CHAPTER

2

Understanding and Facilitating Critical Reflection

As discussed in Chapter One, service-learning is a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities for reflection designed to achieve desired learning outcomes (Jacoby, 1996c). This chapter defines critical reflection in the context of service-learning, describes its various forms, provides the steps for implementation, and explores how engaging students in critical reflection can enhance learning.

2.1 WHAT IS CRITICAL REFLECTION?

What Is Its Role in Service-Learning?

While there are different types of reflection, the primary form of reflection we strive for in service-learning is *critical* reflection. Critical reflection is the process of analyzing, reconsidering, and questioning one's experiences within a broad context of issues and content knowledge. We often hear that "experience is the best teacher," but John Dewey and many other proponents of reflection remind us that experience can be a problematic teacher. Experience without critical reflection can all too easily allow students to reinforce their stereotypes about people who are different from themselves, develop simplistic solutions to complex problems, and generalize inaccurately based on limited data. For example, students who do community service in a homeless shelter without critically reflecting on their experience may come away with impressions like these,

which I have personally encountered: "Homeless people would be able to get off the street if they would just get a job" or "Homeless people are lazy or crazy."

I find Dewey's definition of critical reflection to be more nuanced and useful than the one above: "Critical reflection is the active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends" (1933, p. 9). It is guiding students through the process of considering and reconsidering their values, beliefs, and acquired knowledge that enables them to question and challenge their stereotypes and other *a priori* assumptions. Critical reflection adds depth and breadth to meaning by challenging simplistic conclusions, comparing varying perspectives, examining causality, and raising more challenging questions.

Using the term critical reflection reminds us that reflection is a *critical* element of service-learning. It is essential and irreplaceable. It is also *critical* that reflection in service-learning be done well if it is to develop critical thinking skills, which are a unanimously agreed-upon essential college learning outcome. Critical reflection raises *critical* questions, which challenge us to consider multiple perspectives and to recognize complexity in a situation or issue that may initially seem to be straightforward. Critical reflection is also the foundation of *critical* service-learning pedagogy, which is important in teaching for social justice. Critical service-learning is discussed further in 8.5.

According to Janet Eyler, Dwight E. Giles, and Angela E. Schmiede (1996), critical reflection is continuous, connected, challenging, and contextualized. These "4 Cs" have guided many service-learning educators in developing and facilitating reflection in both course-based and cocurricular experiences.

For the deepest learning to occur, reflection must be an ongoing component of the course or program. In the context of a particular experience, *continuous* means that reflection must occur before, during, and after the experience. Reflection prior to the service or "pre-flection," prepares students by introducing them to the issues, the community, the organization, and the population that their service will address. Reflection during the service experience enables students to record their observations, to examine theory in practice, to process the dissonance they may find between their expectations and the reality of their experience, and to consider how to resolve issues before they become problems. When it follows the service experience, reflection can help students realize what they learned, what it means in relation to their prior thinking and experiences, and what it might lead them to explore and do in the future.

Reflection *connects* experience with other areas of participants' learning and development. Connected reflection builds bridges between content learning, personal reflections, and first-hand experiences. It is often demanding too much of students, particularly those new to service-learning, to assume that they will make these connections on their own. In Kolb's experiential learning model, reflection follows concrete experience and connects it to abstract conceptualization and generalization (1984). Without structured, connected reflection, students "may fail to bridge the gap between the concrete service experience and the abstract issues discussed in class; students may become frustrated and wonder why they are involved in the community as part of their course work" (Eyler, Giles, & Schmiede, 1996, p. 19). Conversely, student participants in both curricular and cocurricular service-learning may fail to understand why they need to engage in reflection if it is not integral to their service experience.

Challenging reflection poses old questions in new ways, is designed to reveal new perspectives, and raises new questions. Facilitators of critical reflection engage students in difficult conversations and activities in which they consider unfamiliar and often uncomfortable ideas. Nevitt Sanford's notion of balancing challenge and support is key to understanding this component of reflection. If the reflection is too challenging and if adequate support is not provided, students will often retreat inside themselves and, thus, will not take the risks necessary for them to try on new ideas and perspectives. However, if the reflection is not challenging enough or if the environment is too supportive, then students are less likely to leave their comfort zones and, as a result, will not learn and grow (1967).

Contextualized reflection engages service-learners in activities and with topics that are meaningful in relation to their experiences and appropriate for their developmental levels and life situations. The desired outcomes of the service-learning experience should guide facilitators' choices about the forms and processes of reflection. Contextual considerations include whether the reflection will occur on campus or at the community site, whether community members should participate, and whether reflection should be an individual or collective activity. Another contextual factor is what else is going on in students' lives and thoughts. For example, students are not likely to possess the mindfulness necessary for deep reflection when stressed by family or work situations or on the day before final examinations or spring break. Current events, such as natural disasters or violent attacks, can also profoundly affect

students emotionally and intellectually, providing either distractions to critical reflection or enriching it by providing a context of immediacy and relevance.

In short, critical reflection should be carefully and intentionally designed to generate learning by applying theory to practice, seeking to understand causality, and appreciating the complexity of social issues and potential solutions. It deepens learning by encouraging students to examine their assumptions, avoid facile conclusions, and ask more complex questions. It also provides evidence of student learning for the purpose of assessment (Ash & Clayton, 2009).

SOURCES OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Pigza, J. (2010). Developing your ability to foster student learning and development through reflection. In B. Jacoby & P. Mutascio (Eds.), *Looking In, Reaching Out: A Reflective Guide for Community Service-Learning Professionals.* Boston, MA: Campus Compact.

Rama, D.V., & Battistoni, R. (2001). *Service-Learning: Using Structured Reflection to Enhance Learning from Service.* www.compact.org/disciplines/reflection/.

