships:** In an ideal service-learning experience, the community partner becomes a true collaborator. Our ability to identify what we contributed, as well as what we received, makes real the concept of reciprocity.
- **Measuring personal growth:** Community experiences provide opportunities for us to reflect on our values, to develop skills and expertise, and to consider our personal career plans. Insights about our newly gained knowledge expands our capacity to be effective workers, family members, and citizens.
- **Examining the teaching and learning process:** Service-learning courses have explicit goals for connecting community experience to the academic experience. Evaluation can strengthen courses, contribute to faculty learning, and have a long-range impact on student experiences and program development.

What Do We Mean By “Evaluation”?

Evaluation provides a structured opportunity to reflect upon what has been accomplished (or not) and the value of such accomplishments. It involves participating in a thoughtful iterative process in which multiple aspects of an experience are considered and constructive feedback is provided. Frequently, the terms evaluation and assessment are used interchangeably. Regardless of what term you use, the goal of evaluation is to help us articulate and share our learning with others in an effort to make improvements. In this sense, evaluation can be imagined as a loop or learning cycle (figure 9.1). You evaluate (assess) an experience, draw insights (analyze), try something new (implement) based on those insights, and evaluate the experience again. This evaluation cycle is fundamentally about learning and putting those new insights directly back into practice.

In introducing the concept of reflection in chapter 6 (page 83), we discussed what are essentially three levels of evaluation for the service-learning experience: (1) pre-service reflection (project identification and planning), (2) reflection during service (meaning, observations, analysis, and adaptation), and (3) post-service reflection (new understandings and application). Thus, in completing those exercises, you have already been actively participating in the Evaluation Learning Cycle.

Now that you are reaching the post-service reflection component, a critical element for determining new understandings and applications that can be shared with others is to demonstrate how you successfully achieved your outcomes. Outcomes are the goals you accomplished. Imagine that your project goal was to rebuild...
the playground equipment in a local park, and you successfully accomplished this task, thus turning the refurbished equipment from being a shared goal to a realized achievement or outcome. How did you reach this goal? What evidence supports your assertion of this achievement? Suppose, for a moment, that you finished with more donated lumber than you needed for the playground equipment, so you redonated these materials to Habitat for Humanity. Evidence of your success certainly starts with the rebuilt park equipment, and it also includes the amount (board feet) of lumber you gave to the nonprofit organization. Other evidence of the outcomes of your success might be the amount of time you took to accomplish the project (you completed it faster than expected), the number of people participating (fourteen neighbors volunteered to help), the amount of money spent (you were under budget by $465), and even comments and quotations you wrote down from happy parents and children at the park.

In evaluating an entire service-learning course (as opposed to a single community experience), students, faculty, and community members may take a critical look at the goals and objectives of the course, the activities that supported those objectives, and the resulting outcomes. Depending on the course and the nature of the project, the outcomes or evidence can vary from the number of children served in an after-school recreational program to the production of a public television announcement on how to become a mentor. You might count the number of homes participating in a new recycling program. You might have created a book of narratives from interviews with women who worked in factories during World War II. In other words, you might gather quantitative data (things you can count) and/or qualitative data (written descriptions of observations and experiences). Indeed, many researchers use multiple methods of evaluation (quantitative and qualitative) in order to best uncover strengths and weaknesses of a project, to prove or disprove assumptions and assertions, and to allow for creative forms of communicating and disseminating the information depending on the nature of the report and the audience (such as charts, photographs, quotations, short stories, etc.)

Evaluation of service-learning courses can also be conducted from other perspectives. Your faculty member may want to identify which reflective exercises and activities best helped you learn. Institutional administrators may want to know the impact of your service-learning course on community-university urban renewal efforts. The community agency may want to do a time-cost analysis of resources the organization expended and benefits the organization received from your work and involvement.

Thus, good evaluation flows logically from course and community partner goals and thoughtfully utilizes both quantitative (numbers) and qualitative (interviews, observations) methods. These results can then be summarized in graphs and data tables, and/or in rich stories and descriptions based upon personal experiences. When evaluation is done in this way, subsequent course design and planning are based on actual data rather than hunches and drive continuous improvement in response to the needs and performance of you, your classmates, faculty, and community.

**Challenges to Evaluation**

Consider the various perceptions stated in the following examples. Clearly, each person has a particular perspective and set of expectations about service-learning. Many reasons may compel us to “make a difference”
through service-learning experiences, including community issues, academic considerations, and issues of personal growth. While all of these are valid, they may not be equally valuable to each of the participants in the service-learning experience. This is a crucial consideration in assessing the project and determining overall impact.

I don’t know if we really did anything important at the community center. We spent most of our time just talking to the kids. I didn’t understand why the professor never spent time in class discussing how the work at the community center related to our readings in the class.

Student

Working with children at the community center provides opportunities for students to recognize and apply the developmental theories they have been learning in class while offering a meaningful resource for the community.

Faculty

It was so valuable to have college students there to interact informally with the kids at the center. Many of them had never met anyone who had gone to college.

