Creating a service learning course raises substantive pedagogical challenges and dilemmas. This chapter discusses the counternormative nature of academic service learning and presents a pedagogical model to resolve these tensions.

Academic Service Learning: A Counternormative Pedagogy

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Faculty interest in academic service learning has exploded over the last few years. Some see service learning as a way to prepare students for active citizenship. Others perceive it as a means to involve universities in socially responsible action. Still others find in it a panacea for the perceived shortcomings of the information-dissemination model that prevails in higher education.

These are solid reasons for becoming involved in academic service learning. But once the motivation for becoming involved has emerged, questions about implementation necessarily arise. Though the notion of adding community service to an academic course may not be difficult to conceptualize, the practice of integrating service and learning is anything but simple.

Contrary to some interpretations, academic service learning is not merely the addition of a community service option or requirement to an academic course. A clause on a syllabus that directs students to complete community service hours as a course requirement or in lieu of another course assignment does not constitute academic service learning. Rather than serving as a parallel or sidebar activity, the students' community service experiences in academic service learning function as a critical learning complement to the academic goals of the course.

In other words, academic service learning is not about the addition of service to learning, but rather the integration of service with learning. In this contrasting *synergistic* model, the students' community service experiences are compatible and integrated with the academic learning objectives of the course, in a manner similar to traditional course requirements. Here students' observations and experiences in the community setting are as pivotal to the students' academic learning as class lectures and library research. In this integrated

model, the service and the learning are reciprocally related; the service experiences inform and transform the academic learning, and the academic learning informs and transforms the service experience (Honnet and Poulsen, 1989).

Integrating service with academic learning, however, catalyzes a complexity to the teaching-learning process that is analogous to adding a newborn to a family. Just as the newborn is not merely the addition of one more member to the family, community service is not merely the addition of one more requirement to a course. As the newborn qualitatively changes the norms and relationships in the family constellation, so, too, community service qualitatively changes the norms and relationships in the teaching-learning process.

A Working Definition of Academic Service Learning

For the purposes of this volume, we are utilizing the working definition, "Academic service learning is a pedagogical model that intentionally integrates academic learning and relevant community service." There are four key components to this definition. First, academic service learning is a *pedagogical model*; first and foremost it is a teaching methodology, more than a values model, leadership development model, or a social responsibility model. Second, there is an *intentional* effort made to utilize the community-based learning on behalf of academic learning, and to utilize academic learning to inform the community service. This presupposes that academic service learning will not happen unless a concerted effort is made to harvest community-based learning and strategically bridge it with academic learning. Third, there is an *integration* of the two kinds of learning, experiential and academic; they work to strengthen one another. Finally, the community service experiences must be *relevant* to the academic course of study (Howard, 1993). Serving in a soup kitchen is relevant for a course on social issues but probably not for a course on civil engineering. All four components are necessary in the practice of academic service learning.

Challenges

From this definition, it is apparent that academic service learning creates a host of stimulating pedagogical challenges that are obviated in traditional pedagogy. For example, how can we strengthen student capacity to extract meaning from community experiences? How can we strengthen student capacity to utilize community-based learning on behalf of academic learning? How can we better enable students to apply their academic learning to their community service? These are challenges that those who consider academic service learning will face.

Many of the pedagogical challenges associated with academic service learning result from its counternormative nature. Academic service learning stands, in some significant ways, in contradistinction to traditional pedagogi-

cal principles. For example, broadening the learning environment beyond the instructor's purview is clearly contrary to standard pedagogical operating procedures. Involving students in experiential learning breaches traditional practice. Positioning students with the responsibility for discerning important from unimportant "data" in the community is contrary to traditional courses in which relevant knowledge is deciphered for the students by the instructor. The mix of traditional classroom-based theoretical learning and nontraditional community-based experiential learning clearly "raises the pedagogical bar."

