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Critical Service-Learning as Social Justice Education: A Case Study of the Citizen Scholars Program

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A critical service-learning pedagogy links service-learning and social justice education by engaging students in meaningful service in the community and integrating that experience with thoughtful introduction, analysis, and discussion of issues important to understanding social justice. The Citizen Scholars Program is a unique four semester service-learning experience with an explicit aim to develop students' capacities to act for positive social change. Using the experiences of the second completion cohort of this program as a case study, this research suggests that a critical service-learning pedagogy encourages students to think more deeply about and develop commitments to act for social justice.

In a traditional service-learning experience, students are required to spend a predetermined number of hours in service to the community and to reflect on that service and its connection to the course content. This practice has been shown to enhance students' cultural awareness, leadership, and communication skills (Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, & Yee, 2000; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Neururer & Rhoads, 1998) and, at the same time, it has been criticized for its reinforcement of social hierarchies, patronization, and deficits-based approach to community service (Forbes, Garber, Kensinger, & Slagter, 1999; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002).

The 15-week semester that encompasses most service-learning experiences is sometimes criticized as simply not enough time to create meaningful change in communities (Bickford & Reynolds, 2002) or to understand the impact of service-learning pedagogy (Howard, 2003; Koth, 2003). Others challenge that service-learning courses often neglect the critical questions and political foundations central to the pedagogy's influence and effectiveness (Bickford & Reynolds, 2002; Brown, 2001; Butin, 2006; Robinson, 2000; Rosenberger, 2000). The case study presented here explores the impact of a service-learning experience designed to encourage students to think critically about social issues and act creatively to produce change. This experience, the Citizen Scholars Program, is deliberate and intentional in its design. Expressly challenging the critiques of service-learning, Citizen Scholars combines a prolonged engagement in service with a curriculum focused on social change and social justice to support students' civic and social justice engagement. Researching the impact of a four semester curricular service-learning program provides new insight into the potential of service-learning; particularly, how service experiences—when linked intentionally with classroom components of reading, writing, discussion, and reflection—can transform students' cognitive understanding of complex concepts (in this case, social justice).

Critical service-learning is a concept that first emerged in the service-learning literature in 1997 when Robert Rhoads introduced "critical community service." Moving this concept more centrally into academic experiences, both Rice and Pollack (2000) and Rosenberger (2000) employed the term "critical service learning" to describe a social justice-oriented approach to community service learning. The distinction between service-learning and critical service-learning can be summarized in its attention to social change, its questioning of the distribution of power in society, and its focus on developing authentic relationships between higher education institutions and the community served. According to Rosenberger (2000),

> Service learning has grown out of a long history of community service in which volunteer service to individual people or to the community is perceived as meeting individual needs but not usually as political action intended to transform structural inequalities. (p. 29)

Critical service-learning may be viewed as an orientation toward service-learning that emphasizes social

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Table 1
Key Aspects of the Citizen Scholars Program Experience

First semester "The Good Society"	Second semester "Integrative Seminar"	Third semester "Organizing for Change"	Fourth semester "Public Policy and Citizen Action"
• Identify service site • Perform 60 hours of service • First reflection defining the good society • Weekly reflections on thoughts that emerge in service • Closing reflection revisiting initial ideas of the good society and exploring how perspectives have changed	• Continue with service or identify new service site • Complete 60 hours of service • Weekly reflections on thoughts that emerge in service • Students lead facilitation of class discussions • Closing reflection on the CSP process exploring how they feel about service and the program	• Continue with service or identify new service site • Complete 60 hours of service • Guided reflections exploring questions tied to service and weekly readings • Students lead facilitation of class discussions • Reflection explicitly explores students conceptions of justice before and after reading a theoretical essay on social justice • Propose capstone experience based on service in the community and research topic	• Design a capstone project where the outcome is aimed toward meaningful social change • Implement capstone project with service to the community as an element of project implementation • Weekly progress reports • Capstone reflection and presentation to share experience with peers and community agencies • Essay to explore commitment to community involvement and participation • Exit interview

justice outcomes over more traditional citizenship goals.

Rahima Wade (2000) describes the difference as "service for an ideal" versus "service to an individual" (p. 97). While some feel that the connections between service-learning and social justice are inherent, critical service-learning makes those connections intentional and explicit. Bickford and Reynolds (2002) demonstrate a critical service-learning orientation by exploring the additional questions that students should consider: "One of service-learning's biggest limitations, admittedly, is that it induces students to ask only, 'How can we help these people?' instead of the harder question, 'Why are conditions this way?'" (p. 231). Critical service-learning programs not only challenge students to ask why, but support students in understanding the causes of injustice, and encourages students to see themselves as agents of social change (Bickford & Reynolds, 2002; Rhoads, 1997; Wade, 2000). Fenwick (2001) labels this pedagogical orientation as "progressive," meaning that educators focus on an individual's responsibility to society and the critical issues facing communities, and view service-learning "as a problem-solving instrument of social and political reform" (p. 6).