2.2 WHAT ARE THE FORMS OF REFLECTION?

What Does Critical Reflection Look Like in Practice?

Reflection in service-learning takes as many forms as the facilitator can imagine. There are four general categories of reflection formats or mediums: speaking, writing, activities, and media.

Speaking, or oral reflection, can takes multiple forms, including directed discussions, presentations, interviews, storytelling, teaching a class, debate, deliberation, preparing real or mock testimony, and even a poetry slam. Reflection through speaking encourages students to think carefully about their messages and speech habits. They also can increase their self-confidence and self-esteem as others find their insights to be valuable. Spoken reflection can occur both in the classroom and at the service site.

Writing is usually the predominant form of reflection that takes place in academic courses. Like spoken reflection, writing challenges students to organize their thoughts in order to make coherent arguments. It generates a permanent record of how they connect the service experiences and course content that can be used as part of future learning activities. In both curricular and cocurricular settings, it also offers the opportunity to improve written

communication skills. Like speaking, writing takes many forms including journals, problem analysis, case studies, essays, theory-to-practice papers, press releases, drafting legislation, and letters to elected officials, editors, or oneself. The double-entry journal is a tried-and-true method for critical reflection in both curricular and cocurricular experiences. Although there are various ways to do it, a double-entry journal generally has subjective reflections, emotions, personal reactions on one side, for example, on the left-hand page and objective reflections, analysis, synthesis, and critique on the right-hand page. Reflection facilitators can give students regular prompts for both sides of the journal and can also ask them to draw arrows to indicate connections between their subjective and their objective reflections. Written reflection can occur on paper and online.

Activities, or reflection through action, work well for many students by providing variety and, if done in groups, can also help to develop relational and teamwork skills. A simple example is the forced-choice exercise, in which students are given a controversial statement and asked to go to one side of the room if they agree with it or to the other side if they disagree. The students on each side of the room then formulate their reasons for choosing the side they did and present them to the students on the opposite side. Participants then have the opportunity to change sides if they wish. The exercise can be repeated several times to encourage students to hone and deepen their arguments.

Role plays can be quite effective, with students taking different roles in a challenging situation. This can be an effective way of preparing students to enter the service site for the first time. For example, a role play situated in a service-learning course on the psychology of domestic violence could prepare students for their experience of working in a shelter for battered women by providing opportunities for the students take on the roles of the victim, her children of different ages and genders, the primary caregiver, the director of the shelter, and the student volunteer. As much detail as desired can be provided, for example, specifying that the primary caregiver, the shelter director, and the student have different views of what would be best in the way of treatment and support for some of the shelter's clients. Racial or ethnic factors could also be varied to add another dimension to the reflection.

The fourth general type of reflection is engaging students through *media* and artistic creation. This could include doing individual or collective collages, drawings, photo or video essays, musical compositions, and other art forms. Reflection through creative expression recognizes students' various talents and

learning styles and provides opportunities to capture subtle emotional truths that may be more easily expressed through media other than words. As with writing, the use of media becomes even more powerful for students who revisit their compositions to recognize their growth as the service-learning experience progresses and their reflections deepen.

SOURCES OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Koliba, C., & Reed, J. (n.d.). *Facilitating Reflection: A Manual for Leaders and Educators*. www. uvm.edu/~dewey/reflection_manual.

Northwest Service Academy. (2013, August). *Service Reflection Toolkit*. http://www1.aucegypt.edu/ maan/pdf/Reflection%20Toolkit%201.pdf.

Rama, D.V., & Battistoni, R. (2001). *Service-Learning: Using Structured Reflection to Enhance Learning from Service*. www.compact.org/disciplines/reflection.

2.3   WHAT ARE THE STEPS IN DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING CRITICAL REFLECTION?

How Do I Make It Happen?
How Can I Engage Students in Critical Reflection?
How Do I Assess and Grade Reflection? How Can I Grade Feelings?

There are five basic steps in the design and implementation of critical reflection, in either curricular or cocurricular experiences. They are (1) identifying learning outcomes, (2) introducing students to the concept and practice of critical reflection, (3) designing a reflection strategy to enable students to meet the learning outcomes, (4) engaging students in reflection, and (5) assessing learning through reflection.

Step 1: State Your Learning Outcomes.

Just as with any other intentional design process, designing critical reflection requires beginning with the end in mind. In this case, this means articulating learning outcomes in concrete, measurable terms. Well-crafted learning outcomes serve as the basis for the design of reflection activities in both curricular and cocurricular contexts and for determining the extent to which the outcomes have been achieved and adequately expressed in the products of critical reflection. Because students may be unfamiliar with critical reflection, it is important to make it clear to them what they can expect to gain. College students are used

to learning content, but not so much the metacognitive skills that critical reflection requires. In a course, critical reflection is well suited for outcomes around more complex dimensions of reasoning; developing enhanced understanding; questioning knowledge, theories, and assumptions; examining causality; and evaluating potential solutions to multifaceted problems. Clearly stated outcomes can also motivate students to engage in critical reflection in cocurricular settings. Desired learning and developmental outcomes that students can achieve through cocurricular service-learning include increased empathy, deeper awareness of one's multiple social identities, clarification of values and purpose, and development in terms of spirituality and faith, active citizenship, and socially responsible leadership.

Step 2: Introduce the Concept and Practice of Critical Reflection.

Once you have articulated your learning outcomes, Step 2 involves defining critical reflection and explaining to students why it is an essential element of their service-learning experience. The answer to the first question in this chapter, "What is critical reflection?," is useful for this purpose. Introducing students to the practice of critical reflection centers on informing them of your expectations. Providing rubrics that concretely describe critical reflection, offer examples of the different levels of reflection, and guide students incrementally to achieving them is helpful. Rubrics are discussed in Step 5.