The Traditional Pedagogical Model

At the risk of generalization and simplification, let us review some of the salient features of the prevailing information-dissemination model in higher education. The oft-cited advantage of this model, customarily manifested in the lecture, is that it is efficient in transmitting volumes of academic information and theory to large numbers of students. Through years of elementary and secondary school rehearsal and then higher education reinforcement, classroom roles, relationships, and norms in the traditional model have been powerfully internalized by all parties; before entering the very first meeting of a class, faculty and students alike know that faculty are the knowledge experts and direct the learning activities in the course, and that students begin with knowledge deficits and follow the prescribed learning activities. In this "banking model" (Freire, 1970), faculty are active, depositing and periodically withdrawing intellectual capital from students who are for the most part passive. The course follows a predetermined structure, learning stimuli are uniform for all students, and each class and each assignment follow a familiar routine. Even in courses in which there is a departure from the standard lecture, "discussion usually focuses on a pre-established set of inquiry questions or curricula" (Chesler, 1993, p. 31). In fact, control of the entire range of teaching and learning activity is within the faculty member's knowledge and experience purview and ascribed and perceived jurisdiction.

Furthermore, in the traditional teaching-learning model, learning is individualistic and privatized; students generally learn by themselves and for themselves. When students do contribute in class discussions, often it is for grade-enhancing reasons rather than to advance their peers' learning. Instructor-determined grades reflect individual achievement. The epistemology that undergirds traditional pedagogy is positivistic and in conflict with communal ways of learning (Palmer, 1990).

Incongruencies Between the Two Pedagogies

Academic service learning is incongruent with traditional pedagogy in a number of ways:

A conflict of goals. Service learning's goal of advancing students' sense of social responsibility or commitment to the broader good conflicts with the

individualistic, self-orientation of the traditional classroom (Howard, 1993). Perhaps the most important way that academic service learning is inconsistent with traditional pedagogy, and even other forms of experiential learning, is in its insistence on advancing students' commitment to the greater good. "The competitive individualism of the classroom . . . reflects a pedagogy that stresses the individual as the prime agent of knowing" (Palmer, 1990, p. 111). In the traditional course, with its focus on the individual, an orientation toward others is necessarily discouraged. The dilemma here is that the nature of the traditional classroom encourages individual responsibility rather than social responsibility.

A conflict about valuable learning. In traditional courses, academic learning is valued, whereas in academic service learning, academic learning is valued *along with* community-based experiential learning. Academic learning is deductively oriented, whereas experiential learning is inductively oriented. The dilemma here is how these very different kinds and ways of learning not only can coexist but can even create a learning synergy for students.

A conflict about control. In traditional courses there is a high degree of structure and direction vis-à-vis learning; the faculty control what is important for students to learn. This contrasts with an invariably low degree of structure and direction vis-à-vis learning in the community (the exception may be professional practica, in which there is directed learning by a designated field placement supervisor). Therefore, in the community, students are more likely to be in charge of their learning. Even though they may be armed with a learning schema from the instructor, the dilemma is how to bring the level of learning structure and direction in the two learning contexts into greater congruence.

A conflict about active learning. A closely related issue is that student passivity contributes to the efficiency of the information-dissemination model, whereas in the community there is a premium on active learning. The high degree of structure and direction provided by the instructor in traditional pedagogy leads to a passive learning posture by students, but the low degree of structure and direction in communities in relation to learning requires that students assume an active learning posture. The dilemma here is how to bring the role of the learner in the classroom into greater congruence with the role of the learner in the community.

A conflict about contributions from students. The orientation toward efficient transmission of information in the traditional model precludes taking advantage of students' learning in the community. Student contributions in traditional pedagogy are discouraged because they compromise the efficiency goal. The dilemma here is how to make student learning that is harvested in the community not only welcome but utilized in the classroom.

A conflict about objectivity. Whereas objectivity is valued in the traditional classroom, in academic service learning a subjective engagement, emanating from the philosophy of pragmatism, is also valued (Liu, 1995). The dilemma here is how to integrate subjective and objective ways of knowing.

