

THE IMPACT OF SERVICE-LEARNING ON STUDENTS' SENSE OF CIVIC  
RESPONSIBILITY

(Spine title: The Impact of Service-Learning on Civic Responsibility)

(Thesis format: Monograph)

by  
Rebecca A. Denby

Faculty of Education

Submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Education

Faculty of Graduate Studies  
The University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario  
April 2008

© Rebecca A. Denby 2008

# Chapter One: Introduction

In the past, strengthening students' sense of civic responsibility was one of the primary objectives of public education (Ontario, 1950). However, in today's society corporate agendas have influenced goal setting in education. Early in children's schooling they are socialized, either overtly or implicitly, to understand the importance of supporting the social and economic power structures, primarily those of corporations. This being said, many believe that public money should be spent on supporting the public good, not on supporting the objectives of the private sector (Chomsky, 2000; Schennach, 2001; Sears, 2003).

Critical thinkers and social innovators from across the ages, such as Plato and Dewey, have shaped my views on the purpose of education and inspired my research interests. Plato stated that the purpose of education should be the development of individuals as guardians and leaders of the community (Schennach, 2001). He promoted not only cognitive development, but also students' self-actualization and their potential to achieve. For him, education was integral to the idea of freedom due to its unlimited scope to develop critical inquiry, and to its creation of opportunities to free oneself from the constraints of society (Schennach). John Dewey (1916), one of the outstanding thinkers of the past century, stated that reforms in education could play a significant role in social change. Schools should educate in a way that would lead individuals to create a free and just society, a society in which the ultimate aim of production is not material goods, but free human beings who associate with one another equally.

## **Civic Responsibility Defined**

To improve our society through education, we need to select a pedagogy that focuses on instilling a sense of social responsibility in our children and to develop an educational system where civic responsibility is a primary goal. For the purpose of my study, civic responsibility is defined as active participation of an individual in the public life of a community, with a focus on the common good (Gottlieb & Robinson, 2003). Others may use similar terms, such as active citizenship or community engagement. In a recent study of academic programs emphasizing the development of responsible citizens (Kahne, Westheimer, & Rogers, 2000), three conceptions of citizenship emerged. One common conception portrays a responsible citizen as someone with a job, who votes, pays taxes, gives blood, and obeys the law. A second conception is participatory citizen, which describes someone who is involved in community affairs (e.g. boards, community events). Last, a social reformer is someone who strives to understand the causes of societal problems and addresses them at the root (Kahne, Westheimer, & Rogers). Although some may view the social reformer as the ideal citizen, the first two types of individuals also can play an important role in society.

## **Service-Learning Defined**

As a form of experiential education, service-learning has its roots in John Dewey's theory of experience, which states that the interaction of knowledge and skills with experience is the key to learning (Jacoby, 1996). Dewey's writing informed service-learning through a philosophy of education, a theory of inquiry, a conception of community and democratic life, and a means for individual engagement in society toward

the end of social transformation. While Dewey never specifically addresses the conceptualization of service-learning, his writings do analyze five specific areas of relevance to it. They are: linking education to experience, democratic community, social service, reflective inquiry, and education for social transformation. Together, these principles form a pedagogy aimed at the development of democratic values and engaged citizenship (Saltmarsh, 1996).

Service-learning provides students with the opportunity to engage in structured activities that are intentionally designed to enhance student learning and civic responsibility, while addressing community needs (Jacoby, 1996). However, as John Dewey stated almost a century ago, “mere activity does not constitute experience” (Dewey, 1916, p. 146). Therefore, integral to service-learning is evaluated reflection which follows the community service because it provides students with an opportunity to reflect critically on the meaning of their service experience (Jacoby). Furthermore, reflection allows students to analyze not only what has taken place, but also why. Reflection encourages students to move beyond the focus on the individual to look at systems and structures (Keller, Nelson, & Wick, 2003). What distinguishes service-learning from other community service or volunteer experiences is the intentional integration of service and learning, the reciprocal involvement of both the student and the community, and the degree and quality of reflection (Brody & Wright, 2004). Specifically, students engaged in service-learning will contribute to the organization, while at the same time receiving valuable education from the community organization staff. Service-learning is different from traditional pedagogy in several areas, including

the role of the student, the role of the instructor, the kind of learning that is valued, and the emphasis on societal rather than individual responsibility (Howard, 2003). Service-learning also allows for students to gain knowledge from the community organization, its staff, and its clientele.

### **Distinction between Co-Curricular and Curricular Service-Learning**

To decrease confusion about the conceptualization of service-learning, it is useful to make a distinction between co-curricular service-learning and curricular service-learning. Curricular service-learning integrates service in the community with academic study. Faculty, in collaboration with community partners, design service-learning projects that meet community needs and deepen students' comprehension of course content. Reflective components are explicitly designed within the curriculum to help students consider relationships among their service, the curriculum, and their cognitive, spiritual, personal, and professional development. By comparison, co-curricular service-learning, is not directly connected to course work or to the students' official plan of study, instead it is part of their extracurricular experience. Programs may originate in areas such as residence life or student services and are organized with careful attention to ensure that community needs are met, reflection occurs, and students' comprehension of the world around them is strengthened, but remain separate from the prescribed academic program of the student. Although both forms are valuable, the focus of my research is on curricular service-learning, as I feel this type of pedagogy requires additional investigation because it is coming to be seen as a viable avenue of academic learning.

Research supports the implementation of service-learning in academic institutions, and has found that participating in such programs substantially enhances the student's academic development, life skill development, and sense of civic responsibility (Kahne, Westheimer, & Rogers, 2000). Service-learning has also been found to foster in students such qualities as self-discipline, collaboration and team building, respect for the quality of work done, character growth, and respect for others (Schaffer, Berman, Pickeral, & Holman, 2001). Gallini and Moely (2003) found that service-learning courses enhanced students' interpersonal and community engagement. In this study, service-learning students scored significantly higher on scales regarding community engagement, academic engagement, interpersonal engagement, academic challenge, and retention of concepts, than did non-service-learning participants. Service-learning also gave students many opportunities to interact with people from different age, socio-economic, and racial groups from those they saw every day, providing opportunities for the development of problem-solving and interpersonal skills including communication, role-taking, and conflict resolution. The experience required students to show initiative, creativity, and flexibility in dealing with new or unexpected situations, and helped them develop their leadership skills (Gallini & Moely, 2003). In addition, Gallini and Moely (2003) reported that students felt that service-learning had positively influenced their understanding of course concepts. More than 58% of the students surveyed felt that they learned more in their service-learning classes than in their other classes. Given all of these benefits it is understandable why service-learning is creating interest among university instructors and administrators.

## **Background on Service-Learning**

Service-learning has been an accepted and widely implemented method of teaching and learning in the United States for many decades (Jacoby, 1996). Although there have been examples of small initiatives in Canada over the past decade, only in the last few years has this pedagogical approach gained more widespread recognition and support on Canadian campuses. In November 2004, The Canadian Alliance for Community Service-Learning (CACSL, 2007) was established to support, educate and network as the means to ensure the effective growth of community service-learning (CSL) in Canada. Their mission is to nurture the active participation of students, educators and communities in service-learning by identifying, investigating and promoting best practices, offering solutions to common challenges, and facilitating the creation of local, regional, national and international networks of individuals and organizations involved in CSL practice and research. Their vision is to have students, educators and communities learning and working together to strengthen society and individuals' sense of civic responsibility (CACSL). Their values include viewing community service-learning as a powerful experiential pedagogy which deems academic and community-based knowledge to be complementary and mutually reinforcing.

CACSL believes that students' engagement in community issues and activities provides an avenue for social change, and that critical, reflective research and inquiry into the processes and effectiveness of CSL is crucial to its becoming an integral part of students' academic learning. In addition, CACSL encourages the active participation of community partners in decisions about the planning, development, and evaluation of

individual CSL programs and of CACSL itself, and is committed to open, inclusive communication and creative collaboration with stakeholders from all sectors. CACSL states that they will be inclusive of diversity, regardless of differences in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, language, and ability, and appropriate accommodations will be made to ensure that CACSL resources, activities, and events are accessible to diverse groups and individuals (CACSL, 2007).

The group's key aim is to secure long-term funding to support service-learning programs and pilot projects. "In the U.S., a huge amount of money and support have gone into service-learning initiatives. We want to have enough money available nationally so that the service-learning movement can grow on Canadian campuses and be sustainable," says Margo Fryer of The University of British Columbia, a member of CACSL (Charbonneau, 2004, p. 9). St. Francis Xavier University (St. FX), Nova Scotia, is the acknowledged pioneer in service-learning in Canada. They introduced the concept in 1996, utilizing a model they adapted from a U.S. college. Marla Gaudet, program officer for the service-learning program explains their rationale in creating the program, "Students didn't have a lot of opportunities for experiential learning, especially community-based. So we looked at this model and found that it fit quite well with our philosophy" (Charbonneau, 2004, p.3). A five-year, \$1-million grant from the J.W. McConnell Foundation helped expand the program. In 2004, St. FX offered voluntary and mandatory service-learning components in 50 courses in a variety of programs involving 900 students, out of a total student population of 4,000. Students volunteer their time at local schools, nursing homes, group homes, food banks, and women's shelters.



Students also act as consultants in their area of study. For example, a nutrition student might help with a meal plan in a group home, or a business student might help to develop a community group's strategic plan (Charbonneau). St. FX also offers a co-curricular "immersion experience", where small groups of students serve for a full week during spring break. Some of the locations include Guatemala, Grenada, Cuba, Mexico, Romania, and inner-city Toronto. For some students from small-town Nova Scotia, inner-city Toronto is just as different as the other locations, notes Ms. Gaudet (Charbonneau).

The University of Western Ontario offers a similar program called Alternative Spring Break. Students have the opportunity to visit countries and complete service work from teaching English to building homes. Projects occur in Mexico, Dominican Republic, Louisiana, and London. In 2007, 110 students participated in this co-curricular experience. There are plans for the program to grow to accommodate the high demand from students. In 2008 three new experiences will be offered. Although the Alternative Spring Break program is an example of co-curricular service-learning, Western also plans to expand the use of service-learning within academic programs (Charbonneau, 2004). In "Engaging the Future: Final Report of the Task Force on Strategic Planning", Western states its plan to support and facilitate development of programs that integrate classroom study with community engagement and service (The University of Western Ontario, 2006). This will include a special role for the Teaching Support Centre in identifying best practices at Western and promoting their wider use. Western is also committed to emphasizing the importance of broad experience outside the classroom for all their

students, recognizing that these activities build leadership capacity (Centre for New Students, 2007).

As with Western, course-based service-learning at the University of Guelph is still in the development stage. In 2004 the university added a service-learning component in the third year of an interdisciplinary Bachelor of Arts and Science program. For an hour and a half each week, the students help to deliver a reading program for at-risk teenagers at a vocational high school. They also have two hours of instruction each week on issues of literacy and models of teaching (Charbonneau, 2004). “It’s an amazing experience, both for me teaching, but really for the students because it makes the learning that’s going on in the classroom seem a lot less abstract”, says English and drama professor Dr. Wilson (Charbonneau, p. 5). Often by this point in the year students experience high levels of stress and are “selectively engaged,” she says. “But in this course, the students are fired up; the material matters to them now” (Charbonneau, p. 5).

The University of British Columbia (UBC) has also added formal course-based service-learning to their academic programs. UBC’s Dr. Fryer would like to see a centralized office on campus, “so faculty feel like they’re not having to start from scratch” (Charbonneau, 2004, p. 6). She adds that, “you can take any course and turn it into a service-learning course, but faculty need to be educated about the concept” (Charbonneau, 2004, p. 6). At the very least, she says, there needs to be a community liaison officer to avoid the duplication of efforts, stating, “you don’t want organizations to get calls from several different departments” (Charbonneau, p. 7).

Although much of the research on service-learning has centered on learning outcomes, most people involved in service-learning initiatives in Canada say such programs play an even more profound role: they create more active and well-rounded citizens. “I take really seriously the notion that we have to be educating people to think critically and to be informed, engaged citizens,” says Ann Wilson, an English and drama professor who teaches a service-learning course at Guelph (Charbonneau, 2004, p. 2). I agree, and therefore I chose to focus my research on the influence of service-learning on students’ sense of civic responsibility.

### **Primary Research Question**

Service-learning is a promising pedagogy that has the potential to not only provide students with knowledge, but to also develop responsible and active citizens. For this reason, I believe it is important to conduct research on service-learning to determine whether it has value in today’s education system. My primary research question is: Does service-learning, as a pedagogical approach, influence students’ sense of civic responsibility? I also consider whether a social justice perspective of service-learning is superior to a charity perspective in influencing students’ sense of civic responsibility.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter has explored the definitions and background of both service-learning and civic responsibility. As stated earlier, the following definitions of service-learning and civic responsibility will be used for the purpose of this thesis. Service-learning is

defined as a pedagogy that enables students to engage in structured activities that are intentionally designed to enhance student learning and civic responsibility, while addressing community needs. Integral to service-learning is evaluated reflection which follows the community service because it provides students with an opportunity to reflect critically on the meaning of their service experience (Jacoby, 1996). Civic responsibility is defined as active participation of an individual in the public life of a community, with a focus on the common good (some may use similar terms, such as active citizenship or community engagement). In the next chapter I review the literature relating to the influence of service-learning on student's sense of civic responsibility.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

In the following chapter, I will review the literature on the influence of service-learning on students' sense of civic responsibility to provide a framework for my own research. I will consider whether our society is civically disengaged, and also attempt to determine who is responsible for civic engagement. I will review research that has measured the influence of service-learning on students' sense of civic responsibility. Last, I will consider the differences between charity and social justice perspectives of service-learning.

### **Civic Disengagement**

Civil society, one based on mutual respect, concern for others, and democratic rights and responsibilities may be at risk. Our cultural trends show that our focus is on material self-interest, rather than on a thoughtful sense of others (Handley, 2001). The following statistics, although primarily from the United States, certainly support this claim. Americans have the largest gap between rich and poor of any industrialized nation and consume a disproportionate amount of natural resources every year, nearly 10 times more than the Chinese (Handley). In 1989, 75% of college freshmen reported their top priority in attending college was to become very well off financially. Only 41% indicated that developing a meaningful philosophy of life was a priority, down from 80% only two decades earlier (Handley). Indicators such as rising crime rates, increasing homelessness and drug addiction, changing work patterns, illiteracy, poverty, concerns about human

security and immigration, and declines in voter participation also provide evidence of a civil society in crisis (Piper, 2002). Furthermore, the lethargy and cynicism toward anything political seen among 18-25 year olds is causing alarm as our democracy is progressively becoming a citizenry of spectators rather than participants (Kapoor and Williams, 2003). This is significant because the majority of post-secondary students are in this age category.