THE CITIZEN SCHOLARS PROGRAM

This case study is focused on an academic service-learning program, the Citizen Scholars Program (CSP), at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Students in the CSP complete a four-course sequence plus one elective course (over four semesters) aimed at preparing students to be agents of change and active participants in communities. During their tenure in the program, Citizen Scholars are required to take the four core courses[1] of the program and complete 60 hours of service in the community each semester.[2] Citizen Scholars also take an additional community service learning "elective" approved by the program directors. This elective can be taken anytime during the students' college careers, although a student is not considered "alum" until the five service-learning courses have been completed. For each semester a student is active in the CSP, she receives a $500 scholarship.

The critical service-learning pedagogy applied through the CSP encourages a commitment to service and to the ideals of social justice. Through the service-learning experience, students balance classroom and community components utilizing each aspect of the pedagogy to enhance their understanding of a particular concept (see Table 1). The CSP centers the content on social responsibility and community change, asking each participant to deepen her commitment to community and to be an involved and active citizen. Through this emphasis, students must first come to believe and understand that the current community is somehow flawed. Then, the student should seek to be aware of root causes that lead to the flaws and problems they now recognize in the community. It is this process that first opens the door to understanding social justice. The recognition that society is not perfect and becoming cognizant of how and whom society's imperfections impact raises consciousness around injustice. Belief in, hope for, and imagination of a different kind of society is the entry point for theorizing about social justice.

In the first semester of the program, Citizen Scholars select the service experience where they will spend more than 200 hours across the two years of their involvement in the program. Almost immediately members of the CSP envision "the good society" (also the name of the

first course of the program, Anthropology 297H) and how their actions can bring them closer to realizing that vision. As the CSP experience continues, students lead class discussions raising key questions and critical incidents that shape their understanding and experience. Written reflections on identity, privilege, various manifestations of oppression (e.g., racism, classism, ableism, heterosexism), and social justice challenge the Citizen Scholars to think more deeply about themselves, their engagement in service, and how (or whether) their actions contribute to social justice. As a culminating experience, students take their experiences in service and the skills and understanding gained through the CSP to research, design, implement, and evaluate a capstone project with an outcome aimed toward meaningful social change. This program design seeks to develop in students the skills, knowledge, experience, and commitment to work collaboratively with others for social change in their communities.

Attention to Social Change

Wade (2001) laments that service-learning programs focus far more attention on the learning and development of students than on development and change in communities. "Rarely do students in service-learning programs consider whether some injustice has created the need for service in the first place" (Wade, 2001, p. 1). Helping students understand the consequences of service—particularly the way that service can perpetuate need by placing "Band-Aids" on community problems—is an important aspect of critical service-learning (Bickford & Reynolds, 2002; Boyle-Baise & Efiom, 2000; Chesler, 1995; Cruz, 1990; Densmore, 2000; Rhoads, 1997; Rosenberger, 2000; Warren, 1998). The CSP brings attention to social change throughout its curriculum, which asks students to consider how aspects of identity impact the need for service, as well as to analyze root causes of social problems. In this way, Citizen Scholars are challenged to consider themselves and their role as service providers and also to question whether community concerns are impacted (or not) based on the community work in which they (and others) are engaged.

Social change "addresses tremendous inequalities and fundamental social challenges by creating structures and conditions that promote equality, autonomy, cooperation, and sustainability" (Langseth & Troppe, 1997, p. 37). Unique to the CSP curriculum, is a final capstone experience (proposed and researched in the third semester and implemented in the fourth) that asks students to identify a community problem, research and analyze its causes, and then propose and implement a strategy that might lead to long-term sustainable change. The Citizen Scholar selects an issue for her capstone based on experience and knowledge gained in the service placement. This project allows service learners to critically analyze their work in the community. O'Grady (2000) reminds us, "Responding to individual human needs is important, but if the social policies that create these needs is [sic] not also understood and addressed, then the cycle of dependence remains" (p. 13). Through the capstone experience, students in the CSP are encouraged to go beyond service, to designing and implementing a project that attempts to respond effectively to community needs and concerns. The intention of the capstone is for students to learn from the process, the missteps and successes, in order to engage more deeply in the process of community change.

Questioning the Distribution of Power

Varlotta (1997) argues that the undeniable power differentials in service-learning relationships "must be exposed, scrutinized, even reconfigured" (p. 119). A critical service-learning pedagogy not only acknowledges the imbalance of power in the service relationship, but seeks to challenge the imbalance and redistribute power through the ways that service-learning experiences are both planned and implemented. The CSP asks students to question the distribution of power in their service experiences and in their community (and in the services the community does and does not provide). "For service-learning to avoid patronizing volunteerism that reinforces 'charity' (i.e., the unidirectional flow from servers who 'have' to servees who 'don't'), everyone's perspective must be accounted for and eventually integrated into the service experience" (Varlotta, 1997, p. 38).

The CSP attempts to challenge and reconfigure the distribution of power by bringing community expertise into the classroom. Community members frequently share their experience and knowledge with the program's students as instructors and co-teachers in the classroom. Community partners also play key roles in helping CSP faculty identify issues and skill sets to shape the curriculum. Additionally, community partners evaluate the Citizen Scholars working with their organizations every semester. In the evaluation process, students (generally) were able to meet with the partner to get feedback, identify areas for change, and strategize next steps to engage more deeply in the work of the organization.