A New Model: The Synergistic Classroom

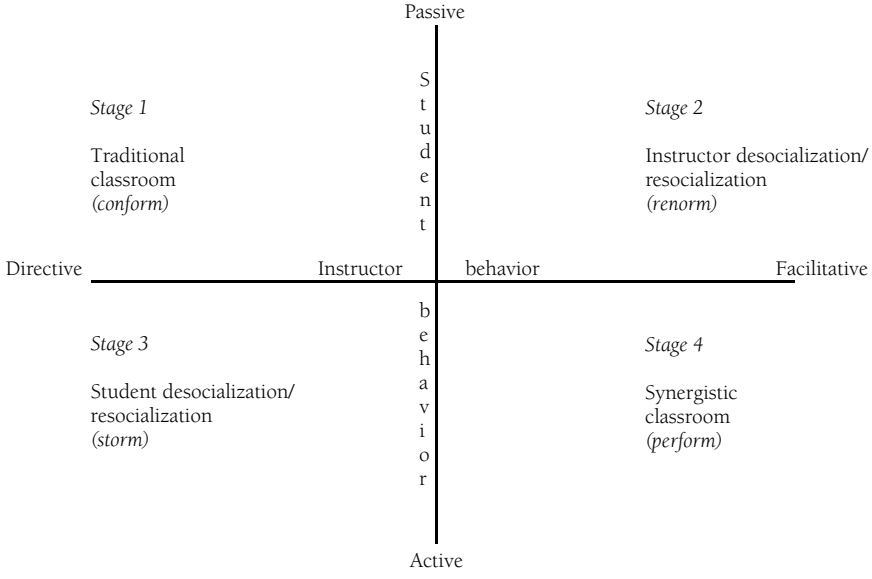
To resolve these tensions, drastic measures are needed. Nothing less than a reconceptualization of the teaching-learning process will do. We need a pedagogical model that

- Encourages social responsibility
- Values and integrates both academic and experiential learning
- Accommodates both high and low levels of structure and direction
- Embraces the active, participatory student
- Welcomes both subjective and objective ways of knowing.

For many years I have struggled with these dilemmas in a sociology service learning course here at the University of Michigan. I have struggled in my attempts to prompt student participation, to find a balance between more structure and less structure, to integrate learning from the community with learning from academic readings, and to encourage social responsibility in the classroom.

Over time I have come to realize that to create a classroom that is consistent with the goals and values of service learning, it is absolutely necessary to deprogram or desocialize students and instructors away from traditional classroom roles, relationships, and norms, and then resocialize them around a new set of classroom behaviors. To accomplish the desocialization and resocialization processes requires that the instructor and the students *travel together* on a journey to remake the classroom. Figure 3.1 depicts this journey.

Figure 3.1. Stages in Transforming the Classroom



In this matrix, four prototypical stages are identified in moving from a traditional classroom to a synergistic classroom that meets the five criteria enumerated above. The first stage, identified as the *conform* stage, depicts the traditional classroom model in which the instructor (represented on the horizontal axis) is directive and the students (represented on the vertical axis) are passive. To initiate the transformation process, identified in the model as the second stage, *renorm,* the instructor must begin to carry out her or his role in an intentionally counternormative way. For example, the instructor may ask students what was important in their readings and in their service experiences since the last class, and use their contributions to frame the class discussion. Actions such as this will implicitly communicate to the students that it will not be business as usual.

In this second stage, however, the students, whose schooling has been effective in internalizing a passive, individualistic role in the classroom, resist these change efforts and continue to be primarily passive. This might be manifested in a low participation rate when the instructor seeks contributions from the students. But as the instructor continues to be consistent in her or his new interpretation of the teacher role, and as the students continue to receive the message that their active participation around both academic and community-based learning is encouraged, we arrive at stage 3 in which the students, in fact, become more active and begin to take greater responsibility for the learning in the classroom.

This *storm* stage, ironically, often becomes problematic for the instructor, who, also schooled for many years to perceive instructors as authorities and students as receptacles, questions the quality of learning under way. As a result, in this third stage the instructor regresses and retreats to a more directive posture. But over time, the instructor comes to realize that the students are genuinely learning, and returns to a more facilitative approach. As the students continue to assume an active role, the fourth and final stage, the *perform* stage—the synergistic classroom—is achieved, in which the consistency between the students' and instructor's respective new roles and ways of learning lead to enhanced teaching-learning performance.

Though this diagram illustrates a linear progression from a traditional classroom to a synergistic classroom, the actual movement from one stage to another is not so simple. In fact, faculty can expect a more nonlinear progression, characterized by fits and stops along the way.