Woodrow Wilson wisely stated many years ago that “we are becoming civically illiterate. Unless we find better ways to educate ourselves as citizens, we run the risk of drifting unwittingly into a new kind of Dark Age; a time when small cadres of specialists will control the decision-making process” (Barber, 1994, p. 87). Although this statement was made early in the last century, it still applies very much to the current state of society. Koliba (2004) agrees, stating that the era of responsible citizenship may be coming to an end. Although most would agree that we, as a society, need to develop more engaged citizens who actively exercise their democratic rights and responsibilities, we have less agreement regarding who should be responsible for this significant task. Recent scholars concur that responsibility for the development of a culture of engagement lies on the shoulders of educational institutions and the people who bring them to life (Koliba).

### **Who is Responsible for Civic Engagement?**

Much of John Dewey’s career was given over to the quest for bridging education and experience in the name of democracy as a way of life rather than just a political system. In 1937, he stated, “unless education has some frame of reference it is bound to

be aimless, lacking a unified objective. There exists in this country such a unified frame. It is called democracy” (Dewey, 1937, p. 415). By the 1960s many postsecondary institutions began to question the relationship of the ivory tower to the democratic nation, and as a result, tried to develop programs which incorporated the values of democracy (Barber, 1994). However, not since the time of John Dewey has so much critical attention been directed at the civic responsibilities of institutions of higher learning (Markus, 2003).

Our fixation with efficiencies, competition, and an economy controlled by market forces is increasingly being scrutinized as we question the purpose of education (Kapoor & Williams, 2003). Many feel that our academic institutions could be of great help to students engaged in community service-learning if they tried consistently and diligently to help students connect their experiences with their academic courses. Critics suggest that students also need more opportunity for moral and social reflection on the problems they see first hand (Coles, 1994). Kapoor and Williams agree, stating that education that is mindful of the need to develop active and engaged citizens is the key to continuing the legacy of democratic participation. As a result of these and similar assertions, there has been a surge of interest in challenging academia to take ownership of their moral and civic goals, and to articulate overtly its role in educating citizens.

To be fair to these institutions, we must remember that in a society increasingly obsessed with standardized measures of academic success and economic outcomes, the challenges for those who believe in the democratic purposes of schooling are substantial

(Kahne, Westheimer, & Rogers, 2000). This being said, some higher education institutions have resisted external pressures to conform to market demands, and have, instead, opted to focus on democratic values within their institutions. As a result, service-learning is receiving wide acceptance in higher education as an innovative educational practice that strengthens the acquisition of course concepts while also affecting students' attitudes regarding community issues, social problems, and civic engagement (Moely, McFarland, Miron, & Mercer, 2002). Furthermore, Schaffer, Berman, Pickeral, and Holman (2001) found that to encourage civic responsibility, schools have made a commitment to integrate service-learning into the curriculum. Saltmarsh (2005) indicates that support for service-learning and other civic engagement activities in higher education is stronger now than at any other time in recent history. He adds that civic engagement is featured in the strategic plan of almost every national higher education association. Furthermore, almost 700 public and private colleges, including over 100 community colleges, are now members of Campus Compact, the national organization committed to renewing the civic dimensions of institutions of higher education (Saltmarsh). Although these are American statistics, Canada is moving in the same direction, as indicated by the foundation of the Canadian Association of Community Service-Learning, as well as the many "Service-Learning Coordinator" positions that have been created on campuses across the country.

Due to the fact that education has been found to be a strong predictor of civic engagement (Kahne, Westheimer, & Rogers, 2000), many curricular efforts are promoted on the grounds that they will support the development of committed and thoughtful



citizens who, in turn, will provide a solid foundation for democracy and social equality. Therefore, educational institutions play a critical role in preparing students for active engagement in political life.

### **Service-Learning's Impact on Students' Sense of Civic Responsibility**

Although many would agree that academic institutions must focus their attention on democratic ideals, there is less agreement on the best strategies for supporting the development of informed, thoughtful, and active citizens in these settings. The question then arises: To what extent can service-learning contribute to citizenship development? This question has interested practitioners, academics, and educational leaders since the beginning of the service-learning movement (Koliba, 2004). Westheimer and Kahne (2004) have repeatedly addressed the relationship between service-learning and citizenship development. They argue that service-learning more than other pedagogies or extra-curricular activities has the potential to significantly increase civic responsibility.

John Dewey (1916) promoted the connections among education, learning within the community, and citizenship. He maintained that the community is integral to educational experiences, and believed that through experiential learning, or learning by doing within the community, individuals could be challenged to go beyond the traditional rote learning that was the norm in classrooms at the time. Dewey contended that if students could apply their learning within the community, they would not only develop themselves on a personal level, but also contribute to their communities as citizens (VanWynsberghe & Andruske, 2007). Cooks and Scharrer (2006) agree, stating that

“community service-learning pedagogy, programs, and research by their very nature promote the idea of academic-community intervention – an interruption in the way things are that produces some sort of change for social betterment” (p. 44).

Several researchers have found that involvement in service-learning fosters citizenship and develops a sense of political efficacy in the students involved (e.g. Drane, 2001; Morgan, 2002; Parker & Altman Dautoff, 2007). Students who participate in service-learning have shown significant increases in the belief that they could make a difference, and have an interest in future volunteer service, have plans to become involved in helping careers, and have a greater ability to get along with people of different backgrounds (Gallini & Moely, 2003). Further, while students who participated in service-learning demonstrated changes in civic attitudes, students who had not been involved in service-learning during the semester showed little change (Moely et al., 2002). In addition, service-learning participants, in comparison with other students, developed basic citizenship skills such as an ability to express opinion, to speak in public, to organize groups, and to think critically about political issues (Gomez, 1999). These are simply a few examples of how service-learning can positively influence students’ sense of civic responsibility.

Eyler, Giles, and Braxton’s (1997) large scale study provides a more in-depth analysis of these results. The Comparing Models of Service-learning project was a national study in the United States of America of the impact of service-learning programs on students’ citizenship values, skills, attitudes, and understanding. Fifteen hundred

students at thirty colleges and universities completed surveys at the beginning and end of the service-learning experience. Students were asked to compare their service-learning experience with their experiences in other classes by asking students to assess the quality of each course, their learning, intellectual stimulation, and motivation to work hard. The researchers focused on students' assessments of their citizenship skills, on their confidence that they could and should make a difference in their communities, on their community-related values and on their perceptions of social problems and social justice. These constructs were selected because they had been identified as the most frequently expressed goals of service-learning programs (Eyler, Giles, & Braxton, 1997). Generally, Eyler, Giles, & Braxton found that participation in high quality service-learning leads to the values, knowledge, skills, sense of efficacy, and commitment that underlie citizenship. Among the program characteristics of service-learning that they found made a difference in education for effective citizenship were: placement quality, application, reflection activities, diversity, and community voice.

To accurately assess the significance of the results of this study, it should be noted that students who had participated in service-learning experiences and those who did not differed significantly on the pre-test measure of virtually every outcome. Those who participated in service-learning already had much higher ratings on each of these measures and these differences were sometimes substantial. Furthermore, while most background characteristics were not significantly related to increases on outcomes, previous service often made a difference. In addition, students with extensive experience and well-integrated service-learning tended to approach social problems related to their

service in a more complex and thorough way than those who had limited experience. Those with limited experience were more likely to jump to quick solutions and tended to form simplistic analyses (Eyler, Giles, & Braxton, 1997).

Eyler, Giles, and Braxton (1997) found that service-learning was a significant predictor of growth in students' belief that they could be personally effective in their community, that they were connected to it, and that the community could be effective in solving its problems. Service-learning also appeared to increase students' beliefs that service should be a school requirement and that citizens should volunteer to serve. Service-learning was a predictor of growth in valuing a career focused on helping people, on volunteering time to the community, on tolerance for others, and on influencing the political system (Eyler, Giles, & Braxton, 1997). In addition, service-learning was a predictor of change in the way students saw social issues, as well as how they thought these issues should be addressed. Students were more likely to put themselves in others' shoes and to remain open to new opinions and information. Finally, they were also more likely to show an increase in their tendency to see problems as systemic, to think that changing policy was a better approach than targeting individuals, to believe that social justice should be a priority for society, to be able to see things from the perspective of others and to be open to new ideas (Eyler, Giles, & Braxton).

In regards to reflection activities, discussion was the only positive predictor of commitment to future service; writing did not encourage future commitment (Eyler, Giles, & Braxton, 1997). Students who did a lot of writing were less likely to be open to

opinions, and were more certain of their points of view. Perhaps the writing process served to entrench their confidence in the validity of their perspective. Writing was also a negative predictor for identifying individuals who chose to be community leaders, whereas discussion and application, defined as the ability to apply classroom knowledge in the community, were associated with individuals who valued future roles as community leaders as a means to influence public policy. Application and writing assignments were associated with increased ability to identify issues and consequences of actions. Application was also found to be a key indicator of students' belief in the importance of changing public policy to solve social problems (Eyler, Giles, & Braxton).

While service-learning was a predictor of change over the course of a semester for many outcome variables, the changes were not statistically significant. Some evidence suggested that how students experience their service-learning will affect changes in their citizenship, attitudes, skills, values, and understanding (Eyler, Giles, & Braxton, 1997). Students rated their experience as positive if they built strong relationships with faculty and fellow students. Fortunately, service-learning provides an environment where students work closely with faculty and other students and therefore can build the kinds of strong relationships that have a positive impact on their lives. Students also rated the experience more favourably if the quality of the placement, as defined by the opportunity to do meaningful work, was high. In addition, the quality of the placement was identified with changes in skills such as political action skills, communication, ability to identify issues, and tolerance (Eyler, Giles, & Braxton).

A smaller, but informative study was conducted by VanWynsberghe and Andruske (2007). Many of their findings support the idea that service-learning has a positive impact on civic responsibility. Specifically, they found that 86 percent of the 65 students they studied indicated that they were inclined to perform community service again, and 35 percent of those found that the experience “opened their eyes” to benefits of helping others. They also found that student interest in service-learning could inspire the students to participate as active members in their communities. Nineteen percent of the students indicated that they had always wanted to participate in community service, but needed the motivational push offered by the course. Seventy-four percent felt that they had made a difference. Students told Vanwynsberghe and Andruske that: “it has made me more inclined to be active in my community because now I see what a difference I can make”, and, “to change the world, I learned we have to be willing to perform community service” (p. 361). Two other students made insightful statements. One said, “I don’t think I made a difference to the organization per se because it is such a large, well-organized place already. I think it made more of a difference on me”. The other agreed, stating, “it helps me just as much as it helps others” (VanWynsberghe & Andruske, p. 362). The students in this study were able to identify reciprocity as a principle element of service-learning.

Another important outcome of service-learning is that it can help combat individuals’ inclinations to view those from other social groups as “different” from themselves. Service-learning, with its potential to integrate students with groups with whom they would not likely otherwise interact, offers a more promising context for

studying relationships between members of different groups. Some service-learning practitioners argue that it is precisely these meaningful inter-group interactions that lead to the numerous positive outcomes for students involved in service-learning (Brody & Wright, 2004). As early as 1916, Dewey stated that one cannot share in discourse with others without learning; without getting a broader point of view and perceiving things of which one would otherwise be ignorant. Brody and Wright agree, stating that without interactions with diversity, students' perceptions about social problems are less likely to change.

Some instructors use service-learning in their courses because they also want students to be aware of how stereotypes dehumanize others, and how these stereotypes can lead to systems of oppression that can have a negative impact on individuals and groups (Keller, Nelson, & Wick, 2003). Service-learning provides students with the opportunity to see the complexity of the problems facing those whom they are serving. Stereotypes are dismantled when students acquire a depth of knowledge of the issues and humanity of a group whom they had previously thought of only in uni-dimensional terms (Keller, Nelson, & Wick). Battistoni (1997) agrees, stating that students who have interacted with the clients in a homeless shelter, for example, are able to humanize homelessness, and also test their own theories about poverty, public policy, and democracy against their actual experiences.

However, positive shifts in attitudes and beliefs are not guaranteed. Sometimes these encounters with "others" are so foreign and strange to students that these

encounters may cause students to retreat to a comfort zone wherein they formulate their opinions and outlooks quickly, perhaps even reinforcing previously held stereotypes (Koliba, 2004). VanWynsberghe and Andruske's (2007) study also provided evidence that although most of the studies on service-learning produce positive results, some service-learning experiences can be perceived as negative by students. Students who felt that the community service aspect of the course had been hugely unsatisfactory represented 12 percent of the class. Time and personal issues with particular organizations were presented as reasons for dissatisfaction (VanWynsberghe & Andruske). Students expressed feelings such as: "It is too far from where I live", and, "I'm not really interested in environmental sustainability". Other students stated, "I have always found excuses not to, and I always will", and, "I see no point". More pragmatically, one student stated that, "students need money so desperately that there is no time to do something that does not financially benefit them". This was seconded by another student who said, "the community service work I did does not make me want to do community service elsewhere nor more often, considering I could be getting paid for those hours I put in elsewhere" (VanWynsberghe & Andruske, p. 364). VanWynsberghe and Andruske also found that if students were not provided with meaningful tasks they felt that their time had been wasted. One of the participants stated, "the organization would have gone on fine without me" (p. 362). Similarly, 15 percent of the students surveyed believed their expectations of the experience had not been met because they had been given too little responsibility. Also, students complained that their skills had not been properly utilized. Overall those stating that they felt they had not made an impact on the organization in which they had been placed, pointed out that they had been given



menial tasks or had felt lost (VanWynsberghe & Andruske). This study contributes to the literature of service-learning by showing that the nature of the service-learning activity determines the utility of the experience to the students involved.

Researchers also found that students may interpret social problems as resulting from individual deficiencies and/or moral weakness, instead of opening students' eyes to the need for political intervention and systemic change (Keller, Nelson, & Wick, 2003). Put another way, viewing "reality" through the lens of their own privilege, students may find themselves judging individuals rather than carefully critiquing deeper societal structures and issues. The need for political or structural change is not perceived to be the issue. From their privileged position, students assume that if those being served would overcome their weaknesses and begin to act responsibly, their problems would dissolve (Keller, Nelson, & Wick). Service-learning can then be seen as contributing to efforts to maintain the power differential and social control, rather than inspiring in students the goals of liberation and social transformation. "Elisa", as an example, felt that the residents and children of the homeless shelter would benefit if she were allowed to "pull them aside" to provide them with childrearing lessons. She assumed that she, a 20-year-old, single, childless student, knew more about childrearing than the working class parents she encountered at the shelter. She assumed that her cultural background gave her the correct answers which, if communicated and adhered to by these parents, would allow them to accomplish what is "best for them" (Keller, Nelson, & Wick, p. 45). As a result of this student's reflections, her instructors realized that students have to identify and to consider their own privilege before they begin their service placements.