Sharing power with students through shared facilitation of class discussions is another way power is reconfigured. Instead of students solely "learning from" faculty, in the second semester course ("Integrative Seminar"), students shaped the syllabus alongside faculty, selecting readings and facilitating discussions. Shared facilitation continued in the third and fourth semester courses, though syllabi were constructed without student input.

Developing Authentic Relationships

The focus on developing authentic relationships, relationships based on connection, is an important element

of a critical service-learning pedagogy. To encourage the development of authentic relationships, the cohort experience and relationship building among CSP peers is emphasized. The program encourages students to find and commit to a single service site during the first semester of the program. This placement, then, becomes the service site where students complete their service (60 hours per semester) for much of the next two years. In these long-term service placements, not only do students have the opportunity to build relationships and make connections with members of the constituent community, but community agencies are able to place these students in more integral service placements that allow them to get involved in some of the central planning and development of the agencies.

Critical service-learning demands that we recognize the differences in service relationships, but as Collins (2000) reminds us, "most relationships across difference are squarely rooted in relations of domination and subordination[;] we have much less experience relating to people as different but equal" (p. 459). We must instead learn to see our differences as "categories of connection," places from which to analyze power, build coalitions, and develop empathy (Collins, 2000). Placements that give the students further insight into how the unequal distribution of power in society impacts the agency, as well as the tools to analyze what strategies might lead to sustainable change are emphasized in helping students to select their service placements.

METHODOLOGY

This research seeks to reveal how an innovative critical service-learning experience, the Citizen Scholars Program, can support students in developing more complex understandings of and deeper commitments to social justice. Using a case study approach, the data presented here refer to the second completion cohort of the CSP (those students who completed the program in May 2002). Eleven women, who joined the CSP in either Fall 1999 or Fall 2000, completed the fourth and final course of the CSP during the Spring semester of 2002. All 11 women shared the same classroom space during the 2001–2002 academic year with 8 of the women entering the program during the same academic semester (Fall 2000), and therefore, also sharing classroom space together during the 2000–2001 academic year. The other three participants entered the program together in the Fall of 1999 and after completing the first year together (two of the four courses), took a year sabbatical from the program to study abroad.

The CSP is a selective program in two ways: First, students self-select by determining whether or not to apply; second, applicants are selected by a membership committee that decides to grant acceptance to the program.[3] Because of this, the program yields a small number of participants (approximately 20 students are accepted into the program on an annual basis; 17 participants were selected to begin in the Fall of 2000). Additionally, because the program requires a four semester commitment, and the core courses of the program must be taken in sequence, attrition from the program is significant. During the 2000–2001 academic year and the 2001–2002 academic year, eight students who should have completed in May 2002 either withdrew from the program or requested a leave of absence.[4] Three students who began the program in the Fall of 1999 re-entered the program (one in the Spring semester of 2001 and two in the Fall of 2001) resulting in 11 students completing the program in May 2002.

The second completion cohort of the CSP is relatively homogenous with regard to race and gender. All 11 participants in this study identify as women. Additionally, 10 of the respondents identify as white, while the eleventh participant is a woman of color. Through self-reports of class identity, two students identified as low-income, one student described her family as lower-middle-class, four students declared themselves middle-class, and four others upper- middle-class.

Exploring factors integral to a critical service-learning pedagogy, I describe the classroom and community service components of a service-learning program and how the experience facilitated students' understanding of and commitment to social justice. Service-learning research studies almost always focus on single-semester service initiatives, and while quantitative measures provide accessible data about program impact, the opportunity to understand the specific processes of the pedagogy and how those processes shape students' learning is not often part of these study designs. Using a more longitudinal approach, this research explores the experiences of students in the four semester service-learning experience of the CSP.

For this research, I collected data from three different points in the participants' service-learning experiences. The first is a pre-CSP collection in the form of the students' application essays. Second is the collection of written materials during the students' tenure in CSP. These materials include students' written reflections from each of the four courses. I conducted exit interviews upon students' completion of the program. Transcripts from those one to two hour interviews at the end of the Spring 2002 semester complete the data that were collected and analyzed for this study. Post-transcription, each respondent was provided with a copy of her transcribed interview during the summer of 2003 in order to respond to new thoughts or emergent experiences brought up by reading her words from the initial interview. I connected with the respondents via e-mail to collect new thoughts regarding their exit interview transcripts.

The CSP writing assignments and exit interview focus on questions of service, citizenship, social change, and social justice. Throughout the four courses of the CSP, students are asked to explore these issues integrating their service experiences into their writing about these concepts. Review of this writing permitted the opportunity to investigate the evolution of students' thinking about the concepts across the two years of the program. The exit interview (along with the e-mailed correspondence regarding the interview in Summer 2003) concluded the exploration from which I gleaned information about students' understanding of these concepts at the conclusion of their service-learning experience and how they believe their service-learning experience influenced that understanding.