Step 3: Design a Reflection Strategy to Achieve the Learning Outcomes.

Designing effective critical reflection, like developing a syllabus for any course or the implementation plan for any cocurricular activity, requires us to make choices. These choices should be informed by your desired learning outcomes as well as the opportunities and constraints that are inherent in the context of the course or experience and the abilities of the students. An effective strategy should combine several reflection modes and should be continuous, connected, challenging, and contextualized, the four qualities of effective reflection advanced in 2.1. For example, if collaboration skills are a desired learning outcome, you might choose a group activity rather than an individual one. If oral presentation skills are desirable, you might select at least one oral reflection activity in addition to written ones. Considerations to guide the design of your reflection strategy are offered in Exhibit 2.1.

EXHIBIT

Considerations for Designing Your Reflection Strategy

1. What learning outcomes do you want students to achieve through reflection?
2. When and how often will reflection occur? Will it be at regular intervals, for example, weekly or biweekly?
3. Will students reflect iteratively so that reflection becomes a habit and builds on itself over the course of the semester?
4. Where will reflection occur? Inside or outside the classroom? At the service site? In the van on the way back to campus?
5. Who will facilitate reflection? The faculty member? The staff advisor? Trained student leaders? Community organization staff?
6. Who will participate in reflection? Will the faculty member join in? Community organization staff or clients?
7. Through what medium or mediums will reflection occur? Speaking, writing, activities, media?
8. Will students reflect individually, in small groups, as a group of the whole? Through a combination of these?
9. What prompts will guide reflection?
10. How will you know whether students achieve your desired learning outcomes?

As you select reflection activities and prompts, it is important to sequence them to guide students toward incrementally higher levels of complexity of thinking, analyzing, and reasoning. Prompts can take many forms, including questions, topics, open-ended sentence stems, and quotes. An effective reflection strategy also includes providing feedback to students along the way through formative assessment. You can use formative assessment to check the reflection process against the learning outcomes so you can refine the desired outcomes along the way, shift your reflection strategies, or change the balance of challenge and support as necessary. Exhibit 2.2 contains a list of sample questions to prompt reflection.

Note: These sample questions are offered to inspire your thinking about how to guide your students through critical reflection in both service-learning courses and cocurricular experiences. I have made no attempt to suggest questions for all disciplines or questions that are appropriate for any course in a particular discipline. They are intended only as examples. Reflection questions should be based on desired learning outcomes and directly relate to the service experience and other readings and learning activities.

EXHIBIT 2.2 **Sample Reflection Questions**

General Personal Questions

- What do you bring to this experience? How much effort are you willing to put forth? How open are you to learning?
- How did this experience make you feel? How do you believe others felt?
- What assumptions and expectations did you bring to the experience? What assumptions and expectations do you think others brought about you?
- To what extent were your assumptions and expectations validated? If the reality was different from your assumptions and expectations, why do you believe there was a discrepancy?
- How did your experience reveal your values, attitudes, and biases? How did it reinforce or challenge your values, attitudes, and biases?
- What personal characteristic are you coming to understand better as a result of your service and reflection experiences? Explain this characteristic so that someone who does not know you would understand it. What are the origins of this characteristic? How do you think you will seek to use, improve, or change this characteristic in the future?
- What was it like to work with community members and other students from different/like race communities? How are your life experiences similar and different from others' in the situation?
- In what ways did you do well in this experience? What personal characteristics helped you do well? What was difficult for you? What personal characteristics contributed to the difficulties you experienced?
- How have you changed as a result of this experience? How will these changes affect your future behaviors?

Project-Based Questions

- What are the strengths and limitations of the project?
- Does the project address immediate needs or long-term solutions?
- If the project continued, would the problem go away eventually?
- If the project stopped in order to try another approach to the issue, would the community suffer?
- Are there assets in the community that are not being tapped? Is our involvement so focused on the community's deficits that we haven't seen its assets?

General Analytical Questions

- What concepts/principles/facts/theories that you have learned relate to your experience? To what extent were they validated or challenged by the experience?

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- What do we know about the social issue being addressed and about how it has affected this community in particular?
- What are the symptoms of the problem, and what are the causes?
- What social issues are connected to the problem addressed by the project, such as racism, class stratification, or sexism? To what extent can a difference be made on this issue without addressing these social problems?
- How did differences in power and privilege emerge in this experience? What underlying systems influence the power dynamics? What are their effects?
- What underlying systems maintain the problem and the power dynamics? How can they be addressed? Dismantled?
- What ethical issues emerged during this experience?
- How do the ethical principles and practices of your discipline align, or not align, with the core beliefs of the community or organization you are working with?
- What tensions between individual interests and the common good did you observe? What trade-offs between them occurred? Who made the trade-offs? To whom were they beneficial or not? Were they appropriate? Why or why not?
- What is progress? Is progress necessarily good for everyone? Why or why not?
- What is the purpose of this reading? What is the author's main argument? How is this argument supported, validated, or contradicted by other readings? By the service experience?
- What are the assumptions embedded in this reading? What is omitted or glossed over? Why?
- Based on the service experience and other readings, where do you stand vis-à-vis the author's position?

Questions to Explore Future Action

- Is enough known about the issue and this community, or is more research needed?
- Who needs to understand the problem better and be convinced to make a change?
- Have the voices of all members of the community been heard? What steps have been taken to ensure everyone agrees on the direction of the effort?
- Is more funding needed? Who would receive the money and what would they use it for? Who could be approached for funding?
- What relevant laws or policies affect the issue? How did they come to be?
- What stance do local and/or national politicians take on the issue?
- How are other individuals or groups working to address the problem? Discuss the strengths and limitations of those approaches and how a coalition might be able to coordinate effort.