## **Differences between Charitable and Social Justice Perspectives on Service-Learning**

The discussion above leads to a distinction that can be made between two fundamentally different perspectives concerning the nature of service-learning: charity and social justice (sometimes referred to as “civic”). While they may be similar in intent to help, the two nevertheless inspire different pedagogical practices (Battistoni, 1997). Some theorists see charity and social justice as two ends of a continuum with social justice as the ideal outcome, while others see these two forms of citizenship as distinct models and do not hold one to be superior to the other. Delve, Mintz, and Stewart (1990) were among the first to emphasize the movement from charity to social justice as a goal of service-learning. They developed a model of service-learning to describe different phases of social responsibility and specified a goal of transitioning from one phase to another, i.e., to move students “from charity to justice” (p. 26).

Charity emphasizes service as an exercise in philanthropy: giving by “paying back” or through “gratitude”. Furthermore, much of the literature on motivations for service focuses on egoistic or altruistic motives. Egoistic motivations include selfish concerns such as feeling good or soliciting praise from others, while altruistic concerns focus on other’s needs (Brody & Wright, 2004). The language of charity creates a dichotomy between self-interest and altruism, leading students to believe that service is a matter of sacrificing personal interests to moral virtue (Barber, 1994). This approach corresponds with the tradition of the 19th century thinking about charity, and emphasizes character building and a kind of compensatory justice where the advantaged feel

obligated to help the less advantaged. However, they do not feel that those being served are a part of the advantaged community (Battistoni, 1997).

Alternatively, social justice emphasizes shared responsibility and the interdependence of rights and responsibilities. It focuses on enlightened self-interest, rather than altruism (Battistoni, 1997). Proponents of this model assert that self-interest is always embedded in community action because in serving neighbours one also serves oneself (Barber, 1994). The social justice view also involves breaking down the barriers of social stratification which make individuals unreceptive to the interests of others (Dewey, 1916).

Society often equates service with charity, rather than with the broader issues surrounding civic responsibility. Given that societal values strongly influence educational values, it is not surprising that the majority of service-learning initiatives emphasize volunteerism and charity, and do not emphasize a broader focus on social movements, analysis of social and economic structures, or systemic change. Markus (2003) found that college students' interest and involvement in public affairs has plummeted, but their individual participation in school-organized community service has reached all-time highs. Furthermore, it has been found that incoming first-year students are more likely to have participated in community service before entering college; however, they are less likely to follow politics than their counterparts 30 years ago (Koliba, 2004; Saltmarsh, 2005). Some activists blame educational institutions for pushing service requirements without examining the broader social and political issues. Those who place the

responsibility on academic institutions feel that these organizations are not only contributing to the misconception that direct service is more important than collective political action (Koliba), but are also wasting time, money, and effort on service-learning programs without any detectable upswing in civic engagement among young adults nationally (Markus).

To test this theory, Wang and Jackson (2005) assessed students' perceptions of civic involvement from either a charity or social justice perspective. They also analyzed the relationship among six dimensions of civic involvement for developing a charity or social justice perspective. These dimensions, which were first described by Eyler & Giles (1997), are: knowledge, skill, sense of efficacy, value, responsibility, and commitment (as cited in Wang & Jackson). They found that charitable involvement and social justice involvement are two different perspectives, and the difference in ratings provide support for the belief that the dominant student view toward civic involvement is a charitable view. Students in the study continued to develop a charitable perspective on civic involvement, but more importantly they developed toward a social justice orientation. Wang and Jackson found that students' views of community service are much more likely to be associated with an interest in helping those in need, rather than a critique of the social structures that contribute to the continuation of need. This being said, the increase in student awareness of social justice over a ten-week period, is a positive and promising result. This suggests that service-learning has the potential to inspire students to move from charitable involvement to a social justice perspective. However, Wang and Jackson found that only programs designed to promote social justice, as opposed to those

with a charity perspective, have been found to have a positive impact on students' sense of efficacy, commitment, and knowledge.

While charitable involvement may enhance students' feelings of self-worth and moral virtue, it likely contributes little to their intellectual development and understanding of inequity within society. Advocacy for service-learning with a social justice approach is based on a belief that successful democracy requires active citizens who question current practice and inspire social change. Kahne, Westheimer, and Rogers (2000) claimed that citizenship in a democratic community requires more than kindness and decency; it requires engagement in complex social and institutional endeavors. It also requires that individuals work to create, evaluate, criticize, and change public institutions and programs. Therefore, they suggest a civic (social justice) model of service-learning is more desirable, one that includes active engagement in social issues; efforts to examine, critique, and change social policy; and a concern for one's fellow humans.

Similarly, Koliba (2004) suggests that the charitable service paradigm rarely tackles issues of power, interest, and accountability. It emphasizes person-to-person helping behavior, rather than collectively engaging in interest groups to address matters of shared interest. Today's younger generation have seen no radical political or social movements in two decades, and consequently have come to confuse service work with politics (Koliba). However, service-learning with a social justice focus provides an opportunity for students to feel as though they are a part of a collective group that can effect social change. For example, Battistoni (1997) found that when democratic

citizenship was at the foundation of a service-learning experience, students came away feeling more a part of their communities, and with a better and more critical understanding of these communities and their roles in them.

One of the key roles that an individual has in society is as a responsible citizen who understands that rights and liberties are not acquired for free (Barber, 1994). Without active citizens who perceive service not to be the altruism of charity, but the responsibility of citizenship on which liberty ultimately depends, no democracy can function properly or even survive. Freedom only flourishes when it is carefully attended. Barber asserts that democracy does not just deserve our gratitude; it demands our participation as a price of survival. He states that citizenship education through community service should be about civic responsibility, and that to develop students' civic responsibility, a service-learning course must be developed so as to intentionally foster in students an awareness of social justice. Saltmarsh (2005) agrees, stating that to participate effectively in the processes of democracy, both during and after their college years, students will need to acquire the knowledge, skills, and values required to participate as engaged, democratic citizens. Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, and Stephens (2003) add that we must educate the whole person as an accountable individual, and an engaged participant in all levels of society: local, state, national, and global. As was previously mentioned, some researchers even assert that service-learning without a focus on social justice can perpetuate racist, sexist, or classist assumptions about others and reinforce a colonial mentality or a sense of superiority (Wang & Jackson, 2005).

Another limitation of a charitable view of service-learning is that it may not attract the students who are the most in need of training in citizenship. These students are, in fact, the least likely to volunteer. Therefore, the majority of young people who have little or no sense of the meaning of citizenship, or a conception of civic responsibility, will not be reached by volunteer programs (Barber, 1994). Eyler, Giles, and Braxton's (1997) research supports this claim. They found significant differences in pre-test scores for those people who choose service, as compared to those who do not. As a result, the authors encouraged academic institutions to consider integrating these service-learning opportunities into their core curriculum rather than making them volunteer options.

A major challenge facing service-learning practitioners who want to incorporate a social justice model of service-learning into their courses is determining the proper role of politics. Many instructors are unclear as to how to expose students to a specific political action without violating their rights to self-determination of their own ideological values. If an educator shares his or her political convictions overtly or covertly, then the power differential between teacher and student must be addressed, even if it can never be completely eliminated. This may involve the teacher making a statement that grades will not be influenced if a student's political ideology differs from that of the instructor (Koliba, 2004). Koliba argues for the adoption of pedagogical practices that encourage political activism. For example, he suggests creating a safe space for "political talk" within the classroom. To ensure comfort, norms of communication can be utilized during group reflection. These norms can be determined by the class themselves. Some examples are: avoiding personal attacks; agreeing to disagree;

watching our air time; and engaging in active listening (Koliba). An effective service-learning course makes politics more relevant to students, as they are encouraged to examine how even providing service is a political act (Keller, Nelson, & Wick, 2003). When service-learning narrows the gap between theory and activism, students think more about formal activist roles, and their own ability to create social change.

Although charity is not a useful building block in sustaining democracy, it can play a role as a desirable activity within the community. However, the social justice model of service-learning has far greater potential to effect meaningful and lasting social change. In the words of John Dewey (1908): “the best kind of help to others, whenever possible, is indirect, and consists in such modifications of the conditions of life, of the general level of subsistence, as enables them independently to help themselves” (p. 350).

## **Chapter Summary**

The research has shown that service-learning can help to develop civic responsibility among its participants in the United States. I feel that my research will be of value to Canadian educators and students in that it will add to the understanding of service-learning’s contribution to students’ engagement in the community in a Canadian context. Specifically, I will investigate whether service-learning, as a pedagogy, can influence students’ sense of civic responsibility. I will also explore whether a social justice perspective of service-learning is more effective in increasing civic responsibility than a charity perspective. While much of the research on service-learning is anecdotal, I utilized both qualitative and quantitative measures to ensure objectivity while allowing



for an in-depth analysis of service-learning's influence on students' sense of civic responsibility. In the next chapter I will discuss my research methodology.

## **Chapter Three: Methodology**

Research on service-learning is necessary to develop a knowledge base about this educational initiative, to improve practice, and to determine its applicability in academic courses. For these reasons, we need to assess service-learning to examine it for programmatic efficacy and for student progress and teaching effectiveness. In the following chapter I discuss the research methods that I chose and why they were selected.

### **Research Methods**

Much of the data collected on the outcomes of service-learning to date have been anecdotal (Waldstein, 2003). This type of research can be inherently subjective and may pose a risk to validity and reliability. Testimonials carry limited weight in the education research community or with policy makers, because the individuals providing the endorsements may be seen as having a vested interest in the continuation of the programs (Waldstein). However extensive the praise students and educators express concerning a project or program, the reports of participants cannot necessarily be taken as an accurate representation of what has occurred, or of the benefits that have resulted from it, particularly if critiques of service-learning are not included. Therefore, we must document in more detail and from various sources, the effects of service-learning. By using a comprehensive quantitative-qualitative system, I was able to incorporate multiple measures that not only investigate a wide range of outcomes, but also allowed for the triangulation of data. For example, a finding observed on a quantitative measure could be

affirmed or contested by evidence from the qualitative data. Alternatively, a qualitative measure could be supported by quantitative data. Furthermore, quantitative data allowed me to see patterns, and the qualitative data provided a greater depth of understanding these patterns.

For this study my primary assessment tool was a survey provided to the students following the service-learning course (please see Appendix A for the survey used). All participants were asked to rate their views on a five point scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The “Civic Responsibility Survey”, developed by Furco, Muller, and Ammon at the Service Learning Research and Development Center, University of California, Berkeley was used as a template (Furco, Muller, & Ammon, 1998). A variety of questions were included to enable the investigation of several outcomes simultaneously.

The following instructions were included at the top of the page:

“Please carefully read the statements below. For each of the following statements, please compare this course with all other traditional courses you have completed in university (traditional in this context refers to courses which involve teacher-guided activities such as lectures, in comparison to non-traditional courses such as an internship). Therefore, each statement should begin with “compared with other courses I have completed in university, this course.....”. These detailed instructions were included to ensure that

students compared their service-learning course to other more traditional courses they had completed (see Appendix A for the complete survey).

While questionnaire data can be useful in giving an overview of service-learning outcomes, qualitative measures from reflective journals and focus groups, and information about real-world outcomes for students are useful in determining the strength and duration of service-learning effects (Moely et al., 2002). Therefore, in addition to the survey, I familiarized myself with the course objectives, observed a class in session, conducted one-on-one interviews, and reviewed the reflection journals of a smaller number of students to obtain rich data on their experiences. The interview questions enabled unintended outcomes to present themselves.

In both the survey and the interview, I avoided the use of academic jargon. The survey and the interview were conducted one week after the course ended. I chose this length of time because it is short enough to ensure that the experience is still fresh, but long enough to allow for student reflection. The interviews lasted approximately half an hour in length and were not tape-recorded because I felt that note-taking would be sufficient. Lastly, I conducted the content analysis of students' reflection journals. The purpose of the journal review was to find anecdotal evidence of changes in the students' sense of civic responsibility that may have occurred throughout the course. Collectively, these assessment tools provided a thorough and rich data set that enabled me to understand and interpret the student experiences (Hecht, 2003).

Although a great deal of my research was quantitative, I had a significant qualitative component. The amount and variety of qualitative data was difficult to manage. To deal with this issue, I utilized the meta-matrix approach (Furco, 2003). This approach is a qualitative tactic for analysis that provides a framework for organizing information from all the data sources into recurring themes. Data were entered into cells that corresponded to the specific constructs being examined. Then data within a particular cell were compared (i.e., all data relating to improvements in civic responsibility). Through this comprehensive analytical process, the frequency and strength of the qualitative data within each cell could be quantified and various comparisons across the cells could be made (Furco).

## **Limitations**

According to research standards, this traditional research design is applicable (Furco, 2003). Service-learning as a subject of study, however, poses multiple challenges for researchers who would like to undertake this research approach. The most significant issue is that this research design relies on equal treatment of individuals, and in service-learning, many contextual variables are beyond the control of the researcher, and these can compromise any possibility for equal treatment. These variabilities may include quality of the service placement, as well as personal interests, beliefs, and values of both the student and faculty member. In an attempt to resolve this issue, many researchers have utilized a sample comprised of smaller homogenous groups, where the within-sample variability is reduced. However, with a smaller sample size, generalizability becomes difficult to justify (Hecht, 2003). To balance the issues of variability and

generalizability, my sample size was 67 students for the survey, 4 students for the interview, and 3 students for the journal review (Hecht). I had intended to survey 95 students and interview and review the journals of ten; however, given that participation was voluntary, my numbers were slightly lower.

Another limitation was that students were not randomly assigned to groups, and therefore, there was no control group. Some argue that students should be randomly assigned to conditions so that some are required to participate in service and others not, to appropriately evaluate service-learning outcomes. However, it has been found that mandatory volunteerism can actually reduce interest in service activities (Gallini & Moely, 2003). In both of the courses I studied, the service component was mandatory; however, Media and Information Technoculture (MIT) 272G was an optional course and students were aware of the service project in advance of selecting the course. Social Justice and Peace Studies (SJPS) 200E on the other hand, was a required course in the Social Justice and Peace Studies program. However, it could be argued that a particular type of student would opt to take the optional service-learning course in the Media and Information Technology program, and that the same type of student would be drawn to a program such as Social Justice and Peace Studies. That type of student is intrinsically interested in effecting social change. However, if this is true it may make the results even more significant because these students began from an advanced place already. Given that I did not conduct a pre-test, it is difficult to determine how much change occurred. I did attempt to overcome that issue by clearly stating at the top of the survey that they

needed to compare this course to courses they had previously taken when evaluating each statement.

## **Descriptions of Courses Studied**

Although several faculty members at The University of Western Ontario have added service-learning components to their courses, I selected Social Justice Peace Studies (SJPS) 200E and Media and Information Technoculture (MIT) 272G for my research because the faculty members, Dr. Pamela Cushing and Dr. Amanda Grzyb, were experienced with the concept of service-learning, and all elements of service-learning were integrated into the courses.