It changed their ideas about the future. The kids want us to organize a trip to campus to see what it is really like there.

Community Partner

We made an institutional commitment to service-learning. Our long-term community partnerships have caused us to reevaluate our resource allocations and organizational support.

University Service-Learning Director

The priority for the community organization may be keeping kids safe. Faculty may be split between addressing community needs and course-specific learning objectives. Students, including yourself, may care about the community and academics, but within the context of your own career plans. From an institutional perspective, the university or college may be balancing the resource efficiency of courses with an institutional commitment to community relationships. This range of priorities results in a related range of values placed on outcomes. (It may be helpful to refer to page 103 in chapter 7 to review the discussion on the potential for conflicting expectations among the faculty, community partner, and students. Fortunately, the strategies developed in chapter 7 can be applied to
thinking about conflicting priorities in terms of evaluation as well.)

Other challenges to evaluation may be timelines, resources, resistant participants, fear of findings, shelved reports, and/or lack of expertise. The good news is that strategies do exist for overcoming these challenges.

A Strategy for Evaluating Service-Learning

Just like the actions and behaviors needed for conducting your service-learning project, evaluation and assessment take thoughtful action and coordinated effort. A comprehensive model for doing this was developed at Portland State University and then modified and enhanced through application in several other institutional contexts (Gelman, Holland, Driscoll, Spring, & Kerrigan, 2001). The model allows evaluation to focus on areas such as individual student learning in terms of achievement of personal and course goals, as well as satisfaction with the learning experience. The model also provides strategies to assess faculty involvement in, and commitment to, service-learning, as well as institutional support for service-learning. Finally, the model addresses evaluation of the impact on the community agency, as well as on community-university partnerships.

As noted above, evaluation is part of an ongoing learning cycle that should be woven from front to back within the tapestry of any service-learning project. By assessing your actions, you can recognize strengths (individual and programmatic), identify opportunities for improvement, and make evident academic and community connections on both real and theoretical terms.

To begin, ask yourself (or discuss with your classmates and/or community partner) the following questions in considering how to assess your service-learning project:

- What is the aim of the assessment? What do I need to know?
- Who might want or need the assessment information? What do others (students, faculty member, community partner, clients, college) need to know?
- What resources are needed and available to support assessment?
- How might I conduct the assessment?

- How can I ensure that the results will be used proactively?

At first, these questions may seem a bit daunting. Most of us have had little experience with formal assessment practices. But the process can be divided easily into a useful framework of three components: concepts, indicators, and evidence. The framework terms are defined below.

- **Concepts**: What do we want to know?
- **Indicators**: How will we measure it?
- **Evidence**: What can we gather, show, or demonstrate?

Let’s say, for example, that you want to identify what your classmates learned about their community as a result of their service experience at the local homeless shelter. The concept that you are evaluating is students’ community awareness about homelessness. An indicator of this concept might be student knowledge about underlying issues that contribute to homelessness. The evidence you might gather could include data from a survey you create and distribute to your classmates (quantitative data) and/or examples of essay questions (with student and faculty permission) that your faculty member asked on an exam about the connections between course readings on low-income housing and clients who use shelter services (qualitative data).

- **Concept**: Student awareness about homelessness
- **Indicator**: Knowledge of factors contributing to homelessness
- **Evidence**: Results from surveys (quantitative data) and/or students essays citing research on homelessness (qualitative data)

Now suppose that you want to assess the impact of your service-learning course on the homeless shelter itself. Here, the concept is the impact of the service-learning course. An indicator of this concept might be placement of homeless clients in free and low-income housing units. The evidence you might gather could be the actual number of clients placed (quantitative data) and/or interviews with the shelter staff about how your class assisted their efforts (qualitative data).
• **Concept:** Impact of student service at the homeless shelter
• **Indicator:** Placement of clients in low-income housing
• **Evidence:** Number of clients served/placed (quantitative data) and/or quotes from interviews with shelter staff about how students assisted their efforts (qualitative data)

In determining your assessment methodology (strategy/design), other issues are important to consider as well: client satisfaction, cost, time, level of collaboration with other social service agencies, travel issues, and so on. What is most important is that you (and your group) determine a reasonable scope for the extent of your evaluation and a plan for how you will gather, disseminate, and communicate your findings for community benefit.

The **CIE Model** (Concepts, Indicators, Evidence) is particularly useful in evaluating the overall service experience (exercise 9.2). The next section discusses other techniques for helping you evaluate your individual student growth, the teaching-learning environment, and contributions to community organizations and their constituents.

Understanding Your Own Experiences

In this chapter’s first exercise (9.1, Conquering the ALPS on page 128), you began to evaluate your contributions and achievements in this service-learning experience. Your ability to identify and articulate your skills and knowledge with respect to the service-learning activities may depend on how many previous service-learning experiences you have had in other settings. Remember, while you or other students may have had no formal service-learning prior to this experience, you may have had other relevant experiences or bring skills that have made substantial contributions to your own learning as well as that of your classmates.