Data were analyzed using grounded theory methodology (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to explore the impacts and possibility of the critical service-learning pedagogy of the CSP as a practice for social justice education. I have chosen to pursue this research using qualitative methods because of the "emphasis on processes and meanings" that a qualitative approach allows (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 4) and to utilize a case study application for reporting to incorporate "intensive, holistic description" of the Citizen Scholars experience (Merriam, 1998, p. 27).

Content analysis of the written materials collected from the students of the CSP began the process of data analysis. Content analysis is an "overall approach" that allowed me to analyze the various forms of communication produced by the members of the CSP to document patterns (Rossman & Rallis, 1998). Overarching themes extracted from the data provide insight into the elements of the service-learning experience that influence students' understandings of and commitments to social justice. With the amount of data available to me, thorough review and coding of the data allowed themes to emerge that shed light on the type of support in both classroom and community settings that allowed the women to struggle with the questions, "What is social justice?" and "How do I live my commitment to social justice?"

Because these women completed the CSP as a cohort, there were common experiences and common themes that emerged in the data. Through coding, I worked inductively with the data and as themes became apparent I generated memos to explicate these themes. Spradley (1980) views data analysis as "a search for patterns" (p. 85). I looked for patterns within individual student experiences and among all of the participants in this research. I believe the themes that emerged in this research allowed me to delve deeper into the practice of critical service-learning (as is practiced in the CSP) to understand the effectiveness of this pedagogy for educating about (and developing commitments to) social justice.

THE CITIZEN SCHOLARS PROGRAM AS SOCIAL JUSTICE EDUCATION

A critical service-learning pedagogy employs a social justice orientation that "redirects the focus of service learning from charity to social change" (Boyle-Baise & Langford, 2004, p. 55). Through an analysis of privilege and oppression, by encouraging students to uncover the root causes that perpetuate the needs addressed by their service sites, and by connecting awareness to action through the development and implementation of a capstone experience, the pedagogy of the Citizen Scholars Program provides the necessary properties to encourage social justice learning for program participants.

Classroom Component

Influential in the Citizen Scholars' understanding of and commitment to social justice was the experience of the service-learning classroom. The classroom environment of the Citizen Scholars operated much like a traditional college classroom, with regular class meetings, writing assignments, course readings, and participation in class discussions. The third and fourth courses of the CSP focused on the capstone project in which students designed and implemented a community initiative aimed toward meaningful social change. Different from a traditional college classroom experience at the University of Massachusetts was class size, ranging from 18 students in the first course ("The Good Society") to 11 students in the final course ("Public Policy and Citizen Action"). This is much smaller than the average class size at the University, where 59% of all classes have 20 students or more (9% of these have more than 100 students) (Univeristy of Massachusetts Amherst Fast Facts, 2006).

This small class size combined with the cohort dynamic of the CSP is crucial to the development of community within the CSP. The CSP classrooms combine experiential activities, small group discussions, and learning circle facilitation techniques to engage students in critical reflection and thoughtful discussion. Over the four semesters, the women of the CSP had deep conversations, shared thoughts, feelings, and experiences, and in many cases became close friends. Brynne[5] acknowledged, "the relationships I've developed as part of this community [the CSP] have sustained me." Students also shared how their relationships as part of the CSP allowed them to think more deeply about their service and the concepts discussed in the courses. Kelly offered in her reflection journal in the third course, "My thoughts [on social justice] are shaped and reshaped with every conversation we have."

The classroom experience also incorporated student co-facilitation. In the second, third, and fourth semesters

of the program, the Citizen Scholars (in pairs) shared responsibility for leading class discussion and facilitating lessons connected to class readings. Students appreciated these student-led sessions noting, "It shows that you recognize that we have something to bring to the table" (Jess). This facilitation would generally incorporate discussions of their service, discussion of the articles, and conversations regarding their differing and changing perspectives. In her exit interview, a Citizen Scholar praised these opportunities as "taking ownership for our own learning" (Brynne). Meredith also praised the shared facilitation during her exit interview. When asked what she thought about the student-led class sessions, she offered:

> It's been a really great space to come to . . . to have a space where I feel comfortable, and I can come and share my views and how I'm feeling about current events. And to listen to people, and people really listening and responding and being honest, rather than . . . a lecture style where you're just being talked at, but you're actually being talked to. It's been a really great space for me.

In the final two semesters of the program, the Citizen Scholars researched a community issue in-depth and then implemented a plan of action to work for meaningful change. The capstone experience provided students the opportunity to evaluate their commitments, to better understand and outline their own process for "working for social justice" and to better clarify for themselves what a more just world entails (Meredith). For example, Beth and Sarah collaborated on a recycling program for a local elementary school, Meredith organized a tutoring workshop to get parents more involved in teaching their young children to read, and Joey and Ryan worked alongside community housing advocates to create a series of forums designed to raise awareness and encourage action regarding affordable housing.