The first class that I studied was Social Justice and Peace Studies (SJPS) 200E, a core course in the Social Justice and Peace Studies program offered by King's University College. This full-year course is split into two terms and I studied the latter half, taught by Dr. Pamela Cushing. Term two concentrates on social justice theory and cases in a variety of contexts, as well as on non-violence, international health injustices, poverty, homelessness, and disability issues. Students in SJPS 200E are required to engage in a local community service project. They are organized into groups of 7-10 and assigned to a local community agency or organization. They are expected to contribute roughly 40 hours of work to a community service project that will fill a specific need in the agency or organization. The 40 hours during the term are comprised of a combination of service work (20 hours), research, and report writing.

The local community service project has both educational and service aims. It is a chance for students to learn to link class concepts with an actual service situation, to see the complexity of ideals in action, and to plan what can be done to improve the situation. This all occurs in tandem with the actual volunteering. The objective is for students to learn to appreciate the complexity and particularity of achieving and sustaining social justice and peace. The course also analyzes why many pervasive social issues remain issues in spite of solid efforts by many strong, bright people.

The goals of the local community service project include: creating a space for students to gain practical knowledge about the complexities and challenges involved in the day-to-day work of pursuing social justice and peace goals at an organizational level; providing an opportunity for students to apply theory and frameworks from lectures to the realities faced by an organization; learning about the benefits and challenges of working in a group of people with diverse values and skills; discerning where they, as students, fit into those dynamics; and making a worthwhile contribution to meet a local organization's need. Organizations also have the opportunity to create further awareness of their organization and to build an ongoing relationship with King's University College, the Social Justice and Peace Studies Program, and the student volunteers.

The service project makes up roughly 45% of a student's course mark. Non-project assignments include: Article Analysis (15%); Mid-term test (15%); Final Exam (25%). The assignments directly related to the service project are: a background report on the organization, project proposal for service task, final project report, project poster, and



a presentation of the project. The purpose of the background report is for the group to learn about the broader context of their organization's field. Students must incorporate into the report the organization's history, including how the organization came to exist, and why such an organization emerged at the time and place that it did. Next they need to consider the organization's current situation, such as its needs, main projects and challenges, organizational structure, and sources of funding. The report should draw some brief conclusions about the field, the organization's place in it, while taking into account social justice considerations.

The proposal is a brief report used for the group to identify what they plan to do for their service-learning time with the community organization. It includes what the students want to do in the organization, why they think the planned work is valuable, and how they intend to carry out the work. Lastly, the final report and poster documents what they were actually able to do. Students are expected to discuss what was learned in the process of researching, consulting, planning and executing the service work in relation to course concepts of social justice and peace work. Students are also asked to suggest directions for future work for other groups and recommend changes to the project structure for the next year. The presentation should include highlights from the report and/or poster. In all assignments students must demonstrate that they have critically reflected on the connections between the service and class concepts.

The second course that I studied was Media and Information Technoculture (MIT) 272G, "Representing Homelessness", taught by Dr. Amanda Grzyb. This course,

offered by the Faculty of Information and Media Studies, traces the concept of the “unhoused” North American through its various manifestations in nineteenth and twentieth century culture. The course examines: the history of vagrancy law from colonial times to the present; the criminalization of homelessness; the relationship between slavery and vagrancy law; ideologies about property ownership, citizenship, and civic empowerment; the relationship among race, immigration, and homelessness; multi-media depictions of homeless people; and the regulation of public spaces and the containment of the homeless “other.” Particular attention is paid to stereotypes about homelessness, and the impact that such misconceptions have on public policy and affordable housing. By addressing the narratives of homelessness in autobiography and fiction, this course explores representations of the homeless North American as a lens for understanding the definition of the Nation.

Along with weekly meetings on campus, all students have a mandatory service-learning placement with a local shelter, with a recreation program for children living in shelters, or with a local homeless or affordable housing advocacy group. Students are expected to complete 20 hours of service over the term to receive credit for the class. This equates to approximately two hours a week for three months of the course. At the end of the term, students submit a time sheet signed by their supervisor at the service site. Students also keep a weekly journal about their service-learning experiences, and the connections between these experiences and the course materials.

In addition to the 20 hours of service, students must complete assignments for academic credit. Attendance is taken in every class, and students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the assigned reading. Attendance and quality of participation account for 20% of the students' grade. On a weekly basis, students are expected to maintain a journal in which they reflect on their experiences at their service-learning placement. In some weeks, the instructor may ask students to address a particular question or archival research for the journal. Dr. Grzyb has stated in the course outline that the best journal entries integrate readings and lectures with practical experiences at the shelters or agencies. Forty percent of the students' overall grade results from reflection journals. The remaining 40% results from a final research paper, consisting of eight to ten pages exploring one of the major topics in the course.

Of the twenty students in the MIT 272G class, I surveyed twelve students, interviewed one, reviewed the reflection journals of three, and observed the final class. Of the seventy students in the SJPS 200E class, I surveyed fifty-five students and interviewed three. Reflection journals were not a required component of SJPS 200E. The professors of both classes allowed me to attend one of their lectures to observe and to request participation from the students. I made an announcement in each of the classes during the break, explaining my research and informing them that they could fill in the survey after class if they were interested in doing so. I also stated that their professor would not have access to any of their individual responses to the surveys or interviews. On a page accompanying the survey (see Appendix B), I asked the survey participants in writing to provide their name, email address, and/or phone number if they were interested

in participating in an interview about their experiences. Only the MIT students completed reflection journals, and therefore I included a space on the page (see Appendix C) to add their name, email address, and/or phone number if they were interested in allowing me to read their journals. I collected the surveys when the students were finished and stored them in my home office. The interviews were conducted on campus in common areas where privacy was assured.

## **Chapter Summary**

In summary, it was my intention to discover whether service-learning, as a pedagogical approach, can strengthen students' sense of civic responsibility in a Canadian context. My hypothesis was that it would positively impact students' sense of civic responsibility. Since much of the research on service-learning is anecdotal, I was able to contribute to the literature by using a comprehensive quantitative-qualitative system. Collectively, these measures had the potential to provide a comprehensive and valuable data set that enabled me to understand and interpret the impact of service-learning on civic responsibility. In the next chapter I will present the results of my research.

## Chapter Four: Results

To determine whether service-learning had an influence on students' sense of civic responsibility, I surveyed 67 students, conducted one-on-one interviews with four students, familiarized myself with the course objectives, and reviewed the reflection journals of three students to obtain additional data on their experiences. I have organized the data from these sources into the same cluster constructs identified in the survey. The constructs are as follows: awareness of, and empathy toward, individuals in the community and their needs; a sense of personal responsibility; a call to action; a belief that they could influence social change; and understanding of the political and social issues that affect the community. However, not all constructs are represented in the qualitative data.

### Survey

#### **Students' Awareness of, and Empathy Toward, Individuals in the Community and Their Needs**

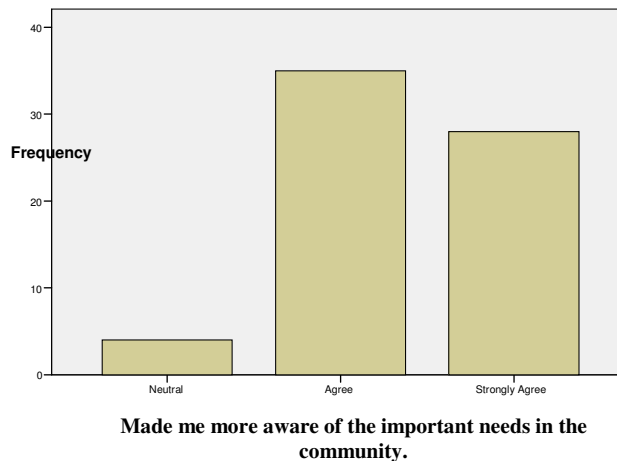
Students expressed a greater awareness of, and empathy toward, individuals in the community and their needs.

**Table 1: Students' Awareness of, and Empathy Toward, Individuals in the Community and Their Needs**

Variable	n = 67	Mean	Std. Dev.	Median	Mode
# 6. Aware of the important needs in the community		4.36	.595	4.00	4
# 10. Aware of what can be done		3.97	.674	4.00	4
# 5. Benefit emotionally from contributing to the community		4.13	.815	4.00	4
# 1. Personal attachment to the community		3.93	.910	4.00	4

Ninety-four percent either agreed or strongly agreed that the course made them more aware of the important needs in the community. The mean for this question was 4.36 (using a five point scale), the mode and median were 4.0, and the standard deviation was only 0.595 because none of the students selected disagree or strongly disagree (see Figure 1 below). In addition, 85% either agreed or strongly agreed that the course “helped me to become aware of what can be done to meet the important needs in the community”. The mean was 3.97, the mode and median were 4.0. The standard deviation was 0.674, which indicated a relatively narrow distribution of responses. Given these numbers, it is evident that service-learning has an influence on students’ awareness of the needs in the community.

**Figure 1 – Distribution of Responses to Question 6**



Eighty-one percent either agreed or strongly agreed that the course helped them to realize that they “benefit emotionally from contributing to the community, even if it is hard and challenging work.” The mean for this question was 4.13, and the mode and median were 4.0. Correspondingly, 79% either agreed or strongly agreed with the

statement “strengthened my personal attachment to the community.” The mean was 3.93, and the mode and median were 4.0. The standard deviation was relatively high at 0.910, which shows that responses to this question were more distributed than others.

### **Students’ Sense of Personal Responsibility**

A majority of students responded that they felt a sense of personal responsibility to the community.

**Table 2: Students’ Sense of Personal Responsibility**

Variable	n = 67	Mean	Std. Dev.	Median	Mode
# 14. Everyone’s responsibility to be involved		4.18	.796	4.00	4
# 2. My responsibility to improve the community		4.00	.798	4.00	4
# 12. Put aside my self-interest in favor of a greater good		3.70	.744	4.00	4

Eighty-seven percent either agreed or strongly agreed that the course “helped me to realize that being actively involved in community issues is everyone’s responsibility, including mine.” The mean for this question was 4.18, and the mode and median were 4.0. The standard deviation was 0.796. In the same way, 78% either agreed or strongly agreed that the course “helped me to realize that it is my responsibility to help improve the community.” The mean, mode, and median were all 4.0. Only 64% either agreed or strongly agreed that the course helped them to put aside their self-interest in favor of a greater good. The mean was 3.70 and the mode and median were 4.0. The reason for this lower score may be because the students realized that they did not need to put aside their self-interest because when they help society they are also helping themselves. As Barber (1994) eloquently states, “self-interests are always embedded in community action because in serving neighbours one also serves oneself” (p. 87).

### Students' Call to Action

The next cluster of questions investigated whether students were called to action following their service-learning experience.

**Table 3: Students' Call to Action**

Variable	n = 67	Mean	Std. Dev.	Median	Mode
# 9. Providing service is something I prefer to let others do		1.82	.757	2.00	2
# 18. Want to become actively involved		4.13	.815	4.00	4
# 19. Find time to make a difference		4.01	.807	4.00	4
# 3. Encourage others to participate		3.99	.896	4.00	4

Eighty-eight percent either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the course helped them to realize that providing service to the community is something they prefer to let others do. For this question the mean was 1.82, the mode and median were 2.0.

Correspondingly, 84% either agreed or strongly agreed that the course made them want to become actively involved in issues that positively affect the community. The mean was 4.13 and the mode and median were 4.0. Also, 79% of the students surveyed either agreed or strongly agreed that the course “influenced me to try to find time to make a positive difference in the community.” The mean was 4.01 and the mode and median were 4.0. Seventy-three percent either agreed or strongly agreed that the course made them want to try to encourage others to participate in community service. The mean for this question was 3.99 and the mode and median were 4.0. Based on these numbers, it can be concluded that some students had difficulty moving from awareness and responsibility to action.



## Students' Confidence in Their Ability to Influence Social Change

Unfortunately, the cluster of results that were least affirming in keeping with the desired results of service-learning were those relating to students' belief in their ability to have impact. Students appear to have an awareness of, and empathy toward, community members and their needs; a sense of personal responsibility; and feel a call to action, but they appear to have little confidence in their ability to have an impact.

**Table 4: Students' Confidence in their Ability to Influence Social Change**

Variable	n = 67	Mean	Std. Dev.	Median	Mode
# 8. Contributions are not valued		1.93	.858	2.00	2
# 11. Powerless to change society's problems		1.93	.804	2.00	2
# 7. Power to make a difference		3.82	.851	4.00	4
# 15. Enough influence to impact community decisions		3.27	.994	4.00	4

I found that 79% either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the course "caused me to feel that my contributions to the community are not valued." For this question the mean was 1.93 and the mode and median were 2.0. Also, 78% either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the course "made me feel that I am powerless to change society's problems." The mean was 1.93, the mode and median were 2.0, and the standard deviation was 0.804. Responses to the positively reframed version of the question demonstrated the same feeling. Only 70% either agreed or strongly agreed that the course helped them to realize that they have the power to make a difference in the community. The mean was 3.82 and the mode and median were 4.0. More significantly, only 42% either agreed or strongly agreed that the course made them feel that they have enough influence to impact community decisions. The mean was 3.27, the mode and median were 3.0, and the standard deviation was 0.994 which seems to indicate some diversity in

students' responses to this question. This is evidence to suggest that more needs to be done to increase students' sense that they can successfully advocate for social change.

### **Students' Awareness of Political and Social Issues**

The most noteworthy results came from the questions regarding students' understanding of the political and social issues that affect the community.

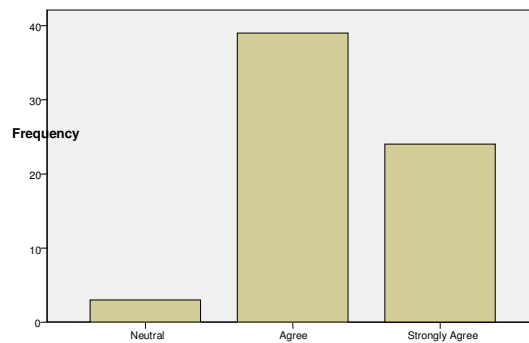
**Table 5: Students' Awareness of Political and Social Issues**

Variable	n = 67	Mean	Std. Dev.	Median	Mode
# 17. State/local issues as important responsibility		4.16	.709	4.00	4
# 20. How political/social issues affect the community		4.32	.559	4.00	4
# 13. Involvement in political/social issues as a way to help		4.18	.695	4.00	4
# 4. Discuss and think about political/social issues		4.37	.775	5.00	5
# 16. Participate in political/social issues to improve the community		4.03	.797	4.00	4

Ninety-seven percent either agreed or strongly agreed that the course “helped me to understand that being concerned about state and local issues is an important responsibility for everybody.” The mean for this question was 4.16 (using a five point scale) and the mode and median were 4.0. Similarly, 96% either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that the course “helped me to understand how political and social policies or issues affect members in the community.” This question had one of the highest scores, with a mean of 4.32, and a mode and median of 4.0. None of the students selected disagree or strongly disagree (see Figure 2 below). This resulted in a standard deviation of only 0.559. In addition, 91% either agreed or strongly agreed that the course “made me feel that becoming involved in political or social issues is a good way to

improve the community.” Ninety percent of the students surveyed either agreed or strongly agreed that the course prompted them to “discuss and think about how political, social, local or national issues affect the community.” The mean for this question was 4.37, the mode and median were 5.0, and the standard deviation was 0.775. Lastly, 81% either agreed or strongly agreed that the course “helped me to realize that I want to participate in political or social causes in order to improve the community.” For this question the mean was 4.03, the mode and median were 4.0, and the standard deviation was 0.797. The positive responses to questions in this cluster indicate that both service-learning courses increased students’ understanding of the political and social issues that affect the community. This suggests that the courses successfully met their objectives for the service-learning component.

