

THE STRUCTURE TRAP:
STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF REFLECTION
ON A CO-CURRICULAR IMMERSION SERVICE-LEARNING TRIP

by

Lorena Boswell

A Thesis

Presented to
The Faculty of Humboldt State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

In Education

May, 2010

THE STRUCTURE TRAP:
AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF REFLECTION
ON A CO-CURRICULAR IMMERSION SERVICE-LEARNING TRIP

by

Lorena Boswell

Approved by the Master's Project Committee:

Keri Gelenian, Major Professor Date

Ann Diver-Stammes, Committee Member Date

Cathleen Rafferty, Committee Member Date

Keri Gelenian, Graduate Coordinator Date

Jena Burges, Vice Provost Date

ABSTRACT

THE STRUCTURE TRAP: STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF REFLECTION ON A CO-CURRICULAR IMMERSION SERVICE-LEARNING TRIP

LORENA BOSWELL

Reflection is well-established in the literature as an essential element of high-quality service-learning. This is true for all forms of service-learning including co-curricular (non-academic) immersion trips such as the week-long Alternative Spring Break trip that is the focus of this case study. As a case study, this thesis utilizes a qualitative methodology, including pre- and post-interviews, field observations with myself as a participant-observer and document analysis. Originally I set out to document the learning outcomes of fourteen students on this trip. However, evaluations clearly indicated that students had negative reactions to the trips' structured reflections. As this was in direct contradiction to the best-practices in the literature, I adjusted my focus in order to fully explore the question of this thesis: what are a selected group of northern California university students' perceptions of their reflection experiences during an alternative spring break co-curricular service-learning trip? This thesis is the result of my own reflective process in attempting to answer this question.

My analysis centers around a concept I am dubbing the structure trap. I identify the nature of the trap, synthesize issues that contributed to falling into the

trap, and analyze a complexity of factors that need to be considered in order to avoid the trap. Ultimately I conclude that the structure trap can be defined as a disconnection between the paradigms of service-learning model and the traditional modernist approach to education.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is not easy to critically express oneself to a teacher. Likewise, it is not often that a teacher has the opportunity to reflect openly with students about what did not work well and how to improve things. For these reasons I would like to thank all of the students who participated in this study. This is especially true for the three student leaders on this trip, whose honest feedback and reflection provided the insights I needed to reflect deeply and pull all of these strings together. All three have hearts of gold and dedicated themselves to this trip with passion, enthusiasm, and skill. Through the interview process, we became reflective practitioners together, and I am honored they trusted me with this.

I am equally grateful for Keri Gelenian's insightful guidance and advice. Never having written something so large and in depth before, I relied on my meetings with Keri to grapple with the data in order to identify and then peel back the layers of the onion until we got to the core.

I would also like to thank: Ann Diver-Stammes for the encouragement when things felt overwhelming and for always taking time out of her busy schedule; Cathleen Rafferty for recognizing the potential of what was to be class assignment and encouraging me to immediately apply for IRB approval; and Carol whose encouragement, flexibility and understanding enabled me to gracefully spend the requisite time and energy on this project.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Every year at the beginning of Spring Break, a group of 12 to 18 enthusiastic students at a northern California university sign up for a Alternative Spring Break, a week-long service-learning immersion trip. This particular year, 16 of them sleepily clambered into two white 12 passenger vans loaded down with sleeping bags, backpacks, boxes of groceries, and camping and gardening equipment. As I drove, they sat at first in a palpable shyness. After a short time of camping, eating, doing service, and learning together, their energy transformed into the easy camaraderie of common interests and purpose.

Similarly, students around the country participate in different forms of Alternative Spring Breaks. Some are curricular, tied to academic classes, while others are co-curricular, offered as an enriching life experience. Some are led by faculty and others by students. The typical student-led model seems to involve hiring and training of students to lead already established trips.

The Alternative Spring Break at this particular university is a co-curricular student-led model. It differs from other student led trips in that it emerges completely out of the particular interests of the current student leaders. They pick a theme and investigate potential communities that would provide both rich learning experiences and a variety of service sites. While they are encouraged to make it easy

on themselves and return to a previously visited site, often they have a fierce desire to create their own trip, which was the case on this trip.