In the past, students have observed that the personal impact of service-learning is cumulative over time. As such, individual “success” or “failure” in a service-learning activity is complicated to determine, and evaluation cannot be approached from a “one-size-fits-all” strategy. Thus, the learning impact must be placed in the context of your own prior experiences, as well as the present project activity.

To do this, let’s look at the **Self-Assessment Matrix**, which enables you to determine strengths by recognizing your own individual levels of experience with various dimensions of the service-learning activity. The matrix is an adaptation of a skill acquisition model originally applied to professional experience (Benner, Tanner & Chesla, 1995; Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1996), and further refined for use in faculty development within service-learning courses and research (Gelmon & Agre-Kippenhan, 2002).

The Self-Assessment Matrix (figure 9.2) shows how experience and learning evolve along a continuum. At each stage, skill levels are categorized as roles (e.g., ‘en-

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**Exercise 9.2: Utilizing the CIE Model**

Create an assessment plan utilizing the matrix below. Ideally, you want to link **Concepts, Indicators, and Evidence** with your original goals from your ALPS (see exercise 2.6 on page 27). Later, you will identify tasks and timelines for this assessment plan, just as you did as part of your action planning. Be sure there is a clear connection between your initial goals and your process for evaluating the success of the service experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Skill Levels in the Self-Assessment Matrix

- An **Explorer** student asks: What is this service-learning experience all about?
- A **Novice** student asks: What are the things that can help me get started in this service-learning experience?
- An **Engaged** student asks: What am I able to do and contribute through service-learning, what else do I need to learn, and what other skills should I develop?
- An **Expert** student asks: How can I help others learn what I have learned through service-learning and other experiences?

**Activity Components of the Self-Assessment Matrix**

- **Experience**: Exposure to service-learning, prior involvement in related activities
- **Learning**: Nature of involvement in creating knowledge for self and others
- **Personal Development**: Integration of learning with personal skill development and career/life decisions
- **Reflection**: Deliberate process of thoughtful review and analysis of the service-learning experience with the express purpose of identifying key areas of learning and connecting the service-learning experience with the academic content of the course
- **Connection to Community**: View of self as related to community

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**Self-Assessment Matrix (SAM)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity Component</th>
<th>Explorer</th>
<th>Novice</th>
<th>Engaged</th>
<th>Expert</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Experience</strong></td>
<td>None or Limited</td>
<td>Initial</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>Extensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learning</strong></td>
<td>Exposure</td>
<td>Observation</td>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>Leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal Development</strong></td>
<td>Self-focused</td>
<td>Self-aware</td>
<td>Connected to others</td>
<td>Big picture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reflection</strong></td>
<td>None or limited</td>
<td>General insights</td>
<td>Connected</td>
<td>Rich and integrated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connection to Community</strong></td>
<td>Individual benefit</td>
<td>Recognizes community needs/assets</td>
<td>Connected locally with community</td>
<td>Facilitates community linkages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intercultural Competence</strong></td>
<td>Personal focus</td>
<td>Aware of others</td>
<td>Respectful and appreciative of others</td>
<td>Seeks out and adapts to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Civic Engagement</strong></td>
<td>Unaware</td>
<td>Participates in activities</td>
<td>Organizes</td>
<td>Initiates social justice action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Capacity to Work in Community</strong></td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Limited and directed</td>
<td>Responds to requests</td>
<td>Imaginative, self-directed leadership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Figure 9.2. **Self-Assessment Matrix (SAM)**

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"gaged") and illustrated as descriptors (e.g., “participation”) that you might demonstrate for each element of the service-learning experience. A brief definition of each skill level and type of service activity follows. See appendix 9.1 for descriptors. Review the matrix and the descriptions that follow, and then proceed to Exercise 9.3: Using the Self-Assessment Matrix. (A comprehensive explanation of each category can be found on pages 131–132.)
LEARNING THROUGH SERVING

Exercise 9.3: Using the Self-Assessment Matrix

Review the matrix and each of the descriptors carefully. Using a highlighter, mark the one descriptor for each component that best described you at the beginning of this service-learning experience. Consider specific examples, if possible, that illustrate these components. (Most people have answers in different columns for the various components.)

Next, take a different-colored highlighter and mark the descriptor for each component that best describes you now, at the end of this service-learning experience.

- What comes to light for you? How have you changed?
- What facilitated your change(s), and how did those factors cause that change?
- Remembering the CIE Model, frame these changes in terms of Concepts, Indicators, and Evidence.
- What could you do to further evaluate your own learning experience and your contributions to the community?

Methods for Evaluating Learning Environments

Intercultural Competence: Recognition of similarities and differences among different population groups and ability to interact between and among different groups

Civic Engagement: Scope of personal involvement in activities (both academic and non-academic) that support community development and participation

Capacity to Work in Communities: Individual recognition and awareness of potential for present and future involvement in work in relevant communities

As you well know, service-learning courses are significantly different from traditional courses. Rather than spending all your time in the classroom, you are out in the community. Rather than listening to an instructor lecture to you each day, you are involved in workgroup discussions. Rather than taking tests, you decide on the timeframes to get the project completed. Granted, not all service-learning takes place within an actual course. Some of you may be doing community service as a part of co-curricular activities on campus. Others of you may be involved in federal work/study programs where you chose to perform your project in the community. However you came to be involved in service-learning, we hope that all of you are engaged in some kind of active reflection and are not just “doing” your service. Indeed, that is the whole idea behind service-learning: that we serve and learn.

