Robert Bringle & Julie Hatcher

Service learning as scholarship: why theory-based research is critical to service learning

Service learning provides an opportunity to improve instruction for students and contribute to the quality of life in communities. This article explores the ways in which service learning also presents opportunities to conduct research and scholarly work that can improve teaching and learning, contribute to the knowledge base of disciplines and professions, enhance the public purposes of higher education, and inform communities in ways that empower them to take action. Research will be most informative when the information that is gained through data collection, whether qualitative or quantitative, is based on a solid theoretical rationale and the results are relevant to refining theoretical propositions that can guide future programme design and implementation.

Diensleer as vakkundigheid: waarom teoriegebaseerde navorsing noodsaaklik is vir diensleer

Diensleer bied 'n geleentheid om onderrig aan studente te verbeter en dra by tot die lewensgehalte van gemeenskappe. Hierdie artikel verken wyses waarop diensleer ook by die volgende 'n rol kan speel: geleenthede verskaf om navorsing en vakkundige werk uit te voer wat onderrig en leer kan verbeter; kan bydra tot die kennisbasis van dissiplines en professies; die openbare doelstellings van hoër onderwys kan uitbrei; en gemeenskappe kan inlig op wyses wat hul kan bemagtig om tot aksie oor te gaan. Navorsing is by uitstek informatief wanneer inligting wat bekom word deur data-insameling, hetsy kwalitatief of kwantitatief, gebaseer is op 'n vaste teoretiese rasionaal en die resultate relevant is vir die verfyning van teoretiese proposisies wat toekomstige programontwerp en -implementering kan rig.

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In America, Ernest Boyer (1996) provided the vision for the engaged campus that has given higher education an opportunity to expand its agenda, enhance the quality of its work, and improve society (Bringle *et al* 1999). The White Paper on Higher Education Transformation (Dept of Education 1997: 8), which challenges South African institutions to promote and develop "social responsibility and awareness among students of the role of higher education in social and economic development through community service programmes" sets a similarly exciting course for the transformation of higher education in South Africa. Aided by the innovative and comprehensive Community-Higher Education-Service-Partnership (CHESP) project, which has seeded the development of service learning (SL) courses, we firmly believe that South African higher education institutions can create new and exciting education models for the rest of the world. The purpose of this article is to discuss the role that research and scholarship can and should play in developing community engagement and SL in South Africa. In doing so, two different aspects of research will be highlighted: conducting research on SL, and conducting research through SL.

1. Civic engagement in the USA

Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis defines civic engagement as

> [...] active collaboration that builds on the resources, skills, expertise, and knowledge of the campus and community to improve the quality of life in communities in a manner consistent with the campus mission (Hatcher & Bringle 2004b: 5).

Civic engagement, then, encompasses conducting teaching, research, and service (including patient and client services) in and with the community. Civic engagement includes university work in all sectors of society: nonprofit, government, and business. The scope of civic engagement work is captured in Figure 1.

The manifestations of civic engagement by American higher education include cooperative extension and continuing education programmes, clinical and pre-professional programmes, administrative initiatives, centralised administrative-academic units with outreach missions, faculty professional service, student volunteer initiatives, eco-

Figure 1: Civic engagement in higher education
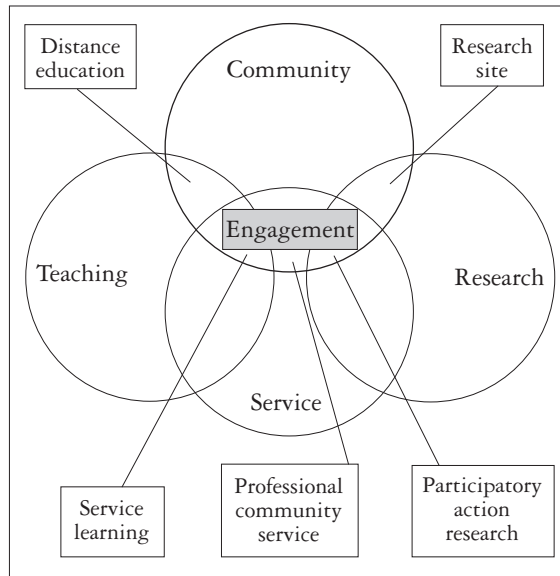
Source: Bringle *et al* 1999: 5

nomic development initiatives, political outreach, community access to facilities and cultural events, and most recently, SL classes (Thomas 1998). Critical examinations have suggested ways in which greater emphasis on civic engagement can change the nature of faculty (academic staff in the South African higher education context) work, enhance student learning, better fulfil campus missions, and improve town-gown relations.[1] One of the most dramatic changes in American higher education during the 1990s that supports civic engagement has been the proliferation of SL courses.