EXHIBIT 2.2 *(continued)*

- What campus or community organizations could be tapped to make the effort stronger? Should a new organization be formed to bring together people who are interested in this issue?
- How can students use the knowledge and skills they are gaining in college, particularly in their career fields, to address the issues?
- What other forms of civic engagement would be effective in addressing the issue?

Sample Questions by Discipline

- **American History:** Was John F. Kennedy a great president? What did you think before this course? Now? What is great? Where did your conception come from? Is greatness a social construct?
- **Art:** What is art? What is the role of the arts in communities? Should the arts be publically financed? How is value assigned to works of art? Should art be private property? Does art need public support? Should controversial art be displayed? Who decides?
- **Biology:** Should addiction be considered a disability? Is it a brain disease or a lack of self-control? What are the moral and medical issues related to addiction? How successful are current treatment programs? What contributes to their success or lack of success? What is the relationship between addiction and other social problems such as domestic violence, child abuse and neglect, and other crimes, as well as fetal alcohol syndrome and suicide? What are the socioeconomic costs of addiction? Is it a waste to spend public funds on cessation programs? Why or why not?
- **Business:** What is the triple bottom line? Is it universally beneficial? Why or why not? How does it relate to social entrepreneurship? Social value creation?
- **Criminal Justice:** What is the purpose of the criminal justice system in the United States? Does the system "work"? What does and doesn't it accomplish? Who are the people in prisons and jails in the United States? Why are they there? What does access to education and jobs have to do with who is in prison? Are we locking up people for being poor? Why are so many people in prison for drug addiction and poverty-related crimes? What are possible alternatives to incarceration?
- **Dance:** What is dance? Why dance? Who is a dancer? How does dance serve as a reflection of cultural attitudes? How can it be a bridge to understanding people?
- **Disability in America:** Why do we label people as "disabled"? What impact does that have? What assumptions do we make about people who are disabled or able-bodied? How were these assumptions validated or contradicted in this experience? What does justice look like when considering ability?
- **Economics:** What is material and non-material poverty? How is poverty measured religiously and philosophically, as well as economically? What are the economic and

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non-economic causes of poverty? Does microcredit lead to long-term alleviation of poverty? Is microenterprise an example of what Adam Smith meant by unhindered competitive markets?

- **Education:** How is education the driving force of upward social mobility? Does one's socioeconomic status determine one's educational level? Or is it the other way around? What are the goals of education in our society? How is education connected to democracy?
- **Engineering:** What is the impact of social factors on the technical issues involved in engineering design? Why is effective communication essential in the design process? How should community views be incorporated into decision making? What is the role of engineering in the democratic process?
- **Government and Politics:** What does it take to be elected to public office? What is the impact of the election process on those who hold public office? What are the formal and informal powers of elected officials at the national and local levels? Who else holds and exercises power in the process of policy development? What are the differences between lobbying and advocacy? Which is most appropriate to use for this cause/issue?
- **Journalism:** What is the public service role of journalism? What is the role of journalism in a democratic society? Can journalism be objective? Should it be?
- **Latin American Cultures and Civilization:** Who did you think Latin Americans were before this class? What led you to your view? What has shaped the experiences and identities of Latin Americans? How do you see Latin Americans differently now? How will your views shape your future actions?
- **Literature:** To what extent does this piece reflect the social issues of its time? Our time? What is its social message? To what extent is it still relevant today? How have the characters' beliefs and actions been shaped by their gender, race, or socioeconomic status? Which character do you most identify with? Why?
- **Mathematics:** How can mathematical modeling predict the adverse effects of prevailing policies and practices on such issues as climate change, overpopulation, and the depletion of natural resources? If adverse effects can be predicted, why it is so difficult to convince society to take protective action?
- **Nursing:** How does healing occur? What makes it possible? What deters it? How do you respond to the suffering of others? Is health a public or private issue? Is it an individual or social problem?
- **Pharmacy:** If medicine provides medical care and nursing provides nursing care, what does pharmacy provide? Drugs? What is the role of pharmacy in a community? To what extent should it be proactive?

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EXHIBIT 2.2 *(continued)*

- **Philosophy:** How would you describe the community organization you work with in terms of a Kantian, Utilitarian, or Aristotelian framework? Use arguments and passages from relevant texts to explain. As you develop an action plan to address a need or issue identified by the organization, why might a contemporary moral theorist object to your plan? How would you respond to the objections?

- **Psychology:** How do you define successful childhood development? What are the psychological tasks a child must master at each stage of development according to your definition of successful development? What unique opportunities and obstacles do children face in lower, middle, and upper social classes? Based on the readings and your experiences, what is a social policy suggestion you would make to ensure that more children successfully begin their adult lives?

- **Public Policy:** What are the benefits and problems of entitlement and welfare programs? Is it appropriate for government to offer safety nets to its citizens? Why or why not? What policies at various levels of government affect homelessness? To what extent is homelessness the result of policy rather than individual circumstances? How do laws, policies, and structures enable or prevent the meaningful participation of diverse populations in our society?

- **Sociology:** From a sociological perspective, what are the factors associated with community emergence and vitality, as opposed to disorganization and decline? How do industrialization, structural change, and globalization differentially affect urban and rural communities? How have urban renewal and suburbanization been experienced by people of different classes, genders, races, and cultures? What are the processes by which individuals become empowered to be change agents in their communities?

- **Theater:** What are the connections between theater, community development, and social change? Who is responsible for making theater available and accessible to all? Who should be?

- **Urban Studies:** What is the relationship of rural-to-urban migration on sociopolitical marginalization? What is environmental racism? What are its effects? What are the politics of public places and spaces as a city becomes gentrified? How do they affect the city's diverse residents?