Students were asked to look beyond service to the larger societal concerns that prompt the need for the service work they engaged in as Citizen Scholars. The CSP faculty invited community partners into the classroom as students worked on their capstone experiences (during the fourth semester) to add their knowledge and experiences to classroom concepts and to help students process challenges they experienced in their capstone projects. The capstone experience was lauded by students as an opportunity to "link theory and practice" (Brynne). Aida, who lobbied city officials for accessible emergency housing to support disabled women survivors of domestic violence, said of her capstone experience, "[It] makes me want to be more engaged in my community in the decisions that are made for my community." She added, "It was not just volunteering, but trying to make sustainable change, and I don't think I would have done that outside of this setting . . . it is a very big thing."

This capstone experience supported social justice learning as students actively sought to implement their vision for sustainable change on an issue they researched for an entire semester. The process required that they talk to and build relationships with people affected by the issue they had selected. As Aida investigated concerns regarding emergency housing for disabled survivors of domestic violence, it was important that she understand the needs of that community in order to develop and implement meaningful change. Students encountered roadblocks in the process of enacting change. When Sarah and Beth learned that recycling was more costly, both in time and funds, than throwing away materials at a local school, convincing school officials to implement a recycling program for classroom materials and cafeteria waste became more difficult. "We never imagined that it could be in a school's best interest NOT to recycle. . . . How do you work with that?" Beth wrote in a progress report during the capstone semester. In considering the success of their capstone projects and how well they understood the community issue they aimed to address, the experience was self-reflective, as students considered their role in the process of enacting change. Joey reflected on the capstone project in the program exit interview:

> And I don't know if the project succeeded in being something more than a band-aid within the community service realm, but something that helps you put the pieces together in your learning process, to look at and grapple with social justice is important if it's what we want to work for.

Through the course readings offered throughout the CSP experience, students were introduced to concepts and issues relevant to service and social justice. The CSP combined science fiction, scholarly articles, reflective essays, and case studies to engage students in conversations regarding identity and oppression, privilege and power, social justice, social change, and processes to create those conditions. Jess reflected in a journal during the third semester course "Organizing for Change":

> We read all different pieces about injustice and struggles of oppressed peoples for justice. It's important to know the history of ongoing struggles. . . . If we really are organizing for change, understanding this history will help us raise awareness through our service.

All of the students in the second completion cohort credited the readings of the CSP with changing their perceptions and allowing them to develop their understandings of social justice. "Reading all of the different materials and million other things has really changed my perceptions of the world and other people. I don't accept things so blindly," Kelly shared during her exit interview.

Students also found comfort and inspiration in the readings, "I also find support in the individuals we read about who have devoted their lives to make our society a good one," wrote Aida in an essay during the capstone course. The right readings can be a source of transformation, as Wendy suggested in a reflection responding to readings on identity and oppression in the third semester course "Organizing for Change":

> I believe that these thoughts and messages have really made me reconsider where I stand and how I deal with these situations. I think that they will have a long term effect on me merely by their presence in my mind and the constant reconsideration of my actions.

Readings were unquestionably important to creating awareness of the social justice concepts central to the curriculum of the CSP, but equally important to this process was the intentional exploration of the readings through conversation and reflection. It was not enough to just read the readings, the students had to process them in order to find the relevance to their lives, their service, the community, and efforts toward social justice.

Social justice learning was enhanced through the readings that were introduced as part of the CSP curriculum. As many of the readings dealt with issues of unearned privilege, oppression, and social responsibility, they encouraged students to consider themselves and their experiences in relation to the concepts communicated through the readings. At times, readings prompted dissonance, presenting information that challenged previously held notions and proposing visions of how the world could be.

The writing assignments challenged students to integrate themselves and their experiences alongside their analyses of the concepts and issues explored in the readings. Through writing, students were able to put their thoughts on paper and use earlier reflections as a way to process their evolving understanding of social justice. Rebecca reflected at the end of her first semester:

> After looking back at each journal entry in chronological order, I was astonished at my increasing pessimism. . . . I felt as though the world was so ridden with poverty, inequality and apathy that no matter what I did, it wouldn't be enough. And finally I accepted this. No matter what I do, it won't be enough to change the world into anything close to Utopia. However, that doesn't mean that I should give up, because if everyone does what they can, we can change things together—one person at a time.

Here, Rebecca acknowledges her past perspectives and used them to reaffirm her efforts and commitment to change. The written reflections, required during the first, second, and third semesters of the CSP, were well-received by most participants. A few commented that the writing often felt redundant and more of a chore than a learning experience. Students struggled with trying to find new things to include in their service journals and were concerned that the prompts that guided reading reflections were at times repetitive. Simultaneously, however, students expressed appreciation for the comments and feedback they received from the teaching team as their reflections were returned. "I really value the time you take to respond to my thoughts and concerns," Joey wrote in a service journal during her first semester in "The Good Society." Students saw the reflections as an ongoing dialogue with the instructors and believed that the information exchange provided a challenge that made them think deeper about their own beliefs and come to new (and sometimes very different) understandings.