I found myself thinking about our class all the time. It affected my own decisions.

After taking one service-learning class I felt more confident taking on and even leading community projects.

Stop for a moment and evaluate what has supported your learning. Did you complete readings on community issues that gave you insights into your clients? Did the instructor or administrator with whom you are working provide clear goals and information about the project? Did you attend an orientation or training session with the community partner to familiarize yourself with their needs and interests?

Now assess for a moment what has inhibited your learning. Was the amount of time you actually performed the service too short? Did the instructor or administrator give you too much freedom and responsibility? Did the community partner fail to keep promises about information and support?

Assuming that you are completing this service experience as a part of a course, you may be able to assess the environment for learning by using a set of teaching
and learning continua that describe the classroom context. These continua offer a lens through which one can evaluate a service-learning course, examine the learning process itself, and illustrate a range of interactions among and between students and instructors (Gelmon, Holland, et al., 2001). The five elements in the continua can be defined as follows:

- **Commitment to others**: In a traditional class, the focus is on students’ (academic) needs, while in an ideal service-learning classroom the focus is both on students’ and the community’s needs. Questions asked to assess the learning community include the following: Do students and faculty seem to be interested in other people’s needs and interests? Do they express a commitment to discovering these needs and interests, both for the community and for their peers?

- **Student role**: In a traditional class, students are relatively passive learners. In this service-learning class, are the students actively involved in the teaching and learning processes? Do they make decisions about course content, process, and activities? Do the students transition from a role as a learner to a role as a learner and teacher as they take on responsibility for their own learning and contribute to their learning of their peers?

- **Faculty role**: In traditional classes, the faculty is directive in managing, ordering, and instructing. Is this the role of the faculty in this service-learning class, or does the faculty facilitate collaboration and offer support? Does the faculty share the authority in the class with the students? Is the faculty member open to learning as well as teaching?

- **Learning orientation**: In traditional classes, the focus is on individual learning, where many service-learning classes are concerned with collective learning. Is the learning environment a collective one in which students and faculty work together? Or is it one in which each individual focuses solely on his or her own individual learning?

- **Pedagogy** (teaching strategies): In traditional classes, faculty may demonstrate a “banking” approach where they “deposit” information into students’ minds; students are then expected to regurgitate information for periodic “withdrawals” such as exams or presentations. At the other extreme, the faculty creates a “constructive” environment where they facilitate experiences and students construct their own meanings and learning. In the service-learning environment, is knowledge created that both finds answers and generates questions? Is there an emphasis on combining theory and experience to construct knowledge?

Regardless of the type of service-learning in which you are engaged, your thoughtful reflection on commitment to others, student roles, instructor roles, the learning orientation, and teaching strategies (pedagogy) can be useful in providing feedback to others about your experience (exercise 9.4). After all, evaluation itself is a learning process. As noted earlier, you assess your experiences, develop insights through analysis, and offer ideas for implementation. Moreover, you identify evidence for the outcomes of the experience. Say, for instance, that a roommate asks you, “What did you like about the service experience?” Your response might be, “Everyone made an explicit commitment to the group process even though we had really different personalities. This made the group both fun and interesting, and amazingly each person made every meeting that was scheduled.”

Staying with this example, let’s imagine that your roommate next asks, “So what does your teacher do?” You might state, “He acts as a facilitator rather than an instructor. He helps us brainstorm and problem-solve, but he’s made us ultimately accountable to the community partner.”

### Measuring Benefits to Community

By now, you have identified how the service experience has made a difference to you and to the class (possibly even the instructor). Did it also make a difference to the community? Working on your own and/or in a group, you have probably already gathered some evidence (quantitative and qualitative information) of your success, especially as you reviewed personal and group achievements in the first activity. Look back at the list of questions you made in Exercise 9.1: Conquering the **ALPS** (page 128). What else do you need to know in
LEARNING THROUGH SERVING

Exercise 9.4: Evaluating the Classroom Learning Environment

What does it feel like to be a student in a service-learning course? Are the methods used by the instructor the same or different from those in traditional courses? Look at the five elements of teaching and learning listed below, and for each mark an “X” that best indicates how you would describe the teaching/learning context of this class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commitment to others</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student role</td>
<td>Passive</td>
<td>Active</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty role</td>
<td>Directive</td>
<td>Facilitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning orientation</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Collective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedagogy</td>
<td>Banking</td>
<td>Constructivist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What evidence can you identify for your positions? If possible, discuss your insights with another classmate or in a group, and generate a list of suggestions or recommendations you would offer for future service-learning courses.