1   Cf Bringle *et al* 1999; Boyer 1994 & 1996; Colby *et al* 2003; Eggerton 1994; Harkavy & Puckett 1994; Peters 2004; Rice 1996.

1.1 Service learning

The American Association of Colleges & Universities describes SL as powerful pedagogy because it brings a civic dimension to teaching academic material, contributes to a civic purpose for institutions of higher education, and fosters a civic dialogue between institutions and their communities. SL is defined as a

> [...] course-based, credit-bearing educational experience in which students (a) participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and (b) reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of personal values and civic responsibility (Bringle & Hatcher 1995: 112).

According to this definition SL is an academic enterprise. Although other forms of community service (volunteering) can have educational benefits, SL deliberately integrates community service activities with educational objectives. This means that not every community service activity is appropriate for a SL course. Community service activities need to be selected for and designed to align with the educational objectives of the course. Furthermore, the community service should not only be meaningful for the student's educational outcomes but also to the community. Thus, well-executed SL represents a co-ordinated partnership between the campus and the community partner, with the instructor tailoring the service experience to the educational agenda and community representatives ensuring that the students' community service is consistent with their goals (Zlotkowski 1999). Thus, high quality SL courses demonstrate reciprocity between the campus and the community, with each giving and receiving, each teaching and learning.

The definition of SL also highlights the importance of reflection. Reflection is the "intentional consideration of an experience in light of particular learning objectives" (Hatcher & Bringle 1997: 153). The presumption is that community service does not necessarily, in and of itself, produce academic learning. Reflection activities provide the bridge between the community service activities and the educational content of the course. Reflection activities direct the student's attention to new interpretations of events and provide a means through which the community service can be studied, analysed, and interpreted much like a text is read and studied for deeper understanding.

SL asks educators to be deliberate in designing community-based learning opportunities for students that promote academic learning, engage students in active and relevant experiential learning in communities, and develop an enhanced understanding of their personal and professional roles in communities. Indeed, Shulman (1988: 7) likens the syllabus to a "proposal for learning" which, like a research proposal, describes the educator's rationale for selecting the conditions, events, and activities that are most likely to result in the expected outcomes. Educators must be willing to be held accountable for the success with which they use an existing knowledge base about SL as a pedagogy to plan, structure, guide, and design those circumstances that are selected to produce the desired outcomes. Thus, designing all academic courses, including SL courses, is a purposive enterprise that encompasses a logic model that specifies the relationships among student characteristics, course assignments, and community service experiences, and desired outcomes for both student learning and the community organisation.

2. Scholarship and research as reflective practice

Reflective practice is an important aspect of professional work (Schoen 1982) and a critical habit for educators to develop to improve both teaching and learning (Brookfield 1995). Reflection is "the intentional consideration of an experience in light of particular learning objectives" (Hatcher & Bringle 1997: 153). Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory highlights the importance of both reflection and active experimentation, for each is a bridge between concrete experience (practice) and abstract conceptualisation (theory). Thus, it is not only the thinking about an experience, but the thinking about an experience in a systematic way that allows practice to influence theory and theory to inform practice. Educators can utilise Kolb's model as they advance their instructional work. Research on SL in particular, and scholarship related to civic engagement in general, represent reflective activities that tie together innovation, implementation, knowledge, feedback, analysis, and interpretation. As a reflective activity, educators conducting research and scholarship associated with SL should strive to meet criteria that Hatcher & Bringle (1997 & 1999) identified as producing effective reflection:

• Bridge the abstract and the concrete: SL scholarship and research should contribute to both theoretical understanding as well as prac-

tical solutions associated with the multiple facets and outcomes of SL.