**Figure 2 - Distribution of Responses to Question 20**



**Question 20: Helped me to understand how political and social policies affect members in the community**

### **Differences between Social Justice and Peace Studies Students and Media, Information, and Technology Students**

The gap in the number of subjects from each of the courses was quite wide, with 12 from Media and Information Technoculture (MIT) 272G and 55 from Social Justice and Peace Studies (SJPS) 200E. Therefore, conclusive statements cannot be made about

the differences in results between the two groups. However, a comparison of the results is helpful as an indicator of discrepancies between the two groups. I should note that differences may be as a result of the fact that the MIT course was an elective, and the SJPS course was mandatory for students in the Social Justice and Peace Studies Program. However, the data analysis showed that the results for both sets of students were very similar. The only notable differences were on question 15 and 19. On question 15, there was a difference in the mean of 0.63, with SJPS students more likely (mean = 3.38) than MIT students (mean = 2.75) to report that the course had caused them to feel that they have enough influence to impact community decisions. Twenty-five percent of MIT students chose strongly disagree, compared to 1.8% of SJPS students (Table 6). This may be due to the fact that SJPS students were assigned to groups by the instructor, while MIT students worked independently. It is possible that as a part of a group they may have felt that they had more impact.

**Table 6 – Comparison of Responses between Groups to Question 15**

			Question 15: Made me feel that I have enough influence to impact community decisions.					
			Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Participants Program	SJPS	Count	1	6	23	21	4	55
		% within Participants Program	1.8%	10.9%	41.8%	38.2%	7.3%	100.0%
	MIT	Count	3	2	4	1	2	12
		% within Participants Program	25.0%	16.7%	33.3%	8.3%	16.7%	100.0%
Total		Count	4	8	27	22	6	67
		% within Participants Program	6.0%	11.9%	40.3%	32.8%	9.0%	100.0%

On question 19 there are differences in the means of 0.71, with MIT students (mean = 4.58) more likely than SJPS students (mean = 3.89) to respond that the course influenced them to find time to make a positive difference in the community. In fact, 100% of the MIT students either agreed or strongly agreed (Table 7). This suggests that the MIT course was more successful in creating this change, possibly because the reflection activities were more structured. Another plausible explanation is that the SJPS students already felt that they were making time to contribute to the community.

**Table 7 – Comparison of Responses between Groups to Question 19**

			Question 19: Influenced me to try to find time to make a positive difference in the community.					
			Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Participants Program	SJPS	Count	1	1	12	30	11	55
		% within Participants Program	1.8%	1.8%	21.8%	54.5%	20.0%	100.0%
	MIT	Count	0	0	0	5	7	12
		% within Participants Program	.0%	.0%	.0%	41.7%	58.3%	100.0%
Total		Count	1	1	12	35	18	67
		% within Participants Program	1.5%	1.5%	17.9%	52.2%	26.9%	100.0%

Although the means are very similar on all other questions, a few questions indicated MIT students were more like to select strongly agree. The means are similar on these questions in that the majority of the students in both groups chose agree or strongly agree. In response to the question regarding whether the course strengthened their personal attachment to the community, 100% of MIT students selected either agree or strongly agree, yet only 74.6% of SJPS students chose the same (Table 8).

**Table 8 – Comparison of Responses between Groups to Question 1**

			Question 1: Strengthened my personal attachment to the community.					
			Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Participants Program	SJPS	Count	2	3	9	32	9	55
		% within Participants Program	3.6%	5.5%	16.4%	58.2%	16.4%	100.0%
	MIT	Count	0	0	0	5	7	12
		% within Participants Program	.0%	.0%	.0%	41.7%	58.3%	100.0%
Total		Count	2	3	9	37	16	67
		% within Participants Program	3.0%	4.5%	13.4%	55.2%	23.9%	100.0%

On a question that asked students if the course prompted them to discuss and think about how political, social, local, or national issues affect the community, 75% of MIT students chose strongly agree compared to 45.5% of SJPS students (Table 9).

**Table 9 – Comparison of Responses between Groups to Question 4**

			Question 4: Prompted me to discuss and think about how political, social, local or national issues affect the community.				
			Strongly Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Participants Program	SJPS	Count	1	4	25	25	55
		% within Participants Program	1.8%	7.3%	45.5%	45.5%	100.0%
	MIT	Count	0	2	1	9	12
		% within Participants Program	.0%	16.7%	8.3%	75.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	1	6	26	34	67
		% within Participants Program	1.5%	9.0%	38.8%	50.7%	100.0%

Similarly, on the question asking whether the course made them feel that becoming involved in political or social issues is a good way to improve the community,

50% of MIT students strongly agree, in comparison with 25% of SJPS students (Table 10).

**Table 10 – Comparison of Responses between Groups to Question 13**

			Question 13: Made me feel that becoming involved in political or social issues is a good way to improve the community.				
			Strongly Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Participants Program	SJPS	Count	1	3	37	14	55
		% within Participants Program	1.8%	5.5%	67.3%	25.5%	100.0%
	MIT	Count	0	2	4	6	12
		% within Participants Program	.0%	16.7%	33.3%	50.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	1	5	41	20	67	
	% within Participants Program	1.5%	7.5%	61.2%	29.9%	100.0%	

When asked about whether the course made them want to become actively involved in issues that positively affect the community, 66.7% of MIT students strongly agreed, in comparison to 27.3% of SJPS students (Table 11).

**Table 11 – Comparison of Responses between Groups to Question 18**

			Question 18: Made me want to become actively involved in issues that positively affect the community.					
			Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Participants Program	SJPS	Count	1	1	9	29	15	55
		% within Participants Program	1.8%	1.8%	16.4%	52.7%	27.3%	100.0%
	MIT	Count	0	0	0	4	8	12
		% within Participants Program	.0%	.0%	.0%	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%
Total	Count	1	1	9	33	23	67	
	% within Participants Program	1.5%	1.5%	13.4%	49.3%	34.3%	100.0%	

Lastly, on the question asking if the course helped them to understand how political and social policies or issues affect members in the community, 66.7% of MIT students selected strongly agree, versus 29.6% of SJPS students (Table 12). It is difficult to make definitive statements about the causes of these discrepancies given the significantly lower number of subjects from the MIT course. As I stated above, these differences could be due to the fact that the MIT course involved formal reflection activities, whereas the SJPS course did not.

**Table 12 – Comparison of Responses between Groups on Question 20**

			Question 20: <b>Helped me to understand how political and social policies or issues affect members in the community.</b>			
			Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Participants Program	SJPS	Count	2	36	16	54
		% within Participants Program	3.7%	66.7%	29.6%	100.0%
	MIT	Count	1	3	8	12
		% within Participants Program	8.3%	25.0%	66.7%	100.0%
Total		Count	3	39	24	66
		% within Participants Program	4.5%	59.1%	36.4%	100.0%

## Interviews

In addition to the survey, I conducted one-on-one interviews with four students from the classes, familiarized myself with the course objectives of both classes, and reviewed the reflection journals of three students in the MIT class to obtain additional data on their experiences. To improve readability, I organized the data from these sources into the same cluster constructs identified through the survey. The constructs are as follows: awareness of, and empathy toward, individuals in the community and their



needs; a sense of personal responsibility; a call to action; a belief that they could influence social change; and understanding of the political and social issues that affect the community. However, not all constructs are represented for each source in the qualitative data.

The interview questions enabled unintended insights to present themselves. Names have been changed to ensure the subjects' anonymity. Three of the interviewed students were from the SJPS class and one was from the MIT class. Although there were male students in both courses, only female students volunteered to be interviewed. My first question, "Why did you choose to take this course?", relates to students' awareness of community needs. The MIT student, Melissa, stated that she had heard great things about the course from former students, and she liked the professor. All three Social Justice and Peace Studies students indicated that the course was mandatory. None of the students mentioned having a prior awareness of the topics covered in the courses.

Next I asked the students: "How was this course different from other university courses you have completed (ie. traditional format courses)?" The responses to this question provide support to the survey results relating to students' awareness of community needs. Melissa felt that the class encouraged more discussion and that students were able to connect with, and learn from, each other. She notes that she found it interesting to hear what others were learning. Melissa also stated that she never skipped a class because she didn't want to miss anything; however, she added that she did not attend 100% of her other classes. Melissa enjoyed the reading and the course overall. The

course caused her to realize that homelessness is a huge problem in society that we don't address. She felt that the placement was the most important part of the course because she learned the most from the homeless people themselves. Lastly Melissa felt that the professor was knowledgeable and excellent.

Holly indicated that an out-of-class commitment is involved with service-learning courses. In this particular course 20 hours of service, a group project, and communication with the organization are all required. This meant that she had more responsibility and accountability, and used problem solving. She felt she had accomplished something in the placement in which both parties benefited. Furthermore, she felt the course allowed for direct application of what was learned and caused increased retention of course concepts.

Like Holly, Amanda also felt that more time was required for this course than other non-service-learning courses. However, she felt it provided her with an opportunity to meet other students and to become involved in the university community. Lastly, Christine expressed that the placement component allowed her to learn how community organizations work administratively and how rewarding the work can be.

My third question, "Do you feel that it is everyone's responsibility to help others who are in need, and has this course influenced your opinions regarding this issue?", inquired into students' sense of personal responsibility for affecting social change. Melissa answered, "Yes, I have always felt that way" and indicated that the service-learning experience confirmed and strengthened her preexisting opinion. She noted that

representation of a country is determined by the way the country treats its citizens. Holly also felt that we need to help others. However, she noted that this does not necessarily mean one group helping another, but both groups helping each other. She indicated that the course influenced her thinking about the way in which helping should occur; specifically she moved from a charity to social justice perspective. Amanda asserted that everyone who can, should help, and also that the course reinforced how she already felt. Christine, however, stated that not everyone is capable of helping others, and, further, that an individual has to want to help. In the worst case scenario she suggested that some students can have a negative reaction to service-learning by becoming cynical, especially if the service-learning is mandatory.

The responses to my next question, “After participating in this course, did you feel that your contributions to the community were valued?”, reinforced the survey results regarding students’ belief in their ability to influence social change. Melissa indicated that she felt valued and appreciated, and commented that some of the participants verbalized their appreciation. Holly echoed this sentiment and indicated that the organization valued her for being there and for being open to learning and experiencing. Amanda felt the same and added that she was able to do more because of the required group project than she would have been able to accomplish as a single volunteer. This is consistent with the results of my survey, which found that 25% of MIT students chose “strongly disagree” in response to whether the course had caused them to feel that they have enough influence to impact community decisions, compared to 1.8% of SJPS students; SJPS students worked in groups, while MIT students worked alone.

To assess whether the participants felt a call to action, I ended the interview by asking: “Has this course increased your interest in contributing to the community?” Melissa said that the course had increased her interest in contributing to the community. However, she didn’t know if she could volunteer outside of the course due to time constraints of her studies. She added that she planned to volunteer in the future, and that the homeless people were really nice and let their guard down when someone showed them consideration. Holly indicated that she had always been interested in contributing to the community, but this experience reinforced her already established values. The experience did change the way she looked at her contributions: she did not value her contributions only in terms of time or money, but rather as working with others. Amanda said she would volunteer in the future because she found the experience rewarding to be able to make a difference. In contrast to the others, Christine said that the course did not influence her interest in contributing to the community. She did not elaborate as to why this was the case.

## **Observations**

I attended the final day of the MIT class to observe one of the group reflection sessions. All students were present and were encouraged to speak aloud in response to questions the professor would pose. When the professor asked the class to reflect on their experiences in the course, many felt that the course increased their awareness of, and empathy toward, individuals in the community and their needs. Students stated that the course helped them to “break stereotypes”. One student asserted that it completely altered

his perceptions of homeless people in that he started to respect them and admire their strengths. Another student felt that the course provided her with the opportunity to “humanize homelessness”, and added, “you cannot get this from sitting in a classroom talking about it. It (the placement) puts a face to the issues we are discussing.” Another student added that the experience “takes one group to another,” referring to the differences between an average university student and an average homeless person. An additional student noticed that her perceptions changed over time, that she felt different after one day and then even more so after several weeks.

The course also increased the students’ understanding of political and social issues that affect the community. According to students, the experience challenged their socialization that had led them to believe that homelessness was not a problem. A particularly insightful comment came from a student who said “it was easier to judge others (i.e., abusive husbands), than to judge ourselves and the systematic social issues we benefit from.” It appears that the experience helped this student to reflect on her own contributions to the problem, rather than deflecting onto someone else.

The professor asked the students how they felt about leaving. One student expressed that she felt guilty about leaving, while another student stated that she felt awkward on the last day. A third student agreed, and shared that the clients of the service made jokes about how they (the student volunteers) would not come back. A student added that she would miss the people she met, but didn’t feel that anyone would miss her because there were so many great volunteers. Another student explained that the

experience was different from volunteering because it is reciprocal. Community service is one-sided in that students serve the members of the organization, while service-learning allows the student to also learn from the members and staff of the organizations. The students benefited by learning and being part of the organization. As an observer, I was impressed with the students' ability to be aware of reciprocity as a key principle of service-learning. Overall the majority of students felt that they got more out of it than the clients. They also expressed their wish that this course was their only one for the year so that they could focus on the learning through their experiences. They felt that these issues were not something that could be learned as easily or deeply from a professor or a book; it brought the concepts to life.

## **Journals**

I also performed a content analysis of students' reflection journals. The purpose of the journal review was to find anecdotal evidence of changes in the students' sense of civic responsibility that may have occurred throughout the course. Only the MIT course required that students keep a reflection journal. Names have been changed to ensure anonymity.

Nadine began her reflection journal by writing about her reasons for taking this course.