Exercise 9.5: Measuring Success: A Planned Approach

Building from exercises 9.1: Conquering the ALPs and 9.2: Utilizing the CIE Model (and any other worksheets you find relevant), create a planned approach for your assessment effort.

1. Note your concepts or indicators.
2. Next, identify the type of evidence (quantitative and qualitative information) you will seek.
3. Now identify who will gather the evidence (collect data) and from whom (other students, the instructor, clients, the community partner) and in what form (surveys, reports)?
4. Identify the timeline when this will occur.
5. Finally, be specific about how the data will be analyzed and synthesized into a report or a presentation that includes a set of recommendations for implementation.

Other Important Issues in Evaluation

Other considerations can affect service-learning evaluation. These range from very specific areas such as economic impact and benefits, to issues that are more

...
difficult to measure, such as cross-cultural challenges and humanitarian considerations. We must also consider evaluation against a backdrop of service decisions made by the community organization and career decisions made by both students and faculty. The relevance of these issues will be determined by the context of the specific course or service experience.

- **Economic impact and benefits**: Service activities are sometimes measured in terms of what they would cost if the agency provided the service itself. For example, if each of twenty students provides four hours a week of tutoring for the duration of a ten-week course, then the class has provided a total of eight hundred hours of tutoring. A monetary value can be attached to these services using comparative market values. Community partners and institutions can then use these measures to help communicate the kinds of resources that students provide. While not a complete expression of value, this is one example of a measure that is understandable to a wide audience. In addition, community partners may need to report to funding organizations, and economic measures can be helpful. However, economic measures do not give the entire picture of the service-learning experience; they may not be completely accurate, as students are learning as they work in the community, and their efficiency may not be at its maximum.

- **Cross-cultural challenges**: As we’ve already discussed, there are often competing expectations and priorities at work that affect evaluation. In chapter 5, we looked at intercultural competencies and attendant issues. Bringing together diverse groups of people from different cultures and institutional backgrounds poses issues that affect evaluation. There may be language barriers that impact the ability to discuss goals. There may be cultural preferences that affect the ways that students and communities interact. These differences may create roadblocks to meeting outcomes. Redirecting around these roadblocks can be a crucial step to evaluating specific service-learning courses. Cross-cultural challenges can also affect how various evaluation methods are designed and implemented.

- **Humanitarian considerations**: There may be significant humanitarian concerns that affect service-learning courses. Faculty at an institution may choose to work with a specific community on a number of projects. Alternatively, an institution may select several key issues to address. There may be some community issues that cannot be ignored. These considerations may give priority to certain projects and may determine students’ placements where they are perceived to be most important as service providers rather than where they can best be academically designed or evaluated.

- **Service decisions**: Given choices, students may gravitate to service experiences for any number of reasons that can affect evaluation. They may be limited by schedules that are packed with classes and family concerns and therefore select courses that fit into their schedules but are not of great interest to them. Other students may choose a service opportunity that connects with their experiences in school or in their private lives and be able to bring a great deal of expertise to the work. A range of interest levels and skills may make for uneven accomplishments and increase the difficulty of evaluation.

- **Career decisions**: Future employment opportunities may be a critical consideration in selecting a service experience. Students may place importance on the success of a course that they feel helps prepare them for their careers. They may also feel a disproportionate responsibility for anything that does not go smoothly. It may be impossible to evaluate such experiences without accounting for the career implications, and findings must be interpreted accordingly.

As an evaluator, you can meet these specific challenges by anticipating how these factors will affect the service-learning experience and by addressing them in your evaluation strategy. Use the evaluation expertise of your faculty member, community member, and/or college institutional research office to ensure that all evaluation methods are ethical and meet college or university safety guidelines.
A final step in evaluation is reporting the results. Once you have collected your data, be timely and responsible in your analysis of it, and report your findings to the various parties involved (other students, faculty, community, institution) to improve future processes and outcomes. A fairly typical approach is to write an assessment report that describes goals, activities, methods of measurement/observation, results, and recommendations (Gelmon & Connell, 2001). It is also common for the results to form the basis for presentations (in class or to the community agency), for publications (student newspapers or journals), or for displays (local malls). Care must be taken to ensure that no confidential information is disclosed and that the community organization has given permission for its evaluation findings to be released. Some of the most convenient ways for sharing information include posting results on a Web site, preparing a poster for display at the community organization, integrating results into an annual report or some other form of report to the community, or incorporating them into an informational brochure for the community partner.

Once careful assessment of your achievements has been completed, it may still feel like there is much left undone. Children are still hungry, families are still homeless, and communities are still unsafe. There is almost always more to be accomplished in a community than we are able to do during a single service-learning experience. We hope that your thoughtful evaluation of your efforts will provide you and others with inspiration and commitment to keep engaging in and working on community issues since you were, in fact, able to demonstrate that you can "make a difference" in the lives of others. We encourage you to remember that your focused community engagement and kindness can have lasting impact even after your experience and contribution is long over.