- Be regular: SL scholarship and research should be conducted across the implementation of a course, at strategic times for a campus programme, and in a manner that demonstrates growth over time in its capacity to contribute to knowledge and practice.

- Be structured: SL scholarship and research should be systematic, programmatic, and allow for clear inferences that increase the knowledge base for teaching and learning.

- Allow for feedback and assessment: SL scholarship and research should be public (use procedures that are identifiable and understandable) so that it can be reviewed, evaluated, critiqued, and recognised by peers and others (students, service providers, community members).

- Clarify values: SL scholarship and research should guide work within a system that honours certain types of knowing that contribute to the integrity of the work and outcomes that promote justice, democratic participation, and enhance the quality of life.

3. Research on service learning in the USA

There is a knowledge base that informs designing learning opportunities for students. Marchese (1997) examined a wide range of research that includes the cognitive sciences, neurosciences, psychology, and education. Marchese noted that most types of instruction in higher education are designed to produce superficial learning. Instructional methods that emphasise short-term memorising of facts and concepts, an obsession with covering large amounts of material, little student choice about what is studied and how it is studied, and anxiety associated with evaluation of learning are limited in producing a depth of understanding.

In contrast, research clearly identifies the elements that are known to enhance depth of understanding in the learning process: active learning that engages the student in determining components of the instruction process; frequent feedback from experts, students, or others (community practitioners) that is provided in non-threatening ways; collaboration with others (students, practitioners) during the learning process; cognitive apprenticeship (a mentor with whom students can discuss and learn generalisation of principles, transfer of knowledge between theory and practice, how to analyse perplexing circumstances), and prac-

tical application in which students are involved in tasks that have real consequences but have a safety net for high stakes mistakes (Marchese 1997).

What does this mean to the practice of teaching in the university? How do we build these principles into good instruction? These principles are not necessarily an indictment of the lecture method of instruction, although they do suggest that higher education relies too heavily on the lecture and has used it indiscriminately for the convenience of faculty, but to the detriment of student learning. Indeed, all teaching methods, including lectures, should be evaluated according to the degree to which they align with what is known to produce the most desirable learning outcomes. There are many pedagogies that align well with Marchese's (1997) attributes of good instruction and that can be regarded as powerful pedagogies, including collaborative learning, co-operative learning, problem-based learning, case method teaching, undergraduate research, senior capstones, and learning communities. Well-designed and well-implemented SL also aligns with Marchese's (1997) attributes and can demonstrate to the higher education community why SL is a good choice and why SL is a smart choice.

Increasing the knowledge base of SL through research and scholarly work is important for practitioners who aspire to be reflective practitioners, who seek to enhance their skills and understanding, and who desire to demonstrate to colleagues how they are offering students well-crafted opportunities for learning. However, with so much promise, it would be unfortunate if knowledge about the outcomes of SL remains the domain of a few dedicated educators who incur the investments and experience the rewards of research. Systematically studying the nature of SL, regardless of the research methodology and design, and codifying that knowledge in accessible ways is important so that all educators can develop an appreciation for and understanding of SL.

3.1 Existing research on service learning

To date, most research on SL in the USA has been conducted on student outcomes rather than on faculty, institutions of higher education, community partners, and community residents (Eyler *et al* 2001). Does SL, as an intervention, enhance students' academic learning, commitment to civic involvement, and result in philanthropic beha-

viours? The most compelling evidence of the positive effects of SL comes from self-report measures, yet Steinke & Buresh (2002) caution that SL research is overly reliant on self-report measures. Bringle & Hatcher (2000) have suggested that, regardless of how outcomes are measured (behavioural observations, archival records, interviews, paper-and-pencil scales), measuring the variable with a multiple-item index is preferrable to a single-item index (cf also Bringle *et al* 2004, for collection of multiple-item scales for SL research). This applies to behavioural measures as well as attitudinal and knowledge measures. Thus, an isolated behavioural index may be as limited in meaningfulness as an isolated item on a self-report survey, and both will be improved (reliability will be increased) when there are multiple indices that are combined (multiple samples from journals, frequent behavioural observations across occasions at service site, three self-report items measuring a particular construct).