Service Component

The service experience is central to the Citizen Scholars' experience as it is with most service-learning programs. It is the act of service, of community involvement that changes the traditional learning experience. The service component received mixed reviews as students were challenged by various aspects of the experience, but all participants felt their service was instrumental in influencing them toward deeper understandings of social justice. Often, students' conflicts in their service experiences (feeling mistreated, unsure about the direction of the program or agency) brought about more clarity in similar ways that the service experience brought to light the ways through which oppression and injustice manifested in the lives of the community members they served.

As service learners, a common theme in written reflections was their differences from the community served. This encounter with difference in the service experience frequently prompted questions for the Citizen Scholars about the impact of privilege (particularly ability, race, and class privilege) on life circumstances. In a mentoring program, a Citizen Scholar wondered about the young girl with whom she was paired, "if her mother didn't work three jobs" (Rebecca); similarly, in a soup kitchen another student asks about a guest, "If people didn't see him as crazy"(Wendy) how would the lives of these community members be different? The ability, through the service experience, to develop intimate and authentic relationships with people different from themselves and to question the distribution of power in society, prompted the Citizen Scholars to think more deeply about the role of identity (or social group membership) in determining educational aspects, job prospects, housing security, and a number of other significant concerns. In looking at the root causes of problems they were witnessing in their service experiences, students working at a shelter for the homeless moved from early thoughts,

"People don't have enough food to eat and should be fed" (Ryan) to "people with mental illness aren't given the same opportunities as others. They end up at the [shelter] because they are constantly turned away from jobs, even from restaurants. People don't give them a chance because they can't get past their own bias" (Ryan).

Through service, power relationships were often easy to identify, but students like Wendy, were appreciative of how the soup kitchen where she did her service blurred the lines between clients and volunteers by asking everyone to give their time to get meals prepared and to partake in the meals being served. "A sustained service-learning interaction, fused with close analysis to server subjectivity" is critical to addressing mutuality, reciprocity, and the asymmetry that sometimes results as power differentials in the service relationship emerge (Camacho, 2004, p. 31). In the community, students were encouraged to analyze the power relationships in their service experiences and to think consciously about ways to redistribute power to counter oppressive circumstances. Brynne reflected on her relationship with a student she mentored during her third semester as a Citizen Scholar:

> I definitely have a lot of power in our relationship because I am older, have access to the vehicle, and have the busier schedule. . . . I have to check myself to not perpetuate the crap she experiences everyday and to open myself up to all the really cool things that I can learn from her.

Her observation later on in the same journal entry that she "never thought this deeply about community service before Citizen Scholars" demonstrates the impact of this experience for Brynne.

Because the CSP is a four semester sequential program, students have the opportunity (and are encouraged) to continue with a single service agency for the duration of the program. The goal of this program design is to encourage students in the development of authentic relationships with community partners, to gain a better understanding of the social problems the agency addressed, and to participate with increasing depth in the workings of the agency to better understand their services and the impact of the agency. In the group of participants for this research, 6 students continued with a single agency across all four semesters, and 9 of the 11 participants stayed in their service placement for at least a full year. Students gave a variety of reasons for changing placements. Meredith wanted a different experience after being abroad for a year, Beth remained in schools but worked in different kinds of education programs to experience "different approaches to teaching," and Joey, who changed her service placement every semester, admitted to being unsure of what she wanted from her service experience. She concluded in the final semester of the program, "I want something more radical—at least I think I do."

All 11 participants in the CSP were able to point to the service experience as an experience that contributed to their increased understanding of and commitment to social justice. Students, like Ryan and Aida, who continued with one placement through all four semesters of the CSP were able to challenge themselves in different jobs at the site or with new kinds of service (like serving on the Board of Directors and working on writing grants) that gave them a different perspective of the agency and its contribution to community, as well as a deeper understanding of the community served and the problems facing those constituents. Students who shifted sites from semester to semester, like Joey, may not have received the depth of understanding about a particular community agency and issue, but even in shifting sites, these students were able to gain insight into a number of different issues facing the community (or the different ways a single issue manifests for different communities) and the myriad ways one might work for the type of society she desires.

The experience of service, for this Citizen Scholars cohort, challenged stereotypes, developed new skills, made privilege visible, and brought recognition to the systemic nature of oppression. In a reflection on the concept of service in her third semester, Joey observed:

> Service is the real world application of ideas and issues we struggle with in class. Some of what we talk about seems so abstract; when we go out into the world, we see them more clearly and see why we must change.

In service, students were involved in a process of analyzing themselves and their actions as well as the agency's efforts to best understand how and whether their work contributed to positive social change. The Citizen Scholars' engagement in meaningful service facilitated social justice learning in a number of ways. As students built relationships with community members in service, the process raised awareness for the students of the implications of their own identities in contrast with those served. The Citizen Scholars developed new recognition for class privilege, race and racism, issues of ability, pressures to assimilate, and even the "stigma" attached to being a college student doing service. In this way, the service experience also fostered contradiction as students were surprised, like Ryan, when the homeless residents of the shelter addressed her as a "tourist" during her first semester as a Citizen Scholar rather than being grateful for her help, as she had expected. Students' stereotypes about the community and about community members were shattered through their weekly interactions in service. The service experience allowed for "an interactive opportunity in which understandings and practices can be turned on their heads, improvised,

examined and reexamined . . . borders of identity can be explored, even crossed" (Camacho, 2004, p. 32). Service was frequently referenced by Citizen Scholars to provide insights into their understandings of social justice in their weekly reflections and writing assignments. The opportunity to be of service and to consider the effectiveness of service in creating social change allowed students to consider both how service challenges structures that create injustice and how they, as individuals, might (and do) contribute to a movement for social justice.