My job was to help guide the student leaders through this very involved process and ensure the overall safety and quality of the participants' experience. This also meant ensuring that the themes of sustainability and community, which the leadership team agreed on for this trip, were well integrated throughout the trip. In other words, my job was to help the student leaders create and provide not only a fun service trip, but a service-learning trip. This involved ensuring they implemented reflection activities which provide students with an opportunity to examine and learn from their experiences and as such are an established essential component of high quality service-learning.

While this was my first experience planning an immersion service-learning trip, my teaching and service-learning background enabled me to fill this role with confidence. I was first trained on the service-learning model as an elementary school teacher in San Francisco in the early 1990s and regularly integrated service-learning projects into my curriculum for the five years I taught there. I also worked for the local community college for three years as the campus Service-Learning Coordinator before being hired at the local university to manage a co-curricular service-learning program.

As a participant observer, I decided to document student learning outcomes on this Alternative Spring Break service-learning trip. In order to do so, I conducted pre and post interviews, analyzed student applications and evaluations, and took field notes. Often with qualitative research, the focus can change with the emergence of certain themes in the data (Glesne, 2006). In this case, my original focus on learning outcomes changed when what emerged from the evaluations was an overwhelmingly negative reaction to the trip's structured reflections.

As an experienced teacher and service-learning practitioner, I was surprised and curious about these negative reactions. How is it that students could object to what I understood as the established best practices of the field? The training resources we utilized, such as the *Reflection Toolkit* (Kinsel, 2003) and the *Service Learning Toolbox* (Geiger, 2001), were pretty straightforward about how to lead reflections. Even though the student leaders were well versed in these resources and in the model of service-learning, I wondered if there a limitation to the quality of student-led reflections. Did the circumstances of this trip demand something different?

Before I could begin to contemplate how to do things differently, I wanted to understand exactly what these negative reactions were about. In order to fully explore their reactions, I adjusted the post-interview questions so that I could answer the question: what are a selected group of northern California university students'

perceptions of their reflection experiences during an alternative spring break co-curricular service-learning trip? Utilizing qualitative, case study research methodology, this thesis is the result of my own reflective process in attempting to answer this question.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of ease of reference and clarity of terms, I am providing the following definitions of terms, all of which are discussed and explained in depth in the literature review of this thesis

Service-learning.

Service-learning holds the central tenant of combining service and learning in order to enhance both (Jacoby & Associates, 1996). Doing so includes intentional integration of a learning component about issues relevant to the service situation (McCarthy, 1996) and an emphasis on the established best practices of reciprocity and reflection (Jacoby & Associates, 1996). Service-learning can take many forms including integration into academic classrooms, one-time or short-term service-learning events, ongoing co-curricular experiences, and intensive/immersion service-learning (Jacoby & Associates, 1996).

Co-curricular service-learning.

Co-curricular service-learning opportunities meet the above definition and are offered outside of the academic setting. They can be organized by a range of

associations such as fraternities, sororities, campus clubs, leadership programs, religious organizations, residence halls, athletic programs, and service organizations (Scheuermann, 1996).

The co-curricular opportunity studied in this thesis, was offered through a university service-learning organization and while students did receive an academic credit/no credit unit for the course, the only requirement for credit was participation. In this way the trip was experiential and non-academic in content and focus and is therefore considered co-curricular for the purpose of this study.

Immersion service-learning.

Immersion service-learning can be either curricular or co-curricular in nature, and involves students living and providing service in a community other than their own (Albert, 1996). Immersion experiences include alternative spring breaks, summer experiences, internships, and independent study and may be as short as a week (Albert, 1996).

Reflection.

Considered one of the main tenants of effective service-learning, reflection provides the bridge between concrete service experience and the conceptual and theoretical lenses of learning (Crossman & Kite, 2007; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Eyler, 2001; Felten, Gilchrist, & Darby, 2006; Ikeda, 2000). At its core is the intentional examination of experience in order to maximize learning. After being triggered by a

surprising situation or experience, individuals are asked to actively engage in examining their preconceptions in light of the new situation and integrate the new understanding in what is termed reflection (Rogers, 2001).

It is important to note that there is a certain amount of ambiguity about the term reflection in that it is used to signify both a cognitive process and a structured learning activity (Hatcher and Bringle, 1997). During this trip the leadership team unconsciously used the term interchangeably as the process of learning from one's experience and the structured activity that facilitates this process. This differentiation becomes evident in the analysis section. Given that the line between the process and structure was blurred during the trip, it is presented as such during the methodology and results sections.

Leadership Team.

This trip was led by three student leaders with myself as a professional staff advisor. The four of us combined are referred to as the leadership team throughout this thesis.