“This course seemed to be an ideal opportunity to learn about homelessness in a university/service setting that would shed light on the subject, and help me open my eyes to more issues that I might not read about in the newspaper. I hoped that

perhaps this course would give me a more ‘scholarly’ background for answers to the issue of homelessness, and perhaps give me more contact with others who were interested in finding an answer to the problem. I want this class to help relieve my sense of helplessness. Education, knowledge, and more interaction are tools that I think will contribute to a broader understanding of homelessness.”

Alternatively, both Melissa and Elizabeth began their reflection journal by discussing their first impressions of the community organizations where they were placed. Melissa stated, “The moment I entered the Youth Action Centre (YAC) I knew that I was going to get a lot out of my experience there. Food donations from various people and organizations in London told me that the community (at least a portion of it), cares”. Like Melissa, Elizabeth began with her first impressions, but prefaced her statements with her initial expectations and stereotypes.

“Prior to commencing my service-placement, I expected the “house” to be occupied by middle-aged women, teenage mothers, and very young children. I was surprised to see teenagers, who were not parents, in the house. The teenagers were much like any other teenager that walked down the hallways of my school. This made me ponder the whole idea of the stereotype of the homeless person that had been discussed in MIT 272G. I visualized a place where volunteers and coordinators are serving the homeless people, a place where people using the service appear unhappy, a place that appears to be stricken with financial burdens. However, the Women’s Community House (WCH) is completely contradictory to

my initial visualization. The women who occupy the shelter serve one another like a communal home, they do not appear to be unhappy, in fact, many appear to be very comfortable and content, and the place appears to be adequately funded as many of the children's toys are new and the kitchen is filled with more than enough food.”

In a later entry, Elizabeth expanded on the idea of stereotypes, illustrating her increased awareness of the needs of individuals in the community. She stated:

“as I am doing my placement at the Women's Community House, I started thinking about the stereotype of the abused woman and the stereotype of the homeless woman. In my opinion, society stereotypes the battered woman as middle-aged, weak, with low self-esteem or emotionally unstable. Society's stereotype of the homeless woman is also often identified as the “bag lady”. The bag lady is a middle-aged woman or older, unsanitary, unattractive, dressed in rags, possibly with a mental disorder, or dishonest. As a result of these stereotypes, the women at this home are subject to double-stigmatization, both as a battered woman and a homeless woman. It is often difficult to distance one's perceived stereotypical images, especially those that are so prevalent, like that of the abused woman and the homeless woman. To be honest, before I started my service-placement I expected to see these stereotypical images at the shelter. After all, it can be argued that all stereotypes are derived from some truths. Although I do not directly interact with the women of the home, and I just observe them from a far, my stereotypical images are broken down, in part, as a result of this course.”



Through the experiences at her placement, Elizabeth was able to understand that her original perceptions were caused by stereotypes in society, not by the homeless women themselves.

Not only did the students break their stereotypes and increase their awareness of community needs, they acquired understanding and empathy toward the clients of the organizations where they were placed. Elizabeth realized that she should not judge others' decisions because as an outsider she is not aware of all of the factors involved.

“As I am far removed from being in that situation, it is easier for me to say that I would leave the relationship to downsize to a lower quality house in exchange for my health and psychological well-being, and while many women do choose that same route, many others succumb to returning to the male that can provide them with a warm and comfortable shelter”.

Elizabeth also developed a great sense of empathy for the women she encountered at the shelter.

“I can't even imagine how hard it is to put up with being in an abusive relationship, or not understanding that this is NOT how relationships ought to be like. I can't imagine how difficult, scary and RISKY it is for these women to pack up their bags and seek a new life. They put themselves at greater danger, and yet

they must do it. These are possibly the strongest women I can imagine. Out of a need to keep their children safe, they need to risk it all and leave everything behind except for a few possessions. They must spend the rest of their lives having to look nervously behind their shoulders for fear of being found and brought back, or worse yet, punished. They require an enormous amount of support, both in terms of finances, programs and services, much of which is not readily available by the community, with some exceptions. Thinking about women that require a home in order to flee a dangerous one is one matter that I have never realized. I now understand that homelessness is such a devastating, difficult, and even monotonous way of living. It worries me now, after this course, to realize that this is a very real and possible reality for hundreds and thousands, even millions of people. It is even a possibility for me. I no longer think it is at all close to funny when someone jokes about someone looking like a hobo or a homeless person, and I found it offensive to read about it in the Gazette when it was “joked about.” It frustrates me to no end when people just say that these homeless people are not motivated enough, or educated. Words seem to fail as I try to explain to them the complexities that these homeless people endure”.

The passage above indicates that Elizabeth has advanced from an awareness of the problems homeless women face, to a sincere empathy for the women affected.

Melissa also acquired a deep awareness of, and empathy toward, homeless individuals as a result of the course.

“I feel as though every moment in which I have felt uncomfortable, either while doing the readings, watching the films or actually spending time with homeless youth, has made me re-evaluate why I had that type of reaction in the first place. I feel those awkward moments made me understand homelessness as something much more intimate that goes on between the housed and un-housed. Now that I have heard the homeless youth’s side of the story, it seems rude to walk by someone in the street without glancing at them. I don’t think I will ever look at another homeless person the same way again. At least, I will never NOT look at a homeless person again. Just a smile or a look when you walk by them in the street, acknowledgement that they are still alive, I think that means more than I ever realized. I have always felt that anyone who is homeless couldn’t possibly really want to be in that circumstance, and now I know they really don’t. The most important thing anyone can ever do for someone who is homeless is just give them a little respect. I strongly feel that before homelessness can be solved, the first step is to help everyone realize their own ignorance about the topic. Being able to take care of yourself is what everyone wants in the long run, whether homeless or not, and I wish more people understood that”.

This passage indicates that Melissa reflected profoundly on her experiences at her placement. Her level of awareness of the needs of individuals in the community, and her empathy toward them is evident throughout her journal.

In her final journal Nadine reflects on the impact she has had during her placement.

“Over the past ten weeks, volunteering a bit of my time towards helping out at the Women’s Community House has proved to be much more changing to ‘me’, than any impact I have been able to make there. After my last day at the WCH, I did not feel as though I had changed the world. Perhaps I did not even make a dent in the history of the WCH. Perhaps the only trace of me having ever been a volunteer there will be my nametag and sign-ins-and-outs on the volunteer timetable sheet. Yet from this experience, I feel I’ve gained valuable insight. This course was really important for me to realize that there is more to what you can’t see (for example, the invisible homeless)”.

Consistent with my survey results, Nadine was not confident in her ability to effect change. It is possible that students may have had very high expectations of what they could contribute when they began their placement, and were therefore disappointed when their impact had been less than they expected. It is also possible that students’ lack of confidence in their ability to make a difference is derived from the fact that they are battling deep societal problems that cannot be solved without a commitment from society as a whole.

I was very impressed with the students’ entries for many reasons, but in particular I was pleasantly surprised to see that all three were aware of the political and social issues

that affect the community. All three had commented on the social concept of “othering”. Elizabeth’s entry does a wonderful job of explaining the idea of “othering”. “I think we judge homeless people for various reasons. Firstly, to “us” the homeless people are the “other”, and like any “othered” group (for example, people with disabilities, homosexuals) they are judged by the “us”. Secondly, the homeless population is judged by the media and society in a negative way, therefore the people already have judgmental views about this population. People that are not homeless might think people are lazy and therefore they might think negatively of these people and refrain from sympathizing with them. Thirdly and most importantly, non-homeless people judge the homeless because they are unaware of the structural problems related to homelessness”. Nadine provides an example of “us” and “them” that she notices in her hometown: “It is bizarre and sad to see the juxtaposition of designer stores like Prada and Chanel on Bloor Street, with homeless people along that same street trying to make an honest wage by selling newspapers and not one businessman or shopper ever stops to take a moment out of their busy lives to buy one”. Lastly, Melissa notes “this is why volunteering in the community is so important. It is a way of facing society’s problems face to face”.

Both Nadine and Melissa were aware of the root causes of the problems they saw during their placements. More importantly, they understand the need for social change, rather than mere charity or service. Nadine wrote the following,

“Thinking back to the enormous difficulties presented by affordable housing (i.e., lack thereof), I imagine it to be a difficult decision to have to choose between

homelessness or abuse. It is truly sad that money is the reason a woman has to return to the abuser who essentially holds power over her as the provider. I have become increasingly proud to be a volunteer with WCH because I can't stop emphasizing how much it seems to make sense on so many levels. WCH truly tries to work at the root of the problem".

Even though many organizations "work at the root of the problem", Melissa notes how our society as a whole prefers band-aid solutions.

"No change can be made in this world without everyone taking on some of the responsibility. I feel that our society has become so self-interested that the notion of helping a stranger has become strongly tied to feelings of guilt rather than feeling a need for change. Instead of helping fight poverty and homelessness directly, people have become content in buying products where at least a portion of the proceeds go to a charity of some kind, minimizing our guilt for buying useless products, in the veil of helping others. But is that really solving the deeper issues at hand? I don't think so. While I think charities are a good start on the road to change, there is a lot more to be done if anyone really wants to make a difference".

Nadine concludes by discussing what she learned from the course.

“I found most of the readings very interesting and engaging. I never used to understand the “big deal” about governments spending less money on affordable housing projects, subsidized housing, special services, etc., but this course has taught me that these are crucial aids for those suffering with homelessness. I think that the most eye-opening experience was just how difficult it is to be homeless. I don’t think it would have taken any less than an entire course on “Representations of Homelessness” to understand all the violence that the homeless have to endure. I also feel as though I have learned a lot from the WCH. I have learned more by experience, and speaking with people, and I think it was all equally as important as class discussions, course readings, and the course videos”.

As a result of the course, Nadine was able to understand the political and social issues underlying homelessness. She also recognizes the importance of a multi-faceted approach to learning, and demonstrates how it strengthened her own comprehension of course concepts.

## **Chapter Summary**

The results indicate that service-learning has a positive influence on students’: awareness of, and empathy toward, individuals in the community and their needs; sense of personal responsibility; interest in taking action; and understanding of the political and social issues that affect the community. In the next chapter, I have triangulated my data to illustrate the themes that presented themselves throughout my research. I also provide my

recommendations for the future direction of service-learning within the Canadian educational system.



## **Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations**

Education has been found to be a strong predictor of civic engagement (Kahne, Westheimer, & Rogers, 2000). Therefore, institutions responsible for education play a critical role in preparing students for active engagement in political life. My primary research question was: Does service-learning, as a pedagogical approach, influence students' sense of civic responsibility? I examined this question through organized inquiry, specifically through the assessment of students' attitudes regarding civic responsibility after participating in a service-learning course. I found that service-learning does have a positive and significant impact on students' sense of civic responsibility. Specifically, I have found that service-learning has a positive influence on: 1) students' awareness of, and empathy toward, individuals in the community and their needs; 2) their sense of personal responsibility; 3) their interest in taking action; and 4) their understanding of the political and social issues that affect the community. Together these are the staples of civic responsibility indicated in the literature. I also found that a social justice approach to service-learning was more effective in influencing students' sense of civic responsibility than a charitable view.

### **Students' Awareness of, and Empathy Toward, Individuals in the Community and Their Needs**

First, my research revealed that service-learning has a positive impact on students' awareness of, and empathy toward, individuals in the community and their needs. During the interviews, one student shared that the course caused her to realize that

homelessness is a huge problem in society which we do not address. She felt that the placement was the most important part of the course because she learned the most from the homeless people themselves. Similarly, one of the students in the class I observed stated that they were socialized to believe that homelessness was not a problem. The survey revealed similar findings; for the cluster of responses relating to students' awareness of the needs of the community, the average of the means was 4.10 (on a five point scale). This is also consistent with previous research conducted on service-learning. VanWynsberghe and Andruske (2007) found that 35 percent of those felt their experience had "opened their eyes" to benefits of helping others.

In the class that I observed many of the students felt that the course helped them to break stereotypes. One student stated that it completely altered their perceptions of homeless people. Similarly, in her journal a student wrote, "my stereotypical images are broken down, in part, as a result of this course". These findings are not surprising given that the outlines for both courses state that particular attention will be paid to stereotypes, and the impact that such misconceptions have on public policy. In addition, some instructors use service-learning in their courses because they want students to be aware of how stereotypes dehumanize others, and how systems of oppression can have an impact on individuals and groups (Keller, Nelson, & Wick, 2003). Furthermore the literature revealed that students who have interacted with the clients in a homeless shelter are able to humanize them, and also test their own theories about poverty, public policy, and democracy against their actual observations (Battistoni, 1997).

In addition to students' progress on dismantling stereotypes, I was also impressed by their understanding of the issue of "othering". In the class I observed, one student asserted that service "takes one group to another." In Elizabeth's journal she provided the following reflection, "like any 'othered' group, they are judged by the 'us'". Nadine's reflection journal read, "this is why volunteering in the community is so important. It is a way of facing society's problems face to face". My secondary research revealed that service-learning gave students many opportunities to interact with people different in age, social class, and race from those they see every day, providing opportunities for development of social and problem-solving skills including communication, role-taking, and conflict resolution (Eyler, Giles, & Braxton, 1997). Furthermore, Brody and Wright (2004) asserted that without interactions with diverse individuals, it is unlikely that students' perceptions regarding social problems would change.

As a result of this awareness, students were able to develop empathy toward the clients they served. In the class I observed students stated that they began to respect and admire the strengths of those they served. Another student felt that the course provided her with the opportunity to "humanize homelessness", and added, "you cannot get this from sitting in a classroom talking about it. It puts a face to the issues we are discussing". This is consistent with the feelings expressed by students in their reflection journals. All of the students developed a greater sense of empathy for homeless individuals as they realized how difficult it is to live in such devastating conditions. Melissa asserted, "Just a smile or a look when you walk by them in the street, acknowledgement that they are still alive, I think that means more than I ever realized". Research has also shown that service-

learning fosters the acquisition of values such as respect and empathy for, and understanding of, others.

An important note about students' awareness is that the experience made them realize that they benefit as much as do those they are serving. During the class I observed, one student explained that the experience was different from volunteering because it is reciprocal, not simply the students serving the members of the organization. Another student expressed a similar realization in her reflection journal, writing that service-learning is "not necessarily one group helping another, but both groups helping each other". A third student added, "volunteering a bit of my time towards helping out at the Women's Community House has proved to be much more changing to me, than any impact I have been able to make there". In VanWynsberghe and Andruske's (2007) study many students revealed much of the same feelings. Overall, I was impressed with the students' ability to be aware of reciprocity as a key principle of service-learning.

### **Students' Sense of Personal Responsibility**

Another outcome of my research was the finding that service-learning caused many students to feel that helping the community is their responsibility. For the survey, the average of the means for the questions in this category was 3.96. In the interviews two students stated that the service-learning course strengthened their belief that helping others was their responsibility. The other two students pointed out that it is only the responsibility of those who are able to help. In her reflection journal another student

stated, “no change can be made in this world without everyone taking on some of the responsibility”.