To date, more research in America has been conducted on the outcomes of SL in collegiate populations as opposed to pre-collegiate populations (cf Furco & Billig 2002). Astin & Sax (1998) found in a large 5-year post-graduation follow-up survey of college students, that outcomes associated with involvement in community service and SL during the college years include gains in civic responsibility (future plans to volunteer, efficacy to change society, commitment to influence social values), gains in academic development (contact with faculty, aspirations for advanced degree), and gains in life skills (leadership skills, interpersonal skills, conflict resolution skills) when compared to nonparticipating students and covarying out pre-existing differences. Furthermore, students who participated in SL reported increased interaction with faculty and peers (Astin & Sax 1998; Eyler *et al* 1997), greater relevance of coursework to career clarification (Keen & Keen 1998; Vogelgesang & Astin 2000), stronger commitment to social responsibility and future volunteering (Astin & Sax 1998; Gray *et al* 1996; Markus *et al* 1993; Perry & Katula 2001), improved learning (Astin & Sax 1998; Eyler & Giles 1999; Markus *et al* 1993), improved ability to think critically about complex problems (Batchelder & Root 1994; Eyler & Giles 1999), increased racial understanding and tolerance (Vogelgesang & Astin 2000), and greater satisfaction with the learning experience (Gray *et al* 1996) than undergraduates who do not participate in SL courses.

Although a great deal is known about student experiences in SL courses, there is much about SL that is not known. There needs to be greater diversification of evidence for the outcomes of SL by providing additional evidence for the academic benefits of SL (discipline-based learning) with measures of learning that are independent of self-reports and that control for pre-existing differences among students when SL and traditional courses are compared. As Steinke & Buresh (2002) and Eyler (2000) point out, this should include a better understanding of the effects of SL on cognitive processes, including critical thinking. Although practitioners of SL would like to believe that SL promotes critical thinking and problem-solving skills of students, only seriously limited evidence exists that it does and less is known about when and why those outcomes occur.

3.2 Conducting research on service learning

There are two dominant research strategies that have been used for studying SL. First, quantitative and qualitative research has compared SL courses to courses taught using traditional methods of pedagogy (Eyler & Giles 1999; Markus *et al* 1993; Osborne *et al* 1998). Secondly, aspects of SL (number of hours of service, types of reflection, types of service activities) have been compared within or across SL courses (Eyler & Giles 1999; Mabry 1998). Each of these strategies is useful in clarifying how and why SL produces particular outcomes.

Most research on SL has failed to control for self-selection of students into SL courses. This confounds the ability to make clear inferences about why students are different at the end of the course and what the effect of the course would have been if students not attracted to the course had been enrolled. Bringle & Hatcher (2000) suggest that the experimental method can also be used to study how variations in attributes of courses are related to particular outcomes (Stukas *et al* 1999). There are numerous ways to overcome the problem of selection including random assignment of students to different types of courses, measuring pre-existing differences in students and statistically controlling for any differences, and randomly assigning students either to a SL course or to a waiting list.

Shumer (2000) identifies one glaring problem that is incompatible with an experimental and quantitative approach to studying SL: defining

the intervention. Shumer (2000) notes that there is tremendous variability in the implementation of SL, and in the research studies that have multiple SL courses this variation in SL is difficult to moderate. In addition, even with research on a single SL, there is variability in how students participate in the service component, interact with community members, and respond to the characteristics of the course. Variability in the nature of the intervention is a significant issue in all types of research on SL, both quantitative and qualitative. For example, inaccuracies in being able to describe the intervention and variations in individual student's participation with the intervention are issues that undermine the ability to analyse and understand what is occurring in all types of research on SL. Researchers must be able to describe the nature of the intervention in order to extract meaning about the experience from the evidence, for if this is not done, then little enduring benefit is derived from the research. However, this variability is a manageable problem when researchers include measures of how SL varies across courses on key dimensions (type of reflection activities, nature of service, number of service hours, frequency of interaction of students with peers, faculty, and community supervisors).