Overview of the Thesis

Chapter Two, the literature review, begins with an overview of service-learning history, established best practices and models. It then culminates in an exploration of both the theoretical lenses on reflection and research about the reflection in service-learning.

Chapter Three, the methodology chapter, provides a description of this case study approach. It begins with a description of the week-long co-curricular service-learning trip, including participants, leadership team, setting, and daily service and reflection activities. This chapter then explains the qualitative data collection methods and data analysis coding systems I utilized.

Chapter Four, the results chapter, details students' responses and observations about the reflection activities on this alternative spring break trip. The results are presented around the themes of individual motivation, group and leadership team dynamics, formally structured reflection including the feeling of forced reflection, students' idea of the benefit and best type of reflection, factors that are perceived to influence reflection, and the leadership team's perspective. Given the qualitative nature of this study I provide a thick description of the data, including many relevant quotes from students.

Chapter Five, the analysis chapter, offers my synthesis of the results from a reflective framework. I have organized the analysis chapter around a concept I am dubbing the structure trap. First I identify the trap through an analysis of students' negative reactions to reflections that felt forced upon them. I then analyze a complexity of factors that need to be considered in order to avoid the trap. My analysis concludes with a synthesis of issues of student leadership and our leadership team dynamics that contributed to falling into the trap. Ultimately, I conclude that

the trap can be defined as a disconnection between the paradigms of service-learning model and the traditional practice in which it was implemented.

Chapter Six is the conclusion in which I synthesize my findings about what I have identified as the structure trap. As a part of this synthesis, I discuss strengths, limitations and implications of this study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

“There is something uniquely powerful about the combination of service and learning... there is something fundamentally more dynamic in the integration of the two than in either alone.” (Kendall & Associates, 1990, p. 19).

Introduction

Over the last forty years, service-learning has been established as an educational philosophy and refined as an educational practice. Although now encompassing a variety of different definitions, the term service-learning holds the central tenant of combining service and learning in order to enhance both (Jacoby & Associates, 1996). The hyphen in the term service-learning represents the role reflection plays in connecting service and learning (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Before looking more closely at the definitions, types, and best practices of service-learning, this literature review will start by describing the beginnings of the service-learning movement. After which I will examine the theory and practice of reflection. I will then relate these back to the service-learning model and its potential learning outcomes. Finally, with consideration of the difficulties and challenges that practitioners have experienced in designing and facilitating reflection, I will examine the literature for factors that may determine high quality reflection both in general

and specifically for week-long co-curricular immersion service learning trips. All of this will culminate in the research question of this thesis: What are the perceptions of a selected group of northern California university students on their reflection experiences during an alternative spring break co-curricular service-learning trip?

The Service-Learning Movement

“Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country” (Kennedy, 1961). Not only through his famous words but also through actions such as the establishment of the Peace Corps and VISTA, President John F. Kennedy helped foster a spirit of service and motivate a generation of young adults (Ehrlich, 1990). Also during this time research in fields of experiential education, career education, and youth development set the stage for service-learning (Neal, 2003). It is within this context, as well as the larger context of the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, that the term service learning was used for the first time in 1966 (Jacoby & Associates, 1996; Titlebaum, Williamson, Daprano, Baer & Brahler, 2004).

The increased interest in community service and volunteerism on college and university campuses propelled service-learning into an educational movement (Kendall & Associates, 1990). Early markers of this growth were the 1969 Atlanta Service-Learning Conference and the 1971 White House Conference on Youth

Report, which called for educators to combine service and learning (Titlebaum et al, 2004). The *Synergist*, a magazine about service learning research, was in publication throughout the 1970s (Neal, 2003). Reflecting the movement's expansion, the National Student Volunteer Program changed its name in 1979 to National Center for Service-Learning (Kendall & Associates, 1990). In 1979, a myriad of service learning definitions were used to describe contexts such as experiential education, cooperative education, voluntary action programs, and federal laws governing the funding of service-learning (Sigmon, 1990).

After over fifteen years of rapid expansion, the 1980s saw the popularity of service-learning recede (Kendall & Associates, 1990). A small group of dedicated professionals analyzed the movement's early approaches and identified the following three pitfalls (Kendall & Associates, 1990): a failure to firmly integrate service within institutions of learning, an assumption that providing service is equivalent to both quality service and engaged learning, and an imbalance of power between service providers and service recipients (Kendall & Associates 1990). This imbalance of power often emerged as a patronizing attitude of helping others instead of supporting them in meeting their own needs (Kendall & Associates, 1990).