In our graphic design class we created an identity system for a nonprofit that provides mentors for kids starting in the second grade and continuing through their high school graduation. The organization was thrilled with our work. They were invited to the White House, where they handed out a brochure we designed. The most rewarding thing for me was that a few months after the class ended I was at a Saturday football game and a van pulled up with our logo on it. Out poured a whole football team of middle-school kids wearing shirts with our logo. It was amazing to see!

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**Key Concepts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>analyze</th>
<th>evaluate</th>
<th>outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>assess</td>
<td>evidence</td>
<td>qualitative data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIE Model</td>
<td>indicators</td>
<td>quantitative data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>concepts</td>
<td>implement</td>
<td>Self-Assessment Matrix</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key Issues**

- How might you identify the best method for evaluating your service-learning experience?
- What are some ways to observe and measure the outcomes to a service experience?
- How might evaluation be integrated into ongoing course activities?
- What are some of the challenges to evaluation, and how might you overcome them?
- How might the evaluation findings best be disseminated?
**Exercise 9.6: Community Evaluation of Service-Learning**

In order to get feedback from community representatives on the service-learning experience, select community representatives (and/or clients) and invite them to participate in a guided discussion with yourself, other students, and your faculty member. Assign a facilitator to guide and monitor the conversation. (You may even want to identify and invite an independent facilitator, not the faculty or anyone else directly involved with the class). Encourage everyone to participate, making sure that no one person dominates the conversation; the goal here is inclusion, not consensus or agreement.

Here are some sample questions that you can adapt to fit your own service experience:

1. Please introduce yourself and indicate your role in this service-learning course.
2. What went well during this experience? What factors contributed to successful outcomes? What evidence do you have of this success?
3. What obstacles or barriers did you encounter during this experience? Please describe how these could have been avoided.
4. Did you accomplish your own personal goals for this experience?
5. What would you do differently next time? What is one thing you would change?
6. What might the college do differently in preparing students or community representatives for the service-learning activity?
7. What might the community organization do differently in preparing students or faculty for the service-learning activity?
8. How would you describe this experience to another student or community representative? What would you emphasize?

After the conversation, debrief the experience and discuss what you will do with all the information that was shared. Who should have access to it? In what format?
Appendix 9.1: Self-Assessment Matrix Descriptions

Learning is an incremental process, with skills and expertise building as you progress. A detailed explanation of each component of the Self-Assessment Matrix follows. As you read this, consider how it applies to you personally based upon past experiences.

- **Learning**: At the Explorer level, students have no prior experience with service-learning and learn through their initial exposure to the pedagogy, community involvement, and the idea of working in a collaborative setting. Novices learn through specifically observing the processes and interactions and through the ways in which their faculty model collaboration. Students who are Engaged learn through active participation in the experience. At the Expert level, students learn by leading others through the activities that contribute to a service-learning course.

- **Personal Development**: Explorers are generally self-focused on their personal concerns, without considering integration of learning skills and decision making. The Novice student is developing self-awareness and the ability to employ a more integrated approach to learning and personal decision making. Engaged students view their learning and decision making as connected to, and influenced by, others. Expert students construct the “big picture,” integrating their learning and skills with long-term career and personal decisions.

- **Reflection**: At the Explorer level students do not actively employ reflection as a learning strategy. As a Novice, reflection is deliberate (and often assigned!) but not integrated into learning. Reflection typically is presented in journal entries as a “weather report”—a self-conscious listing of activities that does not connect to concepts, readings, or other course activities. At the Engaged level, students begin to make connections among the various aspects of the service-learning experience. The Expert demonstrates reflection that is rich and integrated. Students thoughtfully examine the associations among readings, course goals, community experiences, and their own personal development.

- **Connection to Community**: As Explorers, students view themselves individually and without connection to community. As Novice, students start to recognize community needs as well as community assets and begin to see their own connections to the community. At the Engaged level, students begin to forge relationships with the local community and define themselves in the context of their community. At the Expert level, students recognize interconnected needs and facilitate community linkages.

- **Intercultural Competence**: As Explorer, students view the world through their own set of values. As Novice, they develop an awareness of the similarities and differences of diverse groups. Engaged students are cognizant of differences and respectful of others’ viewpoints, values, and priorities. Students at the Expert level recognize the importance of seeking diverse input to community issues. They appreciate differences and see them as a vital component in service-learning.

- **Civic Engagement**: Explorers are unaware of the construct of civic engagement. At the Novice level, they participate in various activities without knowingly viewing them as contributing to community development. At the Engaged level, students understand the concept of “civic engagement” and have the capacity to organize activities that contribute to its development. As Expert, students have developed a comprehensive understanding of civic engagement, can initiate activity, and have developed an understanding of social justice that they then can apply to community problems.