Systematic, scientific, theory-based research with reliable and valid operationalisations offers many benefits in contributing to the knowledge base of SL. This approach includes both quantitative methods for measuring outcomes (Bringle *et al* 2004) and designs that control for self-selection and pre-exiting differences (Bringle & Hatcher 2000). Bringle & Hatcher (2000: 74) contend that

> scientific research on service learning provides a significant and necessary component of work that practitioners in service learning must more frequently use (a) to develop theory that explains the process and outcomes of service learning, (b) to improve the practice of implementing service learning courses and programs, (c) to facilitate the development of a culture of evidence and assessment on campuses, (d) to offer a justification for increased allocation of campus resources to service and service learning, and (e) to provide a basis for developing policy associated with the institutionalization of service learning in higher education.

Although other methods, such as qualitative methods, have strengths, we believe that the academic community and policy-makers will be most receptive to information about the efficacy of SL that is based on quantitative methods.

3.3 The role of theory in research on service learning

The issue of variability in the nature of the intervention (SL course, multiple SL courses) provides an example for illustrating the role of theory in conducting good research on SL (cf Bringle 2003). Theories can provide coherence across these variations by interpreting the variability in terms of common themes or constructs. In this way, theories enhance the understanding of how and why these variations matter. When research is derived from theory and evaluates theory-based hypotheses, the work is more systematic, the relationship between the educational experience and the learning outcomes is better understood, and the findings have broader implications. Thus, theories are important for extracting lessons, principles, and guidelines from research results. In addition, one role of theories in research lies in the deductive process of generating and testing hypotheses.

Conducting research that is not parochial and limited to a particular setting, a combination of circumstances, or a period of time is important to building a substantial knowledge base. In some cases, there are studies of SL courses in which there is strong emphasis on the empirical data that describes a programme and its outcomes, yet with little or no emphasis on theory. This type of research principally describes what was done in a particular SL course, and what outcomes occurred, without attention as to why there is a connection between the antecedents and consequences. Research with these attributes may be good programme evaluation, but is often not good research: "Let's do this and see which of these outcomes occur". Programme evaluation can test theory (the relationship between programme design and outcomes), but it typically does not. Any theory about the relationship between outcomes and interventions is often implicit and when theory is implicated it is only a token statement that is tacked on to the descriptions ("It's reasonable to expect that these outcomes will occur"). In the case of quantitative research this type of research relies heavily on methods, measurement, and statistics without sufficient explanation for why certain variables are being studied, why certain outcomes are expected, and how the outcomes have broader implications. Qualitative research of this type has no clear explanation for why certain questions were asked (of subjects, of archival material) and the conceptual framework for interpretation is based solely on describing the results and making conclusions.

The goal of good research is not simply to describe a highly idiosyncratic event. The purpose of research is to identify explanations that can generalise, or to know when they do and do not generalise (Bringle 2003). Thus, the goal of credible, effective, rigorous, and high-quality research, whether it is quantitative or qualitative, is to understand a phenomenon so that something is learned for the future. For example, what is learned might be a principle of good practice ("Service learning courses that involve structured reflection activities are ..."); something about learning ("Learning is more likely to occur when ...", or something about community impact ("Benefits to community members are improved when ..."). In any case, if the research does not produce knowledge that is relevant to theory development that furthers understanding and guides future decisions, policy, or practice, then it fails to contribute in substantial ways to future work.

Our reading of the research literature on SL, which is predominantly set in the American context, leads us to the conclusion that formal theories have not played a sufficiently prominent role in SL research. But, one might ask, "Doesn't everyone have theories?" And the answer, at one level, is "Yes." But not all theories are necessarily in the form that is most useful for increasing the understanding of SL. In order to be useful, theories need to provide clear hypotheses, provide falsifiable hypotheses, be public, and be systematic and internally coherent (Bringle *et al* 2004).