Best Practices

In response to the movement's disjointedness and self-deception, three common principles as a means of elevating and uniting the practice of service-

learning were identified: “those being served control the service(s) provided; those being served become better able to serve and be served by their own actions; those who serve also are learners and have significant control over what is expected to be learned” (Sigmon, 1990, p. 57).

This effort to move service-learning towards a high-quality experience for both students and service recipients echoed through the latter half of the 1980s (Kendall & Associates, 1990). For example, Campus Compact, an organization which has greatly contributed to the institutionalization of service-learning on college and university campuses (Jacoby & Associates, 1996; Kendall & Associates, 1990) was started in 1985 by three university presidents and the president of the Education Commission of the State (Titlebaum et al, 2004). Revitalization efforts by organizations such as the Carnegie Corporation, the Center for Experiential Education, the National Society for Internships and Experiential Education (NSIEE), as well as Campus Compact focused on the need for research and the establishment of quality service-learning practices (Kendall & Associates, 1990; Neal, 2003).

It was to this effect that NSIEE spearheaded the two-year collaborative effort of 77 national and regional organizations to identify best practices of service-learning (Kendall & Associates, 1990). The end result, which reflected “the thinking of thousands of people, hundreds of programs, and numerous national organizations”

(Kendall & Associates 1990, p. 38), produced the following ten best practices at the Wingspread conference in 1989:

engages people in responsible and challenging actions for the common good; provides structured opportunities for people to reflect critically on their service experience; articulates clear service and learning goals for everyone involved; allows for those with needs to define those needs; clarifies the responsibilities of each person and organization involved; matches service providers and service needs through a process that recognizes changing circumstances; expects genuine, active and sustained organizational commitment; includes training, supervision, monitoring, support, recognition, and evaluation to meet service and learning goals; insures that the time commitment for service and learning is flexible, appropriate, and in the best interest of all involved; is committed to program participation by and with diverse populations. (Kendall & Associates, 1990, p. 40)

These 10 principles have become a cornerstone of service-learning programming around the country (Kendall & Associates, 1990; McElhaney, 1998; Titlebaum et al, 2004). The second principle, the importance of reflection in creating high-quality service-learning experiences, is the focus of this thesis. Before reviewing the literature on the theory and practice of reflection and how it relates to

service-learning practices, I will first address different types of service-learning models.

Service-Learning Models

The 1990s saw an explosion in the number of service-learning courses offered in higher education (Ehrlich, 1990). Just in the academic year 1999-2000, for example, 12.2% of the faculty on 349 surveyed campuses taught 6,272 service-learning courses (Campus Compact, 2001). The 1990s also saw a large increase in service-learning literature and conferences (Jacoby & Associates, 1996).

Government and institutional support increased significantly (Titlebaum et. al. 2004). Examples of this include the establishment of the National and Community Service Act (1990), the Corporation for National Service (1993), *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning* (1994), National Thomas Ehrlich Faculty Award for Service (1995), and the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse (1997) (Titlebaum et al, 2004). A 1990 review of the literature revealed 147 terms used to describe the combination of service and learning depending on either programmatic implementation or philosophical underpinnings (Kendall & Associates, 1990).

After this explosion of service-learning implementation, four variations of service-learning on college campuses were identified: an emphasis on learning goals with service as secondary, an emphasis on service outcomes with learning goals as secondary, separation of service and learning goals, and an integration of service and

learning goals equally in order to enhance both (Sigmon, 1997). It is in describing this fourth scenario that service-learning became hyphenated, signifying the integration and balance of the two terms (Sigmon, 1997). This fourth typology is also considered a best-practice for service-learning course design (Jacoby & Associates, 1996; Geiger, 2001; Sigmon, 1997).

While high quality service-learning programs fall into the fourth typology above and include established best practices such as reciprocity and reflection, searching for one definition of service-learning is to lose sight of the variety of service-learning implementation that exists (National Clearinghouse for Service Learning, n.d.). In addition to the most common type of service-learning, which is integration into academic classrooms, service-learning can also include one-time or short-term service-learning events, ongoing co-curricular experiences, and intensive/immersion service-learning (Jacoby & Associates, 1996).