- **Capacity to Work in Community**: With no prior experience, the capacity of the Explorer is not known. For the student at the Novice level, interaction with community is limited and directed, so they follow the course assignments and participate as requested. At the Engaged level, students develop a more independent ability to respond to requests without the specific direction needed by the Novice. At the Expert level, students work with the community in imaginative ways that recognize and respond to need; they are self-directed and able to provide leadership to others.
A colleague of ours at Portland State University begins each of her service-learning courses by asking her students to consider the following: What they are about to engage in as learners-through-serving will ultimately compose only about a third of the totality of their experience. The first third, she says, they’ve already lived through, in the days and weeks and months and years leading up to this particular moment in their personal and academic lives. The middle third is the collaboration they are embarking on right now. The final third lives in the future, when this group of individuals takes the learning they have gained in the past and in this current moment and applies it to future actions. Remembering that we have had a whole host of experiences that has shaped the persons we are, that we currently are living a new set of experiences that inform our being, and that we make decisions, whether intentionally or not, about who we are becoming, reminds us of the power we have as individuals to choose how to live our lives within communities of others. (Complete exercise 10.1.)

Becoming an engaged citizen is an ongoing journey that requires hard work, critical thinking, clear communication skills, the ability to collaborate with others, and problem-solving expertise. Service-learning and community-based learning courses, like the one you are completing, are evidence of your college’s commitment to providing you with opportunities to acquire valuable citizenship-related skills.

We hope that you have been able to use this book as a tool to help you develop a personal understanding of yourself as a civically engaged individual and to broaden your insights about community issues and the role your academic knowledge might serve in addressing them. Through the activities and exercises, we have tried to foster the realization in each of you that, as engaged citizens, you bring your own unique strengths and skills to collective efforts to promote social justice and the greater good of your communities.

In chapter 1, “What is Service-Learning?” we examined the nature of “service” as it is enacted in service-learning courses and connected this description to a larger conversation about democracy, citizenship, and civic responsibility. The fundamental concept behind learning through serving is the idea that as citizens it is our obligation to contribute to the improvement of our nation and the world. We are accountable for ourselves and for the welfare of others. In this chapter we also explored what role colleges and universities should play in facilitating the development of students’ civic capacities. As we discovered, the development of civic mindedness is more than just what you know, it is what you do with what you know. In essence, community-based educational experiences increase your capacity to apply your knowledge and skills to civic issues.

Chapter 2, “Building and Maintaining Community Partnerships,” explored the student–community partner relationship, with particular emphasis on the respective benefits and rights of both yourself as a student and your community partners as part of the reciprocal learning environment. In this chapter, we introduced...
LEARNING THROUGH SERVING

Exercise 10.1: Reflecting in Thirds

As you prepare to leave this learning-through-serving experience, reflect for a moment on how you got here, what happened for you in this experience, and how those experiences have shaped possibilities for your future choices. You might choose to read through any or all of the exercises you have completed so far, particularly those that have asked you to think about past experiences and reflect rigorously on current ones. After spending sufficient time reflecting, do a ten- to twenty-minute freewrite in response to these questions:

- What life experiences (of any sort) prepared you for this learning-through-serving experience? When you remember back to important events and moments leading up to this community service endeavor, what stands out as being especially important to your preparation for this work? How did you enter this experience?
- What happened to you and for you while you were here? When you review important events and moments in this community service endeavor, what stands out as being especially important and meaningful? How were you in this experience?
- How are you poised to leave this experience? When you imagine the places your experiences are leading you, what stands out as being especially compelling for you to experience next as a person, a community member, a learner? How will you move forward from here in your academic, professional, and personal lives?

Adapted from the work of Carol Gabrielli (2003).
in bringing your work as a class team into collaboration with a community partner. We introduced the concepts of task, maintenance, and organizational roles, as well as exercises and activities to help you identify how group members assumed particular roles within your group. Finally, we emphasized the importance of clear communication and active listening among group members and between group members and community partners as a useful strategy for addressing the challenges of working together on a community-based service project.

Chapter 5, “Creating Cultural Connections: Navigating Difference, Investigating Power, Unpacking Privilege,” provided you with resources to frame your service-learning experience in ways that expand your capacities for working effectively with those who are different from you and to recognize how to act on shared desires for creating positive change in the world. We asserted that our different perspectives are actually keys to maximizing the innovative problem-solving capacities that exist in any community setting. We explored the ways that our notions of “service” are culturally based and sought out a common language for serving and learning with respect and integrity. Moreover, to be interculturally competent, we proposed that you need to cultivate a mindset, a skillset, and a heartset. A useful conceptual tool, Bennett’s “Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity,” was introduced as a framework to explain the development of increasing sophistication in our experience and navigation of differences. Finally, chapter 5 challenged each of us to explore the ways in which privilege attaches to membership in certain groups in order to better understand the cultural dynamics at play in our community partnerships and to continue to develop our intercultural competence.

In chapters 6, 7, and 8, we highlighted multiple approaches for understanding the community-based experience—when things are going well and when things are not going well. Specifically, these chapters explored how you can bridge the disconnect between learning and doing through reflection, what can be done if the community interaction is a disappointment or is “failing,” and how the context and the con-
tent of the service-learning course itself provide direction and meaning.