Thus, research is most informative when the information that is gained through data collection, whether qualitative or quantitative, is relevant to supporting, developing, refining, and revising theoretical propositions that can guide future programme design and implementation (Bringle 2003). Much qualitative research on SL is highly descriptive in nature and more similar to journalism than to scientific research. To show how the design and implementation of a SL programme or course was guided by theory and to demonstrate how the experiences and outcomes are consistent or inconsistent with expectations derived from a theory provides a much more productive basis from which conceptual generalisations can be understood and a basis upon which lessons learned from a setting or a set of circumstances can be applied to other settings. Theories also provide a basis for integrating and differentiating disparate observations and findings (when common

elements can be conceptually organised by a theory) and a basis for understanding boundary conditions for phenomena (when the theory or principle does not apply).

Elaborating on why a principle produces desirable results prods the "why" question and identifies mediating variables (Bringle 2003; Bringle *et al* 2004). A mediating variable describes an intervening variable that is assumed to link the antecedent and the consequence. Theories are built and developed through an exploration of mediating variables. For example, it might be hypothesised that structured reflection activities, as a mediating variable, generate better learning among students because structured activities provide better conceptual maps of the content domain than do unstructured reflection activities. In this case, the nature of the conceptual map is assumed to mediate or explain the relationship between reflection and learning. If the learning outcomes differ because of the type of reflection activities for novice students, then it is expected that a measure of conceptual maps will also differ for the two groups.

In instances in which conflicting findings exist, or a theory specifies different effects for different groups or for different conditions, moderator variables can clarify the circumstances under which different results are obtained. A moderator variable describes an "it depends" relationship. Theories are clarified on the basis of moderating variables. For example, structured reflection may work better for novice SL students, but unstructured reflection may work better for experienced SL students. In this case, which type of reflection is better "depends" on the previous SL experience of the student.

One of the odd paradoxes is that to stress theory in research seems to imply that it is detached from practice. However, the opposite is true. When research is testing theory the combination has the most potential to contribute to practice because of the generalisability of the theoretical propositions to other settings, other courses, other service activities, for, as Kurt Lewin (1951: 169) noted, "Nothing is as practical as a good theory."

4. Conducting research through service learning

According to the definition of civic engagement (cf Figure 1), there are additional forms of civic involvement besides SL (participatory action research, distance learning, professional service). When the intent of these professional activities includes conducting research in and with the community in a manner that "engages faculty members, students, and community members in projects that address a community-identified need" (Strand *et al* 2003: 5), then the activity represents a combination of research and service. These activities are referred to as participatory action research or community-based research.

Strand *et al*'s (2003) model specifies three key components: collaboration between the campus and community; democratisation of knowledge that acknowledges different ways of knowing and different types of knowledge, and social change through actions based on research that promotes social justice. At its best, participatory action research will demonstrate reciprocity by benefiting the various stakeholders. For example, all stakeholders contribute to the research process and learn from the experience. The community participants are able to offer critical information about context and local knowledge as well as expertise on the issue being studied. Academic participants may offer their unique discipline-based perspective and expertise. In addition, the community should benefit from the information gathered and how it informs actions and decisions in ways that empower the participants. The academic participants benefit from how the research informs the discipline or profession's knowledge base in scholarly ways. Participatory action research that encompasses SL allows students to be participants in the development of the collaborative research in ways that strengthen their academic learning and civic competencies. This combination provides a very powerful form of SL instruction and it benefits the professor's scholarly research, the students as learners, and members of the community as participants and recipients of useful information.

Participatory action research may require academics to approach research and scholarship in non-traditional ways. To emphasise research as a democratic and participatory process removes the hierarchical structure that often accompanies traditional programmes of research guided by scholars. However, the promise is that the outcomes from participatory action research are more attentive to fulfilling the goal of

research that include its public purposes by increasing the utilisation of outcomes and enhancing the self-efficacy of a broader set of participants.

5. Conclusion

Why should higher education bother with civic engagement and SL? For, as Smith (1998: 2) notes, "There are no market forces reinforcing any institutional interest in accomplishing progress on the civic dimension". Harkavy (1996) identifies three motives to sustain the will of each campus to become a better citizen in its own manner: the quality of work of the institution, including the scholarship of teaching (via SL) and research (via participatory action research), will be enhanced by community engagement; tangible benefits (increased retention, donations, reputation) will promote the institution among key constituencies, including alumni, funders, and civic leaders; and each institution should model behaviours that it expects to inculcate in its students, including making the morally responsible choice for that institution to be a fully engaged citizen of its communities. University leadership should find any one of these three reasons to be sufficient. Together, they provide a compelling rationale upon which civic engagement, including SL, can be enhanced and sustained for the public good and for institutional development.