- **Women's Studies:** How does gender shape, and how is it shaped by, institutional practices, the experiences of individuals within institutions, and social policy? What are the roles of age and culture in the development of gender attitudes and behaviors? What are the causes and effects of domestic violence? How do ideologies, institutions, and public policies affect single women's experiences of motherhood?

Note: I am grateful to Julie E. Owen and Wendy Wagner (2010, pp. 249–253) for several of the above questions. Used by permission.

Step 4: Engage the Students.

Once the outcomes and strategy are developed, the groundwork has been laid for engaging students in critical reflection. Facilitating critical reflection inside and outside the classroom is different from traditional modes of teaching in both content and process. As reflection facilitators, we may be uncomfortable initially when confronted with questions that we cannot answer. For example, when I taught French for many years, there was never any doubt of whether a noun was masculine or feminine or what is the correct form of the future subjunctive of a particular verb. On the other hand, I have come to recognize that I cannot answer all the questions that arise when students confront poverty and oppression firsthand for the first time. It can be even more challenging to engage students in critical reflection outside the structures offered by course-based service-learning, such as regular class meetings, credit, and grades. Some tips for facilitating critical reflection in both curricular and cocurricular service-learning are offered in Exhibit 2.3.

EXHIBIT 2.3 **Tips for Facilitating Reflection**

- Alert students that you will not be able to answer all the questions that will arise as, for example, they encounter poverty and oppression firsthand for the first time.

- Observe experienced facilitators of critical reflection, including those whose primary work is outside the formal curriculum and regardless of whether they are familiar with service-learning.

- Engage in service-learning experiences and reflection of your own to put yourself in the position of your students and to give you a perspective on critical reflection that you might not be able to gain otherwise.

- Calculate the potential impact of your comments on the reflection process. Sometimes you may want to participate by stating your personal opinion; other times you may not. It may be appropriate in some cases to deflect a question on a controversial topic back to the students: "What are the main issues for and against it? How did you encounter these issues at the service site?"

- Discourage students from asserting their own opinions or views without deeply considering whether they are authentically their own, rather than based on received knowledge or someone else's perspective. Perspective-taking that challenges students to thoughtfully consider and respond to others' views that may be different from their own is an important element of critical reflection.

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EXHIBIT 2.3 *(continued)*

- Skilled reflection facilitators often ask "why" iteratively. If a student expresses a view, facilitators ask can why he or she feels that way and then why again to get to the root cause of the need for the service the students are doing or the underlying values upon which students base their opinions or views. It is also helpful to ask students who speak or write in generalities for specific examples or reasons behind the assertions that they made.
- Encourage all students to participate and to join you in encouraging all voices to be heard. You can model this behavior by saying something like, "OK, let's hear from some of you who haven't spoken yet." You can also use "stacking" or "queuing," by identifying and placing in order the individuals who wish to speak.

Step 5: Assess Learning Through Critical Reflection.

Assessing and grading reflection often produces some angst among those who are new to it. When reflection is misconceived as private, "touchy-feely," or stream of consciousness, assessment and grading seem elusive at best. In response to questions I am frequently asked about how to assess or grade students' feelings, I would say that we should not assess or grade the content of students' feelings. Rather, we should assess how authentically and deeply students think about their feelings.

Some questions we need to address in developing our reflection strategy are: What products will demonstrate learning? What criteria will you use to assess learning through critical reflection? How and how frequently will you provide feedback to students? For course-based service-learning, additional questions include: Will you grade reflections? and How will evaluation of reflection be used in determining the course grade?

There are many ways to assess the quality of reflection, both within and outside the formal curriculum. Rubrics are often used for this purpose. A rubric is a set of demonstrables that are linked to the desired learning outcomes of the service-learning experience, together with criteria that enable both students and facilitators to determine the level of the student's knowledge, skills, or understanding. It is good educational practice to give students the rubrics as you introduce them to critical reflection at the beginning of the course or experience so they know what you expect in terms of complex thinking and analytical reflection. Rubrics also provide consistent criteria for grading. Two examples of rubrics that are readily adaptable for assessment of reflection are provided in Exhibits 2.4 and 2.5. James Bradley's criteria are useful for assessing reflection in both curricular and cocurricular experiences.

EXHIBIT 2.4 **General Criteria for Assessing Service-Learning Reflection**

James Bradley (1995) characterized three levels of critical reflection that are useful in assessing the depth and complexity of students' reflections. This tool is useful in providing feedback to students about the level of their current work and the criteria for increasing the level of their thinking.

Level 1: Surface. Reflection tends to focus on just one aspect of a situation, frequently uses unexamined and unsupported personal beliefs as hard evidence, and may acknowledge different perspectives without valuing or discriminating effectively among them. At this level, students likely list facts learned, places visited, and tasks completed. They offer examples of observed characteristics of the service site or behaviors of clients in the setting but provide little or no insight into the reasons behind their observations. Observations tend to be one-dimensional and based on conventional or unassimilated repetition of what the student has heard from others or acquired from required readings.

Level 2: Emerging. Reflection provides a cogent critique from a single perspective, but fails to see the broader system in which the issue or situation is embedded and other factors that may make change difficult to achieve. Students may provide some connections to the issue or discipline, but the connections are not deep or insightful. They perceive legitimate differences in viewpoint, interpretation, and choices and demonstrate a beginning ability to interpret evidence and draw reasonable conclusions. While students at Level 2 generally continue to use unsupported personal beliefs as evidence, they demonstrate a nascent ability to differentiate between the two. Observations are more thorough and nuanced than at Level 1, but they tend to be situation-specific rather than tied to a broader context.