In chapter 6, “Reflection in Action,” we turned our attention to the process of reflection and the central role that it plays in service-learning classes. We reviewed the work of Dewey and Kolb and introduced the idea of deep reflection that is composed of three elements: observation, personal relevance, and connection. To practice deep reflection, we offered ideas for different modes of reflection—telling, activities, multimedia, and writing—that may be helpful as you search for ways to best articulate the insights and meaning that are part of your community-based experience.

Even with meticulous planning, carefully outlined expectations, and outstanding effort on everyone's part, things can go off-course in service-learning courses. Chapter 7, “Failure with the Best of Intentions,” looked at how to approach breakdowns and conflict constructively. We “walked” you through a three-step program to prepare you to minimize destructive conflict and avoid a range of what we called “roadblocks and flat tires.”

First, we encouraged you to explore some prior experiences in collaborative contexts while considering how those experiences have been framed and defined in terms of “success” or “failure.” Second, we discussed some of the more common roadblocks in the service-learning journey. Finally, chapter activities and exercises—like the “D-U-E Process” for understanding cultural or personality differences—provided you with opportunities to consider and “try on” some alternative response strategies for negotiating unexpected events and circumstances.

In chapter 8, “Expanding Horizons: New Views of Course Concepts,” we examined how to apply academic discipline-based knowledge in community settings. Unlike most classes where the “right” answers are filled in on the “test,” your service-learning project tested you to consider multiple approaches in determining what is right for the community. This is transformational learning—deep learning where new knowledge becomes personally meaningful and connected to community. We examined the relationships between course content and community challenges in order to connect your experiences with the larger world of ideas and issues outside the college campus.

Finally, in chapter 9 we examined the conceptual underpinnings of evaluation in service-learning courses and provided you with tools such as the “Concepts, Indicators, and Evidence (CIE) Model” to help you evaluate the results of your community-based engagement. The “Self-Assessment Matrix” also enabled you to identify strengths you have gained during the project by recognizing your own individual levels of experience with various dimensions of service-learning. We also asked you to revisit your “Action Learning Plan for Serving” to examine how the different outcomes of your service project provide evidence for whether you met (or did not meet) specific partner, learning, and service goals.

As we noted in the beginning of this chapter, the journey toward becoming an engaged community member and citizen requires, among other things, skills, commitment, a willingness to be open to new ideas, and effort. It does not begin and end with a single service-learning course at your college or university. This journey is an ongoing, lifelong one. Still, you have traveled quite a distance on this particular service project road, so let’s take one final look back as you begin to prepare for future journeys (exercise 10.3).

We hope that you have evolved from understanding yourself solely as an individual student in a class of other individual students, motivated only by rewards like grades and course credit, to feeling like part of an interconnected community of other students, faculty, and community partners who are all working together to make a difference in our shared world. So where do you go from here? In a famous quote, Mahatma Ghandi challenges each of us to live the values that underlie service-learning: “You must be the change you wish to see in the world.” As you have discovered in your service-learning experience, doing so requires skill, insight, patience, courage, compassion, fortitude, commitment, and a host of other ways of being. In our final activity, we encourage you to look forward, into your future as an engaged participant in the life of our communities (exercise 10.4).

On behalf of the persons with whom you have learned through serving over these past many weeks, we thank you for the efforts you have made in and for our shared communities. We all benefit from the work each of us chooses to do. The future is in all of our hands. The next step of your journey is up to you.
Exercise 10.3: The Other Side of the Mountain

You may be familiar with the children’s song “The Bear Went over the Mountain.” The punchline of the song is that, when the bear crossed over the mountain, what the bear saw was the other side of the mountain . . . and then another mountain, and another . . .

Working on your own or in a group, you have completed a service-learning project this term. You have “crossed over the mountain” with this project and addressed specific community needs while also realizing personal learning and service goals. As the song promises, there are many more mountains and community needs that are waiting just ahead.

Consider the following questions to identify the new skills, knowledge, and insights you will take with you on the next step of your journey.

• What did you learn about yourself in this learning-through-serving experience?
• What did you learn about your community?
• What new knowledge related to your academic discipline can you utilize in addressing community needs?
• How has the service-learning experience contributed to your sense of being an engaged community member and citizen?

Exercise 10.4: Being the Change

Again, take plenty of time as you consider the questions listed below. In fact, you might return to them again and again as you choose how to bring your personal energy and expertise to the communities of which you are a part.

• When you survey the world (in the form of your family, your neighborhood, your community, your city, your state, your country, or the global community), how would you describe the change you’d like to see in its simplest terms? What change do you wish to see in the world?
• How would this change benefit you and those closest to you? How would it benefit others, and thus contribute to the common good?
• What would it cost you and those closest to you to act in ways that might bring about this change? What would the cost be to others not close to you?
• How might you seek to balance the benefits to your work to bring about this change with the costs to yourself and others?
• How has this service-learning experience prepared you to work for this change? What skills and capacities have you developed that will assist you in your work as a change agent? What skills and capacities would you like to develop further?
• What could you do right now to contribute to this change happening? How might you create shifts in your life such that you might be the change you wish to see in the world in an ongoing, committed way?
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