South African academics interested in community engagement have a tremendous opportunity to develop significant programmes of teaching, research, and professional service with multiple and rich consequences for higher education and communities. Community engagement provides an opportunity to conduct serious academic and scholarly work. First, concerning SL, there is an opportunity to improve the practice and understanding of SL by conducting theory-based research on SL. Research on SL, particularly research that contrasts SL with other forms of instruction, provides a means for contributing to the scholarship of teaching. Secondly, SL provides a powerful context that is both convenient and appropriate for evaluating hypotheses from theories about critical aspects of human behaviour and increasing civic involvement of students in ways that strengthen a democratic society. Furthermore, such research is significant not only for better informing practice but also for contributing to the refinement of academic theory. Finally, participatory action research provides an opportunity to conduct research

that asks compelling intellectual questions in ways that inform the discipline and that increase the capacity of community participants to make informed decisions about significant community issues.

Although there are many perspectives from which community engagement can be evaluated (funders, community impact, institutional goals), it may, in some instances, warrant the status of scholarly academic work. The strongest case for documenting civic engagement as scholarship will occur when there are multiple sources of evidence on the impact of the work on the intended stakeholders, the work has clear academic qualities compelling intellectual question; use of a knowledge base; systematic methods), it is effectively communicated to relevant stakeholders, including academic ones, it results in academic publications, there is peer review of the academic and intellectual qualities of the work, and there is evidence of professional growth of the scholar.

We are impressed with the tremendous potential that SL and civic engagement have for transforming South African higher education in ways that enhance its contributions to an evolving democracy. We firmly believe that the Community-Higher-Education-Service-Partnership (CHESP) initiative in South Africa that is promoting and supporting the integration of community service in academic courses is very significant because it has provided an organised framework for implementing and evaluating different approaches to SL within the South African context. CHESP is unique in the world in its size, scope, and aspirations, and it casts a rather large shadow that, in our appraisal, humbles much of what we aspire to in America for the development of SL and civic engagement. No initiative in America is as intentional and comprehensive from start to finish as CHESP.

To be successful, this work will require various types of programmes and activities, formal and informal discourse on many related topics, and developing and redirecting resources and activities for the university, the community, and higher education. But one of the most significant contributions of CHESP will be determined by the extent to which learning for the South African context is derived. Learning about course design, university-community partnerships, how systematic information gathered from experiences can improve practice, and the potential for SL to prepare citizens for a democratic society is critical to

advance the work, both in South Africa and in the USA. This learning will be most significant when it results in scholarship. Furthermore, the CHESP initiative can be a model for a quality assurance framework for community-based academic service, teaching, and research in South Africa. Therefore, we challenge South African higher educational institutions, as we have challenged American institutions (Bringle & Hatcher 2004a) to establish high aspirations for how SL and civic engagement can produce high quality work that reflects good intellectual content; persuade others to be curious about the work's potential; leverage additional support to advance programmes; build mutually beneficial campus partnerships with communities and the service sector, and articulate the expanding role of higher education in local communities.

At the heart of this work is the commitment to discuss, envision, and critically examine the implications of Boyer's challenge for universities to develop the scholarship of engagement (Bringle *et al* 1999). Boyer challenged American higher education to connect the rich resources of campuses "to our most pressing social, civic, and ethical problems, to our children, to our schools, to our teachers, to our cities" through the scholarship of engagement (Boyer 1996: 19-20). Boyer did not specifically discuss the role of SL; however, SL has become recognised as a fundamental academic intervention to promote civic engagement and further the public purposes of higher education. We trust that academics in South Africa, along with those in America, will meet Boyer's challenge to bring dignity to civic engagement by taking steps to make it an integral part of the fabric of their campuses and higher education. In doing so, we all must creatively identify the ways in which this work can contribute to scholarly research on SL as a pedagogy, and how research scholars can collaborate with, learn from, and contribute to communities.

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