Level 3: Deep. Students view situations from several perspectives, demonstrate clarity of reasoning, and place their experiences in broader, nuanced, and complex contexts. They perceive conflicting goals and choices of the individuals involved in a situation and acknowledge that differences in ideas or choices can be analyzed and evaluated. Students reflecting at the highest level recognize that decisions and actions are situationally dependent and that many factors affect them. They articulate appropriate judgments that are based on strong evidence and sound reasoning. Students reflecting at this level can reasonably assess the importance of the issues facing the individuals involved in the service setting and of their own responsibility as part of it.

EXHIBIT 2.5 Example of Criteria for Assessment of Course-Based Critical Reflection

In her course on the psychology of domestic violence, Karen M. O'Brien uses a simple rubric to assess and grade weekly two-page reflections called *service analysis papers*, in which the students are asked to critically analyze how their service experience relates to course content (O'Brien, 2013).

The readily adaptable grading scheme is as follows:

4 points: Exceptional, thoughtful critique that truly integrates course concepts and research into an analysis of the experience

3 points: Very good, thoughtful critique that applies course concepts and research

2 points: Average to below average analysis; does not integrate course concepts and research in a thorough manner

0: Did not complete the assignment

Adapted from K.M. O'Brien, Psychology 319D: Community Interventions: Service Learning: Domestic Violence II, Spring 2013. Used by permission.

2.4 HOW CAN CRITICAL REFLECTION EMPOWER STUDENTS TO MOVE BEYOND DIRECT SERVICE TO OTHER FORMS OF CIVIC AND POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT?

How Can Critical Reflection Enable Students to Understand the Root Causes of the Need for Their Service?

As discussed in 1.2 and 2.1, Dewey is widely regarded as the inspiration for critical reflection as a fundamental practice of service-learning. Dewey believed that reflective thought must consider the wider historical, cultural, and political contexts of experience in order to frame and reframe problems for which solutions are needed (1933). Critical reflection for Dewey meant becoming more skeptical toward what one has considered as established truth, questioning one's assumptions and their underlying assertions, and challenging the rigidity of one's views and beliefs that makes them seem certain. In addition, critical reflection, in Dewey's view, leads us to challenge social structures that place people in unequal and exploitative conditions and constrain well-being and agency. College students often come to service-learning with the belief that all

well-intentioned service is beneficial to those they are serving. It is often difficult for them to imagine how an act perceived to be altruistic or benevolent can have negative consequences, such as reinforcing prejudices and perpetuating the status quo.

The question for service-learning educators is how to facilitate critical reflection that enables students to view social problems and inequalities in systemic ways, promote students' efficacy to effect social and political change, and lead them to commit to change aspects of society, such as institutional policies and practices, that they perceive to be unjust (Flanagan & Cristens, 2011). In order for students to begin to understand the root causes of the need for their service, reflection needs to encourage them to think deeply about their values, identities, perceptions of themselves and others, and experiences. We should engage students in reflection, analysis, and discussion about how their prejudices and other beliefs affect their views and relationships with community members. Students need to be able to "name the ways they are both like and unlike the individuals they work with in the service setting, and further, how those similarities and differences impact their interactions at the service site and away from the service site" (Mitchell, 2008, p. 59). Critical reflection should also lead students to ask what they have learned about themselves and to put their experiences into a larger context, exploring who they are in the world. Students should challenge, but not necessarily change, their attitudes, beliefs, assumptions, and stereotypes. They should explore, seek to understand, question, and challenge policies, laws, and social institutions in the context of their experiences and readings, discussions, and written assignments.

As service-learners engage in critical reflection about their work in community settings, it is important that we caution them to avoid the "seduction of empathy" (Bowdon & Scott, 2003). While we want students to consider issues like what it means to be a member of a community and to understand the experiences and perspectives of people whose circumstances are different from their own, we must be careful to help them understand that spending a relatively small amount of time working with people who are facing difficulties does not equate to facing those difficulties themselves. We must discourage students from saying things like they "know how it feels" to be homeless or hungry (Bowdon, 2013). Instead, we should encourage students to focus on actions they can take to address the situation during their current service-learning experience and in the future.

Critical reflection in service-learning should lead students to recognize the need and potential for social change, together with their own capacity to effect it. Several influential books and reports published in the last decade note that students are volunteering in greater numbers, but that community service and service-learning do not necessarily lead them to civic or political action (Colby, Beaumont, Ehrlich, & Corngold, 2007; Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, & Stephens, 2003; National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012). For example, students may be passionate about tutoring children in underprivileged schools, but not recognize the need to address the root causes of their underachievement or feel empowered to do so. They may readily engage in environmental clean-ups without considering the sources of the pollution and the steps toward potential solutions that are available to concerned and active citizens. Even more than other citizens, college students suffer from diminished perceptions of our highly polarized political system and, as a result, mistrust political spin (Kiesa et al., 2007; National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012). They are often conflicted in their feelings about politics and government, focusing more on the deep divides that shape our politics and keep our democracy from functioning effectively than on the power of citizens to engage with their government to enact positive social change.

Service-learning experiences together with reflection can enable students to confront these perceptions by considering the extent to which their service addresses the social issues that underlie the need for their service, the avenues of redress that are open to them as democratic citizens, and how they can develop the knowledge and skills necessary to pursue them. The list of sample reflection questions in Exhibit 2.2 includes several that service-learning educators can use to prompt critical reflection to lead students toward further civic and political engagement.

SOURCES OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Center for Civic Reflection. (2013, November). http://civicreflection.org/about/mission.

Owen, J.E., & Wagner, W. (2010). Situating service-learning in the context of civic engagement. In B. Jacoby & P. Mutascio (Eds.), *Looking In, Reaching Out: A Reflective Guide for Community Service-Learning Professionals.* Boston, MA: Campus Compact.