Recognizing the Synergistic Classroom

Transforming a classroom from a traditional orientation to one that is consistent with the goals and opportunities associated with academic service learning is not easy. It takes an intentional campaign on the part of the instructor and lots of patience, because change will be far from immediate. If, however, the challenge is accepted and a commitment to experiment is made, how will one know when one has arrived at the synergistic stage?

For the most part, arrival will be self-evident to the faculty member. As Garry Hesser has written, "Every time faculty read students' papers, journals, exams, or *listen to the quality of discussion* [emphasis added] in a seminar, they are responsible for discerning whether learning is taking place" (1995, p. 35). Faculty will know. The most obvious dynamic to change will be the role of the students. An observer in a synergistic classroom will note that the students are actively engaged in discussion, among themselves or with the instructor. Discussion comfortably embraces both the content of academic readings and observations and experiences from the students' community placements. The instructor may be difficult to identify, though she or he might be seen facilitating the conversation to maximize the students' efforts to integrate the community-based and academic learning, contributing her or his own knowledge and relevant experiences to the discussion, or managing the discussion so that there is equal attention paid to the objective and subjective ways that students come to know. We might even see that if the instructor left the room, the level of learning would not be diminished.

In this classroom, discussion about theory and discussion about experiences is embraced by all, and efforts to integrate the two are made by all parties. The lines of distinction between the student role and the instructor role become blurred, so that students are teachers and learners, and instructors are learners as well as teachers. The traditional classroom's orientation toward individual student learning is replaced by a commitment to the learning of the collectivity. Questions and answers are perceived as equally important to the learning process, and ignorance, rather than to be avoided at all costs, is valued as a resource.

Once the synergistic classroom is achieved or at least approached, the new orientation to classroom teaching and learning can fan out to other components of the course. Faculty and students who have achieved the synergistic classroom will find that group academic projects, students reading each other's term papers, and final exams that call for bridging academic and community learning are consistent with the classroom transformation.

The Cost of the Synergistic Classroom: Time Away from Task?

Inevitably, the question arises: Does this effort to transform the classroom take time away from academic tasks? After all, time is expended in moving through stages 2 and 3 of the model, and, as acknowledged above, time on community learning necessarily takes time away from attention to theoretical learning. How does an instructor committed to student learning about an academic body of knowledge reconcile this dilemma?

The issue at hand has to do with the answer to the question: What is the task at hand in an academic course? If it is to impart as much information as possible, then the information-dissemination model unequivocally receives top honors. But if the task, in addition to learning content, is to excite and motivate

students to learn during the course and after, to learn new ways of learning, and to develop a set of overall values in the field of study, then we know that the information-dissemination model is woefully lacking.

For example, one study found that while teachers are lecturing, students are not attending to what is being said 40 percent of the time (Pollio, 1984). Another study found that in the first ten minutes of lecture, students retain 70 percent of the information, but only 20 percent in the last ten minutes (McKeachie, 1986). Still another study found that four months after taking an introductory psychology course, students knew only 8 percent more than a control group who had never taken the course (Rickard, Rogers, Ellis, and Beidelman, 1988).

In contrast, we continually read faculty testimonials about the difference academic service learning has made in students' drive to learn (Bringle and Hatcher, 1996; Hammond, 1994; Hesser, 1995; Hudson, 1996; Kendrick, 1996; Yelsma, 1994). In a study conducted at the University of Michigan, students in sections of a political science class who were involved in community service as part of the course received better grades and reported more enhanced learning than their counterparts who were involved in library research (Markus, Howard, and King, 1993). In addition, they reported a statistically significant difference relative to their library research counterparts when asked about "performing up to my potential in this course," "developing a set of overall values in this field," and "learning to apply principles from this course to new situations."

A Formidable Challenge

As a relatively new and dilemma-filled pedagogy, academic service learning is not for the meek. Reformatting classroom norms, roles, and outcomes so that both academic and experiential learning can be joined requires a very deliberate effort around a rather formidable challenge. As a counternormative pedagogy, instructors who accept this challenge can expect initial resistance from students, periodic self-doubt about their own teaching accomplishments, and colleagues' looking askance upon this methodology. But the dividends—renewed motivation for learning by students, enhanced academic learning for students, renewed excitement for teaching by instructors, and better preparation of students for their roles as lifelong citizens and learners—will more than compensate for the effort.

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