A survey of the written reflections and exit interview transcripts of participants in the CSP demonstrated that a critical service-learning program that directs its curriculum toward social change, with emphases on developing authentic relationships and questioning the distribution of power, can lead students to more complex understandings of social justice.

At the conclusion of four semesters of service-learning, all 11 members of the CSP expressed a commitment to social justice and were able to articulate ways that they would live their commitments. From expressions of civic participation (e.g., voting, community service) to changing personal habits (e.g., consumer purchases, eating habits, language), from direct action (e.g., protests, petitions, boycotts) to career choices (e.g., teaching, policy work, social service careers), the critical service-learning pedagogy of the CSP curriculum appeared to challenge students to not only make commitments but also act on them.

CRITICAL SERVICE-LEARNING AS SOCIAL JUSTICE EDUCATION

This case study describing the experiences of the second completion cohort of Citizen Scholars suggests great potential for linking critical service-learning and social justice education. The experiences of the Citizen Scholars should encourage us to see the myriad opportunities to develop in students "a critical perspective and action directed toward social change" through the combined pedagogies of service-learning and social justice education (Bell, 1997, p. 14). The concepts and issues of identity, oppression, power, and privilege raised through dialogue in the classroom in tandem with the action of meaningful service in the local community and reflection on both offers the praxis that can lead to the perspective and action desired from students in developing commitments to social justice.

To encourage the development of students' understandings of social justice as well as the commitment necessary to take action on that understanding, it is important for educators to consider the following when implementing a critical service-learning pedagogy.

1. *Bring intentional focus to issues of justice through readings and dialogue.* "We must teach students about the systemic nature of social inequality, including its sources, history, and contemporary manifestations" (Densmore, 2000, p. 55). This focus in the Citizen Scholars curriculum encouraged students, who had all previously been involved in service, to explore their service and their role in service in new ways that allowed them to be more cognizant of how their actions and attitudes impacted possibilities for justice in our society.
2. *Writing opportunities need to focus learners on self, service, and the broader social context.* Students' reflective writing proved to be an important space for students to consider themselves, their actions, and their service. They used it as a time to "sit down and analyze what [they were] doing" (Joey). A combination of free-write journals and guided reflections comprised the majority of writing assignments in the CSP. A central goal of the assignments was to encourage students to examine their own identities in relation to the larger social context of their service and the issues uncovered through the readings. This process forced students to put themselves in the analysis, pushing them to think more deeply about the impact of oppression, power, and privilege in their own life and also on the constituent group they encounter in service and how that might, in turn, replicate in society at large. Through this effort, I believe, the Citizen Scholars were able to gain a deeper perspective on the ways they could contribute to more just and equitable communities.
3. *Encourage prolonged experiences in service that move toward progressively deeper action.* The experience of service can offer a catalyst toward social justice-focused action. As we send students into the community for their service-learning experiences, we should encourage commitments to those experiences, emphasizing the development of authentic relationships with those served. Prolonged experiences lead to more authentic relationships which, in turn, allow the service-learner to enhance her understanding of community concerns and to feel invested in the work and the issues addressed through service. Movement toward deeper action (e.g., from serving meals to securing food donations from local stores, from mentoring a young person to developing a resource manual for other community mentors), provides the student with a broader perspective of the issues the agency purports to address and the ways one can act for positive change.
4. *Emphasize the relationships among students inside the classroom and create community there.* The students in the second completion cohort looked to their peers for support, for challenge, and for comparison. The relationships developed in the classroom created a safe space to ask questions, make mistakes, find common experiences, have difficult conversations, share frustrations, test boundaries, and celebrate positive moments. Most service-learning experiences do not have two years to develop a learning community like that found among the Citizen Scholars, but service-learning classrooms can still aim to create comfort and safety among students. Establishing norms and ground rules to guide conversations and behaviors can establish trust and respect that is essential to developing a strong community. Seeking casual learning environments (either arranging desks in a circle or foregoing traditional

classroom spaces by meeting in lounges or conference rooms) may relax students and support community building. Encouraging students to learn each other's names and to feel comfortable sharing their experiences by modeling as an instructor and by repetition are other ways to create community. A social justice education classroom seeks to honor the purposes of the course, so an environment that does not perpetuate oppression or injustice, respects different cultural and learning styles, and supports open dialogue is essential. This type of environment fosters a learning community that provides enough challenge and support to encourage learning and change associated with social justice (Adams & Marchesani, 1997).