Welch, M. (2009). Moving from service-learning to civic engagement. In B. Jacoby (Ed.), *Civic Engagement in Higher Education: Concepts and Practices,* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

2.5 HOW CAN I MAKE REFLECTION WORK IN *MY* DISCIPLINE?

No matter the discipline, faculty members often ask how reflection works in their own areas of scholarship and in their particular courses. Many have told me that they understand how service-learning and reflection work in other disciplines, but not in theirs. In order to enable faculty members to envision how they can incorporate reflection that leads to achievement of student learning outcomes in particular fields and courses, this section provides a series of specific examples in various disciplines that are also transferable to other courses and disciplines.

Faculty members in the STEM areas—science, technology, engineering, and mathematics—tell me that they see how service-learning and reflection can be effective in the humanities and social sciences but wonder, "What about STEM?" Engaging STEM students, both majors and non-majors seeking to fulfill general education requirements, in critical reflection can motivate them to learn content by considering how the discipline's knowledge base can be used to address the biggest social issues of our time. One of the primary desired learning outcomes for introductory science and mathematics courses is to enable students to acquire enough scientific and mathematical literacy to critically analyze and determine the value of material in the press and on the Internet. In an example from a Midwestern, faith-based college, students in an introductory microbiology course on HIV/AIDS and its biological and social impact learn about cell structure and theory, DNA structure and function, proteins and cell activity, and the nature of viruses and retroviruses. Through readings, videos, speakers, and service, they also focus on the social issues and effects of HIV/AIDS in the black community. Students reflect on the psychosocial impacts of HIV/AIDS on individuals, families, and communities; the effects of stereotypes and judgmental attitudes; and diversity issues such as race, class, culture, gender, sexual orientation, and religion. One of the reflection questions asks pointedly: "Because of this course, explain what you will start doing, stop doing, and continue to do" (Karagon, Rizzo, & Woodard, 2009).

Students in both basic and advanced STEM courses can reinforce their learning of fundamental facts and concepts by teaching them to children, often in after-school tutoring or enrichment programs. In an example from a small, non-selective liberal arts college, most students in the basic chemistry course were failing to achieve the learning outcomes, with many not completing the

course. The faculty member received a small grant to develop a pilot service-learning version of the course to be taught simultaneously with the traditional version. In the service-learning section, students learned the same content and performed the same laboratory experiments. However, they did the experiments along with children at an elementary school in a low-income neighborhood close to the campus. The service-learners practiced the experiments, prepared lessons for the children, and then conducted the experiments with the children. Through journals and in-class discussions, the students reflected on such topics as, Why is it important to learn chemistry? What are some ramifications of not learning chemistry for me personally and for society? Why is it challenging? Why do some people think they cannot learn chemistry? What skills and experiences do I have that can help me learn chemistry? As a result, the students in the service-learning pilot were far more likely to complete the course and achieve better grades than those in the comparison group.

In a clinical nursing course, students grapple with the question of "exactly what is a critically reflective practitioner?" (Bowden, 2003, p. 28). They engage in several activities designed to developing the habit of critical reflection in nursing practice, which include questioning previously accepted routines, values, and belief systems as well as considering how these are related to nursing, health care, and society (Bowden, 2003). For example, students describe, as opposed to define, a critically reflective professional. Definition implies an already existing, precise, and objective answer. Description, on the other hand, particularly when guided by questions that prompt reflection, provides a richer, more nuanced picture (Bowden, 2003). Once students write their descriptions of a critically reflective nurse, questions for subsequent reflection include: "Did you draw on previous knowledge from undertaking other courses, or reading, or discussions with colleagues, or was your description drawn from all or a number of these sources? Did you think only within a nursing context or did you think more broadly? What influenced your understanding? What attitudes, values, and assumptions are evident in your description? Where did these attitudes and values come from? ... Would you like the nurse in your description to be you?" (Bowden, 2003, p. 29). This activity and similar reflection questions would be appropriate for pre-professional students in a wide variety of fields in addition to the health professions, including law, accounting, education, journalism, and business.

A generic example from the social sciences is a sociology course on homelessness in America. Students learn the history, theories, causes, and demographics related to homelessness in American society and work four hours per

week in a homeless shelter. The faculty member prompts the students, through critical reflection, to demonstrate their understanding of the complex dynamics and effects of a myriad of social and economic issues on homelessness, various approaches to working with people who are homeless and their effectiveness in particular situations, and the effects of gender, culture, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. In addition to in-class reflection, the students write a weekly reflection paper that is to be no more than two double-spaced pages, including references, and no more than one paragraph on what occurred during the shelter visit. The faculty member specifies that the paper should be a thoughtful critique of the experience and the readings in the course. She adds that it is appropriate to describe feelings about the experience, but that the paper should focus on critical analysis about how the service experience relates to materials in the course. Reflection topics include: What did I learn about working with shelter residents this week? How do I feel about my progress? What did I do well this week and what could I have improved upon? How successfully does the organization address the issues faced by its clients? What would I do differently based on my experience and course materials? and How does culture/race/socioeconomic status influence my service work? How are cross-cultural issues addressed in the agency? How might I address cross-cultural issues if I were the director of the agency? The reflection plan for this course could be readily adapted for a course in social work or nonprofit management by focusing more on the role of the shelter director or for a course in child development by focusing more of the readings, service, and reflection on children who are homeless.

Service-learning in the humanities provides many opportunities for students to reflect on what it means to be human. The humanities "reveal how people have tried to make moral, spiritual, and intellectual sense of a world in which irrationality, despair, loneliness, and death are as conspicuous as birth, friendship, hope, and reason" (Commission on the Humanities, 1980, p. 1). Reflection is an essential mode of learning in the humanities fields, which "offer clues but never a complete answer" to the most complex questions (Commission on the Humanities, 1980, p. 1).