One-time and short-term service-learning events range from campus-wide service days to volunteer opportunities for specific groups such as the orientation program or residence halls (McCarthy, 1996). What differentiates these service-learning events from simple service events is the intentional integration of a learning component about issues relevant to the situation (McCarthy, 1996). A well-planned event assesses community needs and student interest, develops shared expectations among all participants, selects meaningful activities, provides structured reflection,

recognizes students, and develops evaluations (McCarthy, 1996). One-time and short-term service-learning events are usually indirect types of service such as organizing a food drive or fundraising for AIDS research (McCarthy, 1996). Although limited in depth and intensity, these short service-learning experiences can offer new insight and knowledge about a community while simultaneously inspiring students to further engage in service (McCarthy, 1996).

Ongoing co-curricular service-learning opportunities are organized by a range of associations such as fraternities, sororities, campus clubs, leadership programs, religious organizations, residence halls, athletic programs, and service organizations (Scheuermann, 1996). With intentional planning and implementation, these groups can move from their traditional role of providing community service to engaging in effective high quality co-curricular service-learning (Scheuermann, 1996). Lacking the structure of an academic class, it is challenging to ensure that co-curricular service-learning enables learning to take place (Scheuermann, 1996). For this reason and because most students first engage in service-learning through a co-curricular experience, it is important to ensure that these experiences incorporate the best practices of service-learning (Scheuermann, 1996).

Either curricular or co-curricular in nature, intensive and immersion service-learning includes alternative spring breaks, summer experiences, internships, and independent study (Albert, 1996). While intensive experiences last at least 10 hours a

week for a summer or a semester, immersion service-learning may be as short as a week and involve students living and providing service in a community other than their own (Albert, 1996). While there is a difference between the two terms, intensive can also be used to refer to both (Albert, 1996). “The more intensive a student’s service-learning experience is the more profound and complex are the possible outcomes” (Albert, 1996, p. 184). This creates particular challenges for the intensive and immersion service-learning experience including choosing appropriate sites; designing programs around specific outcomes; identifying different student motivations and levels of preparedness; assessing and evaluating the experience for all involved; providing reentry support after the experience; dealing with funding issues, cross-cultural and language training, culture shock homesickness, host-student mismatch, political concerns, and logistical details, and structuring appropriate and high quality reflection (Albert, 1996).

No matter the frequency or model, what distinguishes service-learning from service and volunteerism is an emphasis on the established best practices of reciprocity and reflection (Jacoby & Associates, 1996). From its first applications in the 1960s to the explosion of governmental and institutional support that led to the Wingspread Convention’s establishment of best practices, the service-learning movement of 1990 was in need of research to back up what was believed to be a strong pedagogical approach (Kendall & Associates, 1990). Answering this call for

research, the 1990s and the start of the 21st century witnessed an explosion of service-learning research and literature including some that explored the impact and best practices for reflection (Kendall & Associates, 1990). Before examining the research on the process and structure of reflection including factors that impact its effectiveness, I will first summarize three major theoretical lenses of the reflective process.

Theoretical Lenses on Reflection

The importance of intentional reflection on concrete experience in service-learning has its roots in the work of John Dewey and is explored and elaborated by, among others, David Kolb and Donald Schon (Bingle & Hatcher, 1999; Crossman & Kite, 2007; Eyler, Giles, & Schmeide, 1996; Felten, Gilchrist, & Darby, 2006; Jacoby & Associates, 1996; Ogden & Claus, 1997). The ideas of these three theorists will be explored in this section.

For John Dewey, reflective thinking is an “active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends” (Dewey, 1933, p. 9). In order to think reflectively students must be actively open-minded, approach learning wholeheartedly, and engage responsibly in reflecting on meaning and its consequences (Dewey, 1933). Educators can help students develop these habits of mind by appealing to their curiosity, providing engaging and intrinsically worthwhile

activities within a meaningful context, and continuously fostering development over time (Dewey, 1933).

Reflective thought moves through four phases: definition of the problem, identification of a hypothesis, observation and analysis, and testing through action (Dewey, 1933). In this way, reflection is a cyclical process of uncertainty and doubt leading to understanding which then brings on new sources of confusion and doubt and consequently new questions and reflective thinking (Dewey, 1933). Reflection is also the bridge between conceptual understandings and concrete experiences (Dewey, 1933). “Dewey’s focus on the iteration between thought and experience is the touchstone for most service-learning practitioners; his emphasis on action-reflection and then action again underlies most models of reflection” (Eyler & Giles, 1999, p.194).