5. *Support student-directed learning through opportunities for shared teaching*. Citizen Scholars credited co-facilitation opportunities with increasing confidence and feeling empowered in their educational endeavors. Student co-facilitations allow students to manage the classroom and to direct the conversation and lessons toward issues that are testing them in service or literature. Opportunities for shared teaching can serve several functions for the classroom. The issues that occupy students' facilitations can alert faculty to issues and problems in the service site or concepts with which students are struggling. Through building relationships with co-facilitators during the planning and facilitation process, student teaching can aid the development of community in the classroom. As discussed previously, co-facilitation also redistributes power in the classroom, showing students that their knowledge is valid and respected. Further, the experience of planning and leading a classroom discussion can provide invaluable community development and leadership skills with regard to group dynamics, facilitating dialogue, and outcomes-based planning. These skills benefit students in their service and as they seek to take action on social justice commitments.
6. *Provide exposure to issues of exclusion, marginalization, and oppression to encourage action beyond service*. Challenging people to recognize oppression and its various manifestations is essential to working for social justice (Young, 1990). Increased knowledge and understanding of issues of exclusion, marginalization, and oppression may foster relational empathy and motivate students to take action for change (Collins, 2000; Goodman, 2000). Although emphasizing power and privilege can be difficult and may sometimes build resistance among privileged students as they struggle with this new recognition, "a social justice education aims to develop a critical citizenry capable of analyzing and challenging oppressive characteristics of society" (Sapp, 2003, p. 5). As students search to understand issues facing the community they serve, instructors must continually challenge students to name and investigate the roles that social group membership and structural oppression play in the problems community members experience. This awareness stimulates the passion and commitment in students needed to take action outside traditional notions of service toward social justice.
7. *Support students where they are and affirm the commitments they are able and willing to make*. Through the experience of Citizen Scholars, the 11 students in the program were able to end the four semesters of the program espousing a commitment to social justice. The actions students felt able to take to live their commitments, however, differed dramatically. While some students felt prepared to engage in revolutionary action that challenged current structures and systems in an effort to transform society, others believed that continued involvement in service and acting with their votes to bring candidates holding similar values into office, were the appropriate next steps to acting on their commitments. It is important for instructors to recognize the validity of both positions. All of the students held firm commitments to social justice and expressed desires for a more just world. They felt a need to belong to a movement for social justice and believed that their desire and dedication as well as their connection to others (be it through direct action, service, or other community involvement) could be a positive contribution to a movement for social justice. Our desire, as service-learning and social justice educators and advocates, is to prepare students for responsible community participation that leads to more just and equitable communities. The willingness of our students to take steps toward that end demonstrates the understanding and commitment we seek. Affirming these actions can give students confidence in their beliefs and encourage sustained involvement. This sustained involvement may lead to deeper and more complex roles, increased responsibility and leadership, and courage to take action in different ways with a continued aim toward justice.

CONCLUSION

The students whose service-learning experiences were investigated for this case study have provided insight into the potential for service-learning to enhance students' conceptions of and commitments to social justice. The data in this research reveal the potential for a critical service-learning pedagogy to generate responsible community participants working for a more just and equitable society. That is, the Citizen Scholars Program creates opportunities that allow students to make meaning of social justice and develop the confidence in their understandings to take action in support of their ideas. Through this program, the University provides students with an educational experience that investigates conditions of injustice and prepares students with the skills and initiative necessary to work for meaningful social change. This action, in turn, benefits everyone as a new generation of leaders, with visions of justice guiding their efforts, leave the University with intent to live their social justice commitments and to work for meaningful social change.

NOTES

1. The four courses that comprise the core of the Citizen Scholars Program (1999–2002) curriculum are as follows: Anthropology 297H: The Good Society, Honors 291S: Citizen

Scholars Integrative Seminar, Honors 391S: Organizing for Change, Honors 492C: Public Policy and Citizen Action.

2. Citizen Scholars do voluntary service in the community for 60 hours in three of the four semesters of the program. Students have the option of doing up to 30 hours of service during the intersession (either in summer for the Fall semester or in December/January for the Spring semester) to count towards their 60 hours. During the fourth and final semester of the program, Citizens Scholars are engaged in capstone projects that are aimed at creating positive change in the community. The student's work on this project fulfills her 60 hour commitment to community service during that semester.

3. To be eligible for the CSP, students must have a 3.2 grade point average (4.0 scale) and at least four semesters remaining in their academic endeavors. Students are recruited from across campus through posters and encouragement from students already in the program. Students involved in other service-learning experiences, like the first-year service-learning living community on campus or the alternative spring break program, are also encouraged to apply because program staff for the CSP are also involved with these service-learning initiatives. To apply, students complete an application that asks for some demographic data and an essay explaining their interest in the program. Applicants are interviewed by one of the program co-directors and a current student in the program, and selection is determined by consensus of the membership committee (a blend of faculty, students, and program staff).

4. Because of the four semester four-course commitment, a leave of absence from the CSP is for a full academic year (i.e., students that take leave in the spring semester of one year cannot rejoin the program until the spring semester of the next academic year).

5. All names presented in this case study are pseudonyms.

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