### **Students’ Call to Action**

Based on my research it would appear that some students had difficulty moving from awareness to action. In the interviews I conducted, none of the students responded that they would participate in service right away, using phrases such as “when I have more time”, and “in the future”. However, my survey did provide more promising results; the average of the means for this cluster of responses was 3.82. Specifically, 88% either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the course helped them to realize that providing service to the community is something they prefer to let others do and 84% either agreed or strongly agreed that the course made them want to become actively involved in issues that positively affect the community.

### **Students’ Confidence in their Ability to Influence Social Change**

Students seem to have had an awareness of, and empathy toward, individuals in the community and their needs; a sense of personal responsibility; an interest in taking action; and an understanding of the political and social issues that affect the community. However, many students did not feel they had the influence to create social change in the community. In the survey, the average of the means for this cluster of questions was 3.30, which although still positive is lower than the other constructs. Most significantly, only 42% either agreed or strongly agreed that the course “made me feel that I have enough influence to impact community decisions”. Forty percent of students were neutral, and the remaining 18% disagreed or strongly disagreed. The results of the survey are

consistent with the perspectives shared by a student in the class I observed. She stated that she would miss the people she met, but didn't feel that anyone would miss her because there were so many great volunteers. Furthermore, in a reflection journal one student wrote, "I want this class to help relieve my sense of helplessness".

The secondary sources that I reviewed provided mixed results. Overall, research found that involvement in service-learning fosters students' confidence in their ability to make a difference. In particular, 74 percent of the subjects in VanWynsberghe and Andruske's (2007) study felt that they had made a difference. One student stated, "It has made me more inclined to be active in my community because now I see what a difference I can make", and another said, "to change the world, I learned we have to be willing to perform community service" (p. 361). However, in the same study 15% of the participants felt that they were not given enough responsibility, and therefore were unable to make an impact. One of the students stated, "the organization would have gone on fine without me" (VanWynsberghe and Andruske, p. 362). As I mentioned in an earlier chapter, this feedback from students demonstrates that the nature of the service-learning activity determines the utility of the experience.

## **Students' Awareness of Political and Social Issues**

The most noteworthy survey results came from the questions regarding students' understanding of the political and social issues that affect the community. The average of the means for the questions in this cluster was 4.21. It was evident in the students' reflection journals that their understanding of the political and social issues that affect

their community had increased as a result of their service-learning course. The students were aware of the multifaceted causes of the problems they saw during their placements. One stated, “It is truly sad that money is the reason a woman has to return to the abuser who essentially holds power over her as the provider”, and another, “I never used to understand the ‘big deal’ about governments spending less money on affordable housing projects, subsidized housing, special services, etc., but this course has taught me that these are crucial aids for those suffering with homelessness.” A particularly insightful comment came from a student who said, “It was easier to judge others (ie. abusive husbands), than to judge ourselves and the systematic social issues we benefit from.” Furthermore, a review of the literature revealed that service-learning was a predictor of positive change in students’ tendencies to see problems as systemic and their beliefs that changing policy was a better approach than targeting individual behavior (Eyler, Giles, & Braxton, 1997).

### **Differences between Charity and Social Justice Perspectives**

The expectations outlined in the course outlines of both courses demonstrate that the instructors utilize a social justice approach to service-learning. The charity view emphasizes service as an exercise in philanthropy: giving by “paying back” or through “gratitude”, whereas the social justice view emphasizes shared responsibility and the interdependence of rights and responsibilities. Unfortunately, the majority of service-learning initiatives emphasize volunteerism and charity, but do not teach about analysis of political and social issues or social change. It is evident that students are becoming more involved in community service, but less active in the political issues that shape the

community they are serving (Markus, 2003, Koliba, 2004, Saltmarsh, 2005). It is possible that this differentiation may be due to the fact that extra-curricular activities, such as community service, are becoming a significant requirement for admission to professional school, as well as employment opportunities. Exercising one's rights and responsibilities as a citizen is more difficult to articulate on a resume.

Delve, Mintz, and Stewart (1990) were among the first to emphasize the movement from charity to social justice as a goal of service-learning, and Westheimer and Kahne (2004) also prefer a social justice model of service-learning that includes active engagement in social issues; efforts to examine, critique, and change social policy; and a concern for one's fellow humans. Furthermore, Battistoni (1997) found that when democratic citizenship was at the foundation of a service-learning experience, students came away feeling more a part of their communities, and with a better and more critical understanding of these communities and their roles in them.

Although I acknowledge the role of charity as a desirable activity within the community, I agree wholeheartedly with the researchers above who feel that the social justice model of service-learning has far greater potential to effect meaningful and lasting social change. Both classes used a social justice model of service-learning. Although they did complete service work, in both courses students were expected to analyze the political and social issues that are at the root of the problems they saw first hand at their placement site. The following excerpt from a student's reflection journal demonstrates that a social justice model of service-learning can be very effective in deepening students'



understanding of problems within our society. She wrote, “Instead of helping fight poverty and homelessness directly, people have become content in buying products where at least a portion of the proceeds go to a charity of some kind, minimizing our guilt for buying useless products, in the veil of helping others. But is that really solving the deeper issues at hand? I don’t think so. While I think charities are a good start on the road to change, there is a lot more to be done if anyone really wants to make a difference”. Her comments provide support to the notion that a social justice perspective of service-learning is superior to a charitable view.

## **Recommendations for Practice and Future Research**

As a result of the findings above, I recommend that service-learning practitioners do their best to ensure that they draw on a social justice model of service-learning, rather than a charity perspective. Therefore, service-learning programs should focus on collective political activism, rather than individual service. As a result of this shift from charity to social justice, we also need to move from the language of “service-learning” to “engaged learning”. Engaged learning involves educating students about the social and political issues that affect the community. It could include activities such as service work, working groups on policy reform, and collective action toward social change. I would argue that “engaged learning” already exists in courses where a social justice view of service-learning is being utilized, and that the change in terminology would more effectively describe this form of pedagogy. Furthermore, I feel that this change in terminology would be welcomed by those using a social justice model of service-learning. I also feel that because service-learning has been a widely accepted pedagogy in

the United States for decades, selecting the term “engaged learning” would enable Canada to explore a form of experiential learning that suits our own unique values.

In future, researchers should focus on the impact of “engaged learning” on students’ sense of civic responsibility. Specifically, researchers should conduct pre-tests and post-tests to analyze the changes that have occurred over the course of an academic term. A comparison study of those who have participated in engaged learning courses and those who have not would also be valuable. Furthermore, it would be useful to investigate whether students involved in engaged learning throughout their educational pursuits are likely to continue to exercise their democratic rights and responsibilities over the course of their lives. It is my hope that engaged learning will influence individuals to continue the legacy of democratic participation in Canada.

## *References*

- Barber, B. R. (1994). A proposal for mandatory citizen education and community service. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, 1*(1), 86-93.
- Battistoni, R. M. (1997). Service learning and democratic citizenship. *Theory into Practice, 36*(3), 150-156.
- Brody, S. M., & Wright, S. C. (2004). Expanding the self through service-learning. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, 11*(1), 14-24.
- Canadian Alliance of Community Service Learning (CACSL). (nd). Retrieved October 4, 2007, from [www.communityservicelearning.ca](http://www.communityservicelearning.ca)
- The Centre for New Students Fall Update. (2007, September). 1, 3.
- Charbonneau, L. (2004, February). Educating citizen jane. *University Affairs*.
- Chomsky, N. (2000). *Chomsky on miseducation*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc.
- Colby, A., Ehrlich, E., Beaumont, E., Stephens, J. (2003). *Educating citizens: Preparing America's undergraduates for lives of moral and civic responsibility*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Coles, R. (1994). Putting head and heart on the line. *Chronicle of Higher Education, 41*, A64.
- Cooks, L., & Scharrer, E. (2006). Assessing learning in community service learning: a social approach. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, 13*(1), 44-55.
- Delve, C. I., Mintz, S. D., & Stewart, G. M. (1990). Promoting values development through community service: A design. In C. I. Delve, Mintz, S. D., & Stewart, G. M. (Eds.), *New directions for students services: Community service as values education* (pp. 7-29). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Dewey, J. (1908). *Ethics*. New York: H. Holt.
- Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and education*. In *The middle works of John Dewey: vol. 9*. Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Dewey, J. (1937). *Education and social change*. In *The later works of John Dewey: Vol. 11*. Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press.

- Drane, D. D. (2001). *The relationship between service learning and self-reported civic outcomes of college students based on selected demographic variables*. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Southern Mississippi, Mississippi, United States.
- Eyler, J., Giles, D. E., & Braxton, J. (1997, March). *Report of a national study comparing the impacts of service-learning program characteristics on post secondary students*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL.
- Eyler, J., Giles, D. E., Jr. (1997). The impact of service-learning on college students. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 4, 5-15.
- Eyler, J., & Giles, D. E., Jr. (1999). *Where's the learning in service-learning?* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Furco, A. (2003). Issues of definition and program diversity in the study of service-learning. In S. Billig & A. Waterman (Eds.), *Studying service-learning: Innovations in education research methodology* (pp. 13-34). Mahwah, NY: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Furco, A., Muller, P., & Ammon, M.S. (1998). Civic Responsibility Survey. Retrieved January 10, 2007, from [http://cart.rmcdenver.com/instruments/civic\\_responsibility.pdf](http://cart.rmcdenver.com/instruments/civic_responsibility.pdf)
- Gallini, S. M., & Moely, B. E. (2003). Service-learning and engagement, academic challenge, and retention. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 10(1), 5-14.
- Gomez, B. (1999). *Service-learning: Every child a citizen*. Education Commission of the States. Denver, CO.
- Gottlieb, K., & Robinson, G. (2003, December). Integrating Civic Responsibility into the Curriculum. *Community College Journal*. Retrieved March 11, 2007, from [http://www.aacc.nche.edu/Content/ContentGroups/CC\\_Journal/Dec\\_Jan\\_20031/p25\\_26.pdf](http://www.aacc.nche.edu/Content/ContentGroups/CC_Journal/Dec_Jan_20031/p25_26.pdf)
- Handley, J. B. (2001). The humanities and citizenship: A challenge for service-learning. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 8(1), 52-61.
- Hecht, D. (2003). Issues of research design and statistical analysis. In S. Billig & A. Waterman (Eds.), *Studying service-learning: Innovations in education research methodology* (pp. 107-124). Mahwah, NY: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

- Howard, J. (2003). Service-learning research: Foundational issues. In S. Billig & A. Waterman (Eds.), *Studying service-learning: Innovations in education research methodology* (pp. 1-12). Mahwah, NY: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Jacoby, B. (1996). *Service-learning in higher education: Concepts and practices*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Kahne, J., Westheimer, J., & Rogers, B. (2000). Service-learning and citizenship: Directions for research. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, Special Issue, 42-51.
- Kapoor, P. & Williams, D. R. (2003). Essay review of *higher education's imperative: Rising to the challenge of educating citizens* by Anne Colby, Thomas Ehrlich, Elizabeth Beaumont, & Jason Stephens. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 10(1), 70-75.
- Keller, J., Nelson, S., & Wick, R. (2003). Care ethics, service-learning, and social change. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 10(1), 39-50.
- Koliba, C. J. (2004). Service-learning and the downsizing of democracy: Learning our way out. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 10(2), 57-68.
- Markus, G. B. (2003). Essay review of civic engagement across the curriculum: A resource book for service-learning faculty in all disciplines by Richard M. Battistoni. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 9(2), 44-52.
- Moely, B. E., McFarland, M., Miron, D., & Mercer, S. (2002). Changes in college students' attitudes and intentions for civic involvement as a function of service-learning experiences. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 9(1), 18-26.
- Morgan, W. D. (2002). *Building citizenship: Service-learning and student leadership*. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, Indiana, United States.
- Ontario. Royal Commission on Education in Ontario. (1950). *Report of the Royal Commission on Education in Ontario*. Toronto: King's Printer.
- Parker, B., & Altman Dautoff, D. (2007). Service-Learning and study abroad: Synergistic learning opportunities. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 13(2), 40-53.
- Piper, M. (2002, November 22). Individual duty the basis for our Civil Society. *The Vancouver Sun*, p. A21.

- Saltmarsh, J. (1996). Education for Critical Citizenship: John Dewey's Contribution to the Pedagogy of Community Service Learning. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 3, 13-21.
- Saltmarsh, J. (2005). The Civic Promise of Service Learning. *Liberal Education*, 91(2), 50-55.
- Schaffer, E., Berman, S., Pickeral, T., & Holman, E. (2001). *Service-learning and character education: one plus one is more than two*. Education Commission of the United States, Denver, CO.
- Schennach, P. J. (2001). *Drivers of Change: Ontario University Tuition Deregulation and Differentiation*. Unpublished master's directed research project, The University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario, Canada.
- Sears, A. (2003). *Retooling the Mind Factory*. Aurora, ON: Garamond Press.
- The University of Western Ontario. (2006, November). Engaging the Future: Final Report of the Task Force on Strategic Planning. Retrieved October 15, 2007, from [http://www.uwo.ca/pvp/strategic\\_plan](http://www.uwo.ca/pvp/strategic_plan)
- VanWynsberghe, R., & Andruske, C. L. (2007). Research in the Service of Co-Learning: Sustainability and Community Engagement. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 30(1), 349-377.
- Waldstein, F. (2003). Epistemology and Service-Learning Research. In S. Billig & A. Waterman (Eds.), *Studying Service-Learning: Innovations in Education Research Methodology* (pp. 35-46). Mahwah, NY: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Wang, Y., & Jackson, G. (2005). Forms and dimensions of civic involvement. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 11(2), 39-48.
- Westheimer, J., & Kahne, J. (2004). What kind of citizen? The politics of educating for democracy. *American Educational Research Journal*, 41(2), 237-269.

## APPENDIX A

### The Impact of Service-Learning on Students' Sense of Civic Responsibility

#### Survey Questions

This study is designed to investigate the experiences of students in courses with a service-learning component.

**Participation is voluntary.** The survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

Please carefully read the statements below. For each of the following statements, please compare this course with all other traditional courses you have completed in university (traditional in this context refers to courses which involve teacher-guided activities such as lectures, in comparison to non-traditional courses such as an internship). Therefore, each statement should begin with "compared with other courses I have completed in university, this course.....". Please note that there are no penalties for not participating in this survey.