Following in the footsteps of Dewey’s cycle of action and reflection, David Kolb’s cyclical model of experiential education reiterates the importance of reflection in the learning process (Eyler, Giles, & Schmeide, 1996; Felten, Gilchrist, & Darby, 2006; Jacoby & Associates, 1996; McEwen, 1996; Stanton, 1990). In this model, learning is a four-stage process including fully and openly engaging in a new concrete experience, engaging in reflection and observation from many perspectives, creating abstract conceptualization by integrating observations into logical theories, and active experimentation in order to solve problems or make decisions (Kolb,

1984). In other words, the learner moves through the stages of feeling, watching and listening, thinking, and doing (Eyler, Giles, & Schmeide, 1996). Learners can enter the cycle at any point and may engage in more than one of these stages simultaneously (Kolb, 1984).

Based on this experiential learning cycle, individual learning styles include convergers, who combine abstract conceptualization and active experimentation by focusing on practical application of their ideas; accommodators who combine active experimentation with concrete experiences by preferring to carry out plans, take risks and have new experiences; divergers who combine concrete experiences and reflection and observation by using multiple perspectives to generate ideas; and assimilators who combine reflection and observation and abstract conceptualization by using inductive reasoning to create theoretical models and integrated explanations (Kolb, 1984). No matter their learning style, learning is most effective when students fully engage in all four stages of the experiential learning cycle (Kolb, 1984).

The catalyst for engaging in reflection is a problematic new experience that elicits an emotional response in the learner of doubt and confusion (Dewey, 1933), conflict (Kolb 1984) or surprise (Schon, 1983). The emergence of a new problem requires a different kind of thinking termed reflection-in-action (Schon, 1983) as opposed to routine situations during which one can draw on static academic

knowledge of traditional theories and practices which, although stored in memory, cannot be applied to new situations (Dewey, 1933; Schon, 1983).

Schon delineates the need for a shift in professional practice that parallels the shift in pedagogy called for by the service-learning model (Rubin, 1990). This creative problem-solving approach requires teachers and mentors to act as coaches: to advise, question, criticize, and combine telling and listening with demonstrating and imitating (Schon, 1983). Different from the traditional passive training, which could be termed reflection-in-knowledge (Rubin, 1990), reflection-in-action requires exploration, testing hypothesis, and becoming aware of one's intuitive process in order to makes tacit ideas explicit (Schon, 1983):

What allows this to happen is that the inquirer is willing to step into the problematic situation, to impose a frame on it, to follow the implications of the discipline thus established and yet to remain open to the situation's back-talk. Reflecting on the surprising consequences of his efforts to shape the situation in conformity with his initially chosen frame, the inquirer frames new questions and new ends. (Schon, 1983, p. 269)

In this way the traditional positivistic model which divides theory and practice is replaced with the rigorous practice of reflection-in-action (Schon, 1983).

When reflecting-in-action teachers and students engage in a reflective-contract which creates new expectations and outcomes for both of them (Schon,

1983). For the teacher the reflective contract necessitates giving up the power and professional mystique of the expert and moving into a more vulnerable position of shared power and exploration of uncertainty (Schon, 1983). Similarly a student must move from the comfort and security of faithfully relying on the teacher's expertise to embracing the necessity of acquiring enough voice to increase their participation and enjoy the excitement of discovery (Schon, 1983). The relationship between teacher and student is no longer dependent and based on assumed trust but is interdependent and based on respect grown out of shared engagement in the situation (Schon, 1983). Conflicts and dilemmas in the reflective contract can occur if teacher and student are claiming to be reflective but one of them is still acting within the traditional model (Schon, 1983). In this case the results will match those of the traditional model (Schon, 1983).

One way Schon identifies this shift from traditional to reflective is what he terms a shift from Model I to Model II (Schon, 1983). Practitioners of Model I value rational arguments, view situations as win/lose, try to win by achieving tasks as they define them, and "avoid negative feelings such as anger and resentment" (Schon, 1983. p. 226). In order to control tasks and protect themselves and others, Model I practitioners act unilaterally without testing the necessity of their actions (Schon, 1983). Model I practitioners' sense of vulnerability within a system of external reward or punishments functions to reinforce the model, preserve

established knowledge, and limit reflection (Schon, 1983). For Model I uncertainty is a sign of weakness (Schon, 1983).