In addition to the examples from the humanities included in 4.2, an interdisciplinary service-learning course in history and theater at a rural university illustrates how reflection can help students achieve learning outcomes in two disciplines in a single course. The course arose from a conversation between two faculty members, one each from the history and theater departments, who were lamenting that it was hard to interest students in local history and to get non-majors to enroll in theater courses, which threatened the continued existence of

the theater major. At the same time, the local theater and other small businesses located on a nearby town's main street were struggling because the town had recently been bypassed by an interstate highway that drew potential visitors away. As a result, the faculty members designed a course in which students researched local history from original sources, including town and church records, photographs, and interviews with townspeople, particularly those who had lived long lives in the area. The students then used the information they acquired through their research to create short plays that they scripted, produced, and performed at the end of the semester in the local theater to enthusiastic audiences consisting of residents, school children, tourists, and students, faculty, and staff from the university. The students reflected weekly in journals, responding to prompts provided by the faculty members. They considered topics such as the importance of historic preservation, what they learned about local history and why they did not know about it before, the effects of development on local economies, the role of theater as education and entertainment, and whose responsibility it is to preserve history and to make theater available in rural communities. More discipline-based examples of service-learning and reflection are in 4.2.

2.6 HOW DOES REFLECTION WORK IN COCURRICULAR SERVICE-LEARNING, ESPECIALLY ONE-TIME OR SHORT-TERM EXPERIENCES?

How Can I Engage Students in Reflection If There Is No Classroom and No Credit Involved?
How Do I Build Reflection into a One-Time Event?

There is no doubt that it is challenging to engage students in meaningful reflection outside the structure of the curriculum. However, setting realistic goals and intentionally integrating reflection into the design of the experience can result in positive learning and development. Some guidelines for designing and implementing reflection in short cocurricular service-learning experiences include:

▣ Consider using a term other than reflection. For some students, reflection may have religious connotations or conjure up notions of forced intimacy. Terms such as check-in, pair-and-share, chat, or buzz session may be more effective. Asking student leaders to suggest terms is likely be helpful. On the other hand, at a faith-based institution or within the context of a chaplaincy-based program, reflection through prayer may seem natural to students.

▣ Involve participants in "pre-flection" to prepare them for the service experience and for the essential role of reflection in service-learning. Make it clear to students what they will be doing, why it matters, whom they will be working with, and what the big-picture issues are. Allow students to voice their expectations, concerns, and stereotypes. Address concerns, manage expectations, and acknowledge stereotypes.

▣ Set the tone by establishing simple norms for group reflection, such as: feel free to ask as well as answer questions, avoid profanity, listen carefully, be open-minded, and speak in complete sentences rather than one- or few-word answers.

▣ Offer students a variety of modes of reflection. For example, students who are not confident speaking to a group may prefer reflection through online discussions, journaling, social media, or artistic expression.

▣ Provide clear expectations, instructions, and assessment criteria, if relevant.

▣ Seek closure on emotional issues by the end of the reflection session. Suggest issues and questions students might want to think more about following the end of the session.

A frequently used framework for reflection in short-term cocurricular service-learning experiences is the What? So What? Now What? model in Exhibit 2.6. Chapter Five discusses cocurricular service-learning in depth.

EXHIBIT 2.6 What? So What? Now What? Reflection Model

- What happened? What did you see, hear, touch, say? What did you feel? What surprised, pleased, frustrated, angered you?
- So what have you learned? What difference does what you saw and learned make to you? What do you understand differently now? How does what you have learned relate to prior knowledge, ideas, theories? Why is this learning important?
- Now what will you do? Why does it matter? What will you do as a result? What will you do differently? What will you not do?

Adapted from K. Rice, "Becoming a Reflective Community Service-Learning Professional." In B. Jacoby & P. Mutascio (Eds.), *Looking In, Reaching Out: A Reflective Guide for Community Service-Learning Professionals.* Boston, MA: Campus Compact, 2010. Used by permission.

CONCLUSION

Reflection is so fundamental to the concept and practice of service-learning that it is not an understatement that *there can be no service-learning without reflection.* Essential and irreplaceable, reflection is indeed the hyphen that intentionally and purposefully connects the service and the learning. One can do service and one can learn, but reflection is the process through which the service and learning can become transformative. It is through critical reflection that we open ourselves to become changed in meaningful ways by what we do, whom we meet, what we know, and what we seek to know. Many examples of reflection in the context of academic courses and cocurricular experiences can be found in Chapters Four and Five.

CHAPTER

3

Developing and Sustaining Campus-Community Partnerships for Service-Learning

As an avid observer, practitioner, and advocate of service-learning, it is clear to me that high-quality service-learning must be grounded in authentic, mutually beneficial campus-community partnerships. However, in reality, there are too many partnerships "in name only" that exist primarily in a grant application or college promotional brochure. Too many communities have complained about being used as "learning laboratories" or having been "partnered to death" by a well-meaning university. Service-learning partnerships are complex, fluid, dynamic, and fragile. They take time, energy, and patience to develop, and they evolve over time. Yet the only way to maximize the potential of service-learning for students and communities is to create and sustain reciprocal partnerships. This chapter describes the principles, practices, forms, and steps of campus-community partnerships, together with the opportunities and challenges that they present.

By necessity, service-learning involves a wide range of partnerships across units within the institution; with schools, communities, and community organizations; with other higher education institutions; with all levels of government, national and local associations and foundations, large corporations and small businesses; and, increasingly, institutions, nongovernmental organizations, and communities around the world. However, I have intentionally focused this chapter on the unique nature of *campus-community* partnerships, which I sometimes, for simplicity, refer to as *service-learning partnerships.* It is also important to note that, while service-learning partnerships by necessity engage both campus and community, this chapter is written from the perspective of the institution.