1. Strengthened my personal attachment to the community.  
 **strongly disagree**  **disagree**  **neutral**  **agree**  **strongly agree**
2. Helped me to realize that it is my responsibility to help improve the community.  
 **strongly disagree**  **disagree**  **neutral**  **agree**  **strongly agree**
3. Made me want to try to encourage others to participate in community service.  
 **strongly disagree**  **disagree**  **neutral**  **agree**  **strongly agree**
4. Prompted me to discuss and think about how political, social, local or national issues affect the community.  
 **strongly disagree**  **disagree**  **neutral**  **agree**  **strongly agree**
5. Helped me to realize that I benefit emotionally from contributing to the community, even if it is hard and challenging work.  
 **strongly disagree**  **disagree**  **neutral**  **agree**  **strongly agree**
6. Made me more aware of the important needs in the community.  
 **strongly disagree**  **disagree**  **neutral**  **agree**  **strongly agree**

7. Helped me to realize that I have the power to make a difference in the community.  
 **strongly disagree**  **disagree**  **neutral**  **agree**  **strongly agree**
8. Caused me to feel that my contributions to the community are not valued.  
 **strongly disagree**  **disagree**  **neutral**  **agree**  **strongly agree**
9. Helped me to realize that providing service to the community is something I prefer to let others do.  
 **strongly disagree**  **disagree**  **neutral**  **agree**  **strongly agree**
10. Helped me to become aware of what can be done to meet the important needs in the community.  
 **strongly disagree**  **disagree**  **neutral**  **agree**  **strongly agree**
11. Made me feel that I am powerless to change society's problems.  
 **strongly disagree**  **disagree**  **neutral**  **agree**  **strongly agree**
12. Helped me to put aside my self-interest in favor of a greater good.  
 **strongly disagree**  **disagree**  **neutral**  **agree**  **strongly agree**
13. Made me feel that becoming involved in political or social issues is a good way to improve the community.  
 **strongly disagree**  **disagree**  **neutral**  **agree**  **strongly agree**
14. Helped me to realize that being actively involved in community issues is everyone's responsibility, including mine.  
 **strongly disagree**  **disagree**  **neutral**  **agree**  **strongly agree**
15. Made me feel that I have enough influence to impact community decisions.  
 **strongly disagree**  **disagree**  **neutral**  **agree**  **strongly agree**
16. Helped me to realize that I want to participate in political or social causes in order to improve the community.  
 **strongly disagree**  **disagree**  **neutral**  **agree**  **strongly agree**
17. Helped me to understand that being concerned about state and local issues is an important responsibility for everybody.  
 **strongly disagree**  **disagree**  **neutral**  **agree**  **strongly agree**
18. Made me want to become actively involved in issues that positively affect the community.



**strongly disagree**  **disagree**  **neutral**  **agree**  **strongly agree**

19. Influenced me to try to find time to make a positive difference in the community.

**strongly disagree**  **disagree**  **neutral**  **agree**  **strongly agree**

20. Helped me to understand how political and social policies or issues affect members in the community.

**strongly disagree**  **disagree**  **neutral**  **agree**  **strongly agree**

21. How many university courses have you completed to date? \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX B

### **The Impact of Service-Learning on Students' Sense of Civic Responsibility**

#### **Interview Questions**

1. Why did you choose to take this course?
2. How was this course different from other university courses you have completed? (ie. Traditional courses)
3. Do you feel that it is everyone's responsibility to help others who are in need? Has this course influenced your opinions regarding this issue?
4. After participating in this course, did you feel that your contributions to the community were valued?
5. Has this course increased your interest in contributing to the community?

## *APPENDIX C*

### *The Impact of Service-Learning on Students' Sense of Civic Responsibility*

#### *LETTER OF INFORMATION*

My name is Rebecca Denby and I am a graduate student at the Faculty of Education at The University of Western Ontario. I am currently conducting research into the impact of service-learning and would like to invite you to participate in this study.

If you agree to participate in this survey you will be asked to respond to questions about your perceptions of your sense of civic responsibility following your participation in a service-learning course. The survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

The information collected will be used for research purposes only, and neither your name nor information which could identify you will be used in any publication or presentation of the study results. All information collected for the study will be kept confidential.

There are no known risks to participating in this study.

Completion of this survey is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw at any time with no effect on your academic status.

If you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research subject you may contact the Director, Office of Research Ethics, The University of Western Ontario at 519-661-3036 or [ethics@uwo.ca](mailto:ethics@uwo.ca). If you have any questions about this study, please contact Dr. Robert Macmillan.

The Impact of Service-Learning on Students' Sense of Civic Responsibility

*Dr. Robert Macmillan and Dr. Debra Dawson*

CONSENT FORM

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

Name (please print):

Signature:

Date:

## APPENDIX D

### *The Impact of Service-Learning on Students' Sense of Civic Responsibility*

#### *LETTER OF INFORMATION*

My name is Rebecca Denby and I am a graduate student at the Faculty of Education at The University of Western Ontario. I am currently conducting research into the impact of service-learning and would like to invite you to participate in this study.

The aims of this study are to assess the outcomes of service-learning.

If you agree to participate in this interview you will be asked to respond to questions about your perceptions of your sense of civic responsibility following your participation in a service-learning course. The interview will be approximately 15 minutes in length.

The information collected will be used for research purposes only, and neither your name nor information which could identify you will be used in any publication or presentation of the study results. All information collected for the study will be kept confidential. Your professor will not have access to your individual responses at any time, and your grades will not be impacted by your participation in this study.

There are no known risks to participating in this study.

Participation in this interview is voluntary. Your instructor for this class will not be informed about your decision to participate (or not) in this study.

For more information on service-learning, the following book may be helpful:

Jacoby, B. (1996). *Service-Learning in Higher Education: Concepts and Practices*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

If you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research subject you may contact the Director, Office of Research Ethics, The University of Western Ontario at 519-661-3036 or [ethics@uwo.ca](mailto:ethics@uwo.ca). If you have any questions about this study, please contact Dr. Robert Macmillan.

Sincerely,

The Impact of Service-Learning on Students' Sense of Civic Responsibility

*Dr. Robert Macmillan and Dr. Debra Dawson*

CONSENT FORM

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

Name (please print):

Signature:

Date:

## APPENDIX E

### *The Impact of Service-Learning on Students' Sense of Civic Responsibility*

#### LETTER OF INFORMATION

My name is Rebecca Denby and I am a graduate student at the Faculty of Education at The University of Western Ontario. I am currently conducting research into the impact of service-learning and would like to invite you to participate in this study.

The aims of this study are to assess the outcomes of service-learning.

With your consent, I will view your reflection journal to gain information on the potential changes that can occur over the course of a term. I will return your journal to you within one month of receiving it.

The information collected will be used for research purposes only, and neither your name nor information which could identify you will be used in any publication or presentation of the study results. All information collected for the study will be kept confidential.

There are no known risks to participating in this study. Your instructor for this class will not be informed about your decision to participate (or not) in this study.

For more information on service-learning, the following book may be helpful:

Jacoby, B. (1996). *Service-Learning in Higher Education: Concepts and Practices*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

If you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research subject you may contact the Director, Office of Research Ethics, The University of Western Ontario at 519-661-3036 or [ethics@uwo.ca](mailto:ethics@uwo.ca). If you have any questions about this study, please contact Dr. Robert Macmillan.

Sincerely,

The Impact of Service-Learning on Students' Sense of Civic Responsibility

*Dr. Robert Macmillan and Dr. Debra Dawson*

CONSENT FORM

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

Name (please print):

Signature:

Date:





# Rebecca Denby

---

## EDUCATION

- 2007      **Master of Education, Educational Policy and Leadership**  
Thesis: The Impact of Service-Learning on Student's Sense of Civic Responsibility  
The University of Western Ontario
- 2006      **Intercultural Communication**  
The University of British Columbia
- 2004      **Bachelor of Education**  
The University of Western Ontario
- 2002      **Bachelor of Arts, Honors Kinesiology**  
The University of Western Ontario
- 

## RELATED EXPERIENCE

- 2002-2004      **International Exchange Coordinator**, International Exchange Program  
2006-current      The University of Western Ontario
- Demonstrated superior conflict resolution skills while dealing with a full range of stakeholders, including international partners, students, faculty, and staff, to ensure the maintenance of UWO's strong relationships with the greater community
  - Advised incoming and outgoing exchange students on matters such as safety abroad, eligibility, course selection, registration and grade conversions, resulting in decreased demand on faculties and departments on campus
  - Effectively delivered marketing presentations to groups ranging in size from 25 to 800 individuals (including March Break Open House, Fall Preview Day, Ontario Universities Fair, and classroom presentations) to increase awareness of the exchange program
  - Supervised 3 part-time staff members and 30 volunteers, balancing high expectations with compassion and fairness
  - Demonstrated ability to improve efficiency and organization, while ensuring accurate statistical data
  - Utilize decision-making and problem solving skills to manage urgent situations
  - Represented UWO at international conferences and successfully organized large scale events to promote internationalization
- 2004-2006      **Recruiting Logistics Coordinator**, Ivey Career Management  
The University of Western Ontario
- Proven ability to provide positive results within a fast paced, high stress environment, resulting in a 93% job placement rate for MBA students
  - Advised HBA and MBA students on matters such as job search strategies, resume and cover letter writing, networking, and interviewing
  - Identified a need and developed resource materials on immigration issues to support our international student population
  - Utilized my strong Frontpage skills to create an Immigration website and maintain the Ivey Career Management website

- Routinely delivered high quality projects on time with minimal supervision

2000-  
2002

**Assistant to the Coordinator**, University Transitional Programs  
The University of Western Ontario

- Valued member of two dynamic teams which provided support to first year students, resulting in an increased rate of retention within the university
- Assisted in the yearly organization and facilitation of the Summer Academic Orientation Program and the Off Campus Dons Program

### COMPUTER SKILLS

- Strong working knowledge of Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, Access, PowerPoint, Frontpage and Publisher)
- Sound knowledge of academic registration systems and student databases (including PeopleSoft HE, Maximizer, Counsellor Scheduler and Career Path)

### COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

2007 **Team Leader**, Western Serves  
 2007-current **Active Member**, Culture Team, UWO  
 2005-current **Active Member**, Western Service-Learning Committee  
 2005-2007 **Active Member**, Western Heads East, Fundraising Committee  
 2004 **Palliative Care Volunteer**, St. Joseph's Hospital  
 2003-2004 **Active Member**, Faculty of Education, Volunteer and Charity Committee  
 2002-2003 **Classroom Assistant**, Sherwood Public School  
 2001-2003 **Volunteer Server**, Southgate Seniors' Centre  
 1999 **Classroom Assistant**, Victoria Public School  
 1998 **Palliative Care Certification**, St. Joseph's Hospital  
 1997-1998 **Animal Caretaker**, London Humane Society

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO  
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

***CERTIFICATE OF EXAMINATION***

Supervisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Robert Macmillan

Supervisory Committee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Debra Dawson

Examiners

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Jason Brown

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Aniko Varpalotai

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. June Matthews

The thesis by

***Rebecca Amber Denby***

entitled:

The Impact of Service-Learning on Students' Sense of Civic Responsibility

is accepted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**Master of Education**

Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair of the Thesis Examination Board

## ABSTRACT

This study examined whether service-learning, as a pedagogical approach, can influence students' sense of civic responsibility. Service-learning is defined as a pedagogy that enables students to engage in structured activities that are intentionally designed to enhance student learning, reflection, and civic responsibility, while addressing community needs. Civic responsibility is defined as active participation of an individual in the public life of a community, with a focus on the common good. Sixty-seven students were surveyed, four students were interviewed, and the reflection journals of three students were reviewed. It was found that service-learning has a positive influence on students': awareness of, and empathy toward, individuals in the community and their needs; sense of personal responsibility; interest in taking action; and understanding of the political and social issues that affect the community.

**Keywords:** Service-Learning, Civic Responsibility, Social Justice, Student Engagement

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to sincerely thank the many individuals who contributed significantly to the completion of my thesis. I would like to acknowledge Dr. Robert Macmillan for his endless patience and encouragement, Dr. Debra Dawson for her expertise and ongoing support, Dr. Amanda Gryzb for her enthusiasm, and Dr. Pamela Cushing for her compassion. I would also like to thank Dr. Ken Meadows and Carrie Smith for helping me navigate the SPSS software. Finally, I would like to express my appreciation to my husband, Jason, for his sincere understanding throughout this process.

# Table of Contents

Certificate of Examination .....	ii
Abstract .....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Table of Contents .....	v
List of Tables.....	vii
List of Figures.....	viii
List of Appendices .....	ix
Chapter One: Introduction .....	1
Civic Responsibility Defined .....	2
Service-Learning Defined .....	2
Distinction between Co-Curricular and Curricular Service-Learning.....	4
Background on Service-Learning.....	6
Primary Research Question.....	10
Chapter Summary .....	10
Chapter Two: Literature Review .....	12
Civic Disengagement .....	12
Who is Responsible for Civic Engagement? .....	13
Service-Learning's Impact on Students' Sense of Civic Responsibility .....	16
Differences between Charitable and Social Justice Perspectives on Service-Learning .....	25
Chapter Summary .....	31
Chapter Three: Methodology.....	33
Research Methods .....	33
Limitations .....	36
Descriptions of Courses Studied .....	38
Chapter Summary .....	43

Chapter Four: Results .....	44
Survey .....	44
Differences between Social Justice and Peace Studies Students and Media, Information, and Technology Students.....	50
Interviews .....	55
Observations .....	59
Journals .....	61
Chapter Summary .....	70
 Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations .....	 72
Students' Awareness of, and Empathy Toward, Individuals in the Community ....	72
Students' Sense of Personal Responsibility .....	75
Students' Call to Action.....	76
Students' Confidence in their Ability to Influence Social Change.....	76
Students' Awareness of Political and Social Issues .....	77
Differences between Charity and Social Justice Perspectives .....	78
Recommendations for Practice and Future Research .....	80
 References .....	 82
Appendices.....	86
Curriculum Vitae.....	97



## List of Tables

Table 1: Students' Awareness of, and Empathy toward Individuals in the Community and Their Needs.....	44
Table 2: Students' Sense of Personal Responsibility .....	46
Table 3: Students' Call to Action .....	47
Table 4: Students' Confidence in their Ability to Influence Social Change .....	48
Table 5: Students' Awareness of Political and Social Issues .....	49
Table 6: Comparison of Responses between Groups to Question 15 .....	51
Table 7: Comparison of Responses between Groups to Question 19 .....	52
Table 8: Comparison of Responses between Groups to Question 1 .....	53
Table 9: Comparison of Responses between Groups to Question 4 .....	53
Table 10: Comparison of Responses between Groups to Question 13 .....	54
Table 11: Comparison of Responses between Groups to Question 18 .....	54
Table 12: Comparison of Responses between Groups on Question 20 .....	55

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Distribution of Responses to Question 6.....	45
Figure 2: Distribution of Responses to Question 20.....	50

## **List of Appendices**

A	Civic Responsibility Survey .....	86
B	Interview Questions .....	89
C	Letter of Information and Consent Form for Survey Participation .....	90
D	Letter of Information and Consent Form for Interview Participation .....	92
E	Letter of Information and Consent Form for Journal Review .....	94
F	Ethics Approval .....	96