On the other hand, without defensiveness, Model II practitioners promote everyone's awareness of value systems, experiences and limits that may be at play in decision making; seek to exchange valid information and conclusions from observable data; and set the stage for people to make informed decisions free from pressure (Schon, 1983). In order to enhance freedom of choice, internal commitment and avoid withholding information because of negative feelings, Model II practitioners make designing the task, managing the environment, and protecting all parties a joint undertaking (Schon, 1983). Open to learning and committed to investigate their ideas, they freely question and test data, dilemmas, assumptions and inferences while referring directly to categorical observations (Schon, 1983). Unlike Model I practitioners, practitioners of Model II embrace uncertainty as part of the scientific art of research (Schon, 1983).

Together Dewey, Kolb and Schon describe a cyclical process of action, reflection and new action that is the basis for service-learning practice (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999; Crossman & Kite, 2007; Eyler, Giles, & Schmeide, 1996; Felten, Gilchrist, & Darby, 2006; Jacoby & Associates, 1996; Ogden & Claus, 1997). The pedagogical shift from traditional academic learning to service-learning, from passive recipient of knowledge to active creator of learning will be reflected in some

of the factors discussed in a later section that impact high quality reflection. First, in order to understand the importance of reflection in service-learning, I will review the literature for definitions of reflection in service-learning as well as outcomes of service-learning

Reflection in Service-Learning Research and Practice

Definitions of reflection.

Because reflection is both a cognitive process and a structured learning activity there is a certain amount of ambiguity about the term (Hatcher and Bringle, 1997). Adding to the confusion is the fact that educators and theorists use “the term reflection as a noun, a verb, an adjective, a process, and an outcome” (Rogers, 2001, p. 40). The following are a few definitions of reflection in service-learning pulled from the literature to reveal the scope in which the term is used. Reflection is “the intentional consideration of an experience in light of particular learning objectives” (Hatcher & Bringle, 1997, p.153); “the use of creative and critical thinking skills to help prepare for, succeed in, and learn from the service experience, and to examine the larger picture and context in which the service occurs” (Toole & Toole, 1995, p 100-101); “a process involving the interplay of emotion and cognition in which people (students, teachers, and community partners) intentionally connect service experiences with academic learning objectives” (Felten, Gilchrist & Darby, 2006); and “a process specifically structured to help examine the frameworks that we use to

interpret experience... It is the critical questioning of why things are and the attempt to fully understand the root causes of observable events and behaviors” (Eyler, Giles, Schmeide, 1996, pp.13-4).

A synthesis of various definitions found in the literature identifies the following commonalities: individual’s active engagement triggered by a surprising situation or experience, examining one’s preconceptions in light of the new situation, and integrating the new understanding (Rogers, 2001). “Helping students question their assumptions, identify questions that arise from their experience, or link what they are learning in the classroom with the lives of communities” is central to effective service-learning (Eyler, 2001, p. 42).

Outcomes of service-learning.

As should be evident by the above definitions, reflection is a necessary bridge between students’ concrete experience of service and the conceptual and theoretical lenses of learning (Blyth, Saito, & Berkas, 1997; Crossman & Kite, 2007; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Eyler, 2001; Felten, Gilchrist, & Darby, 2006; Ikeda, 2000). Service without reflection does not always lead to high quality learning (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999; Eyler, 2001; Ikeda, 2000; Mabry, 1998; Moore, 1999; Ogden & Claus, 1997). Additionally, not engaging students in reflection can be miseducative (Blyth, Saito, & Berkas, 1997; Ikeda, 2000; Mabry, 1998) or result in “haphazard, accidental and superficial” learning with students unable to describe it concretely (Stanton, 1990, p.

185). By helping students to process and transform their experiences, reflection is the key to many different types of learning outcomes including cognitive, social, personal, and functional (Dubinsky, 2006; Eyler, Giles, Stenson & Gray, 2001; Ikeda, 2000; Ogden & Claus, 1997). The following is a summary rather than an exhaustive account, of the breadth of potential outcomes of service-learning reflection.

Cognitive learning outcomes include academic learning (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Eyler, Giles, Stenson & Gray, 2001; Mabry, 1998) and an increased ability to apply subject matter to practical situations (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Eyler, Giles, Stenson & Gray, 2001; Ikeda, 2000). Results that conflict with students' claims of a positive impact on cognitive outcomes may be explained by variation in quality of service-learning programs or by the difference between traditional pedagogy, which focuses on knowledge, and service-learning pedagogy, which focuses on skills (Steinke & Buresh, 2002). Cognitive learning outcomes of service-learning include: critical thinking and problem solving skills, a deeper understanding of the subject matter and of complex situations, and a greater ability to synthesize learning and experience (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Eyler, Giles, Stenson & Gray, 2001; Ikeda, 2000; Mabry, 1998; Ogden & Claus, 1997). Reflection is necessary in order to achieve these cognitive goals in service-learning (Eyler, 2001).

Social outcomes of service-learning include an increased commitment to social responsibility, citizenry and service (Eyler, Giles, Stenson & Gray, 2001; Hatcher & Bringle, 1997). Through reflecting on community service experience students can increase their awareness of others (Adler-Kassner, n.d.; Dubinsky, 2006; Ikeda, 2000; Ogden & Claus, 1997), recognize their own assumptions and biases (Crossman & Kite, 2007; Nsibande, 2007) and increase their acceptance of multiple perspectives (Crossman & Kite, 2007; Green & Diehm, 1995). Service-learning reflection can lead to increased knowledge of social agencies (Eyler & Giles, 1999), awareness of community issues, a commitment towards active citizenship (Dubinsky, 2006), greater commitment to volunteerism, stronger beliefs about making a difference in the world, and increased social, moral and civic values (Mabry, 1998). However, sometimes poorly structured reflection can reinforce students' original assumptions and stereotypes (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999).

On a personal level service-learning can lead to a greater sense of self (Dubinsky, 2006; Eyler, Giles, Stenson & Gray, 2001; Ikeda, 2000). It can also lead to spiritual growth, moral development, improved interpersonal, communication and leadership skills (Eyler, Giles, Stenson & Gray, 2001; McEwen, 1996). Students who reflect on service can become more aware of their personal values (Ikeda, 2000; McEwen, 1996), move from reactive to proactive listening skills (Crossman & Kite,

2007), increase their spirit of collaboration (Ogden & Claus, 1997), and increase their level of engagement in the classroom (Ikeda, 2000).

In addition to cognitive, social, and personal learning outcomes other outcomes of service-learning can be seen as functional, professional or indirect. Reflection as an integral part of the cycle of service can intrinsically lead to functional outcomes such as decisions about service plan, identification of possible future action, and appropriate and inclusive celebration (Ogden & Claus, 1997). Service-learning can also result in further career development (Joseph et al, 2007). Some teachers value assessment of students' experience and thinking as an important outcome of reflection (Crossman & Kite, 2007; Welch & James, 2007). Developmental outcomes such as changes in identity, values and beliefs that lead to changes in behavior such as future service participation, self-efficacy, and life long learning are intuited but need to be the subject of longitudinal studies (Ikeda, 2000).

As is evidenced by the above literature, reflection is the key to service-learning outcomes. "How reflection activities are designed plays an important role in their capacity to yield learning, support personal growth, provide insight, develop skills, and promote civic responsibility." (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999 p. 184). In the next two sections I will first explore the process and possible structures of reflection and then the different factors that may impact the quality of reflection.

The process of reflection.

“There is a growing realization of the need – and complexity—of combining service with learning, of integrating action in the community with reflection on the experience and with analysis of the issues addressed” (Kendall & Associates, 1990, p.12). A challenging, supportive and carefully crafted reflection process can help students confront uncomfortable ideas that they may otherwise interpret with familiar but inadequate frameworks (Eyler, Giles, Schmeide, 1996). Alternately, a service-learning reflection activity can be structured in such a way that it is miseducative by reinforcing preexisting ideas and/or stereotypes (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999). The challenge of how to best guide students through the process of reflection has been the subject of inquiry.

One model suggests students move through five phases of student awareness. During the first two stages of exploration and clarification students’ awareness is first global and unclear then narrowly focused predominately on the student group (Delve, Minz & Stewart, 1990). During realization, students’ emphasis is on the needs of the population served, while in the final two stages of activation and internalization students begin to struggle with and then fully integrate issues of social justice and advocacy (Delve, Minz & Stewart, 1990).

No matter what phase they are in, students might reflect on cognitive, affective, and/or behavioral aspects of their service experience (Welch, 1999). They

may reflect on themselves, on the context or circumstance of others, or on systemic and global situations and issues (Yates & Youniss, 1997, Welch & James, 2007). Learning outcomes are deepened in written journals when students are encouraged to comprehensively reflect on all six of the above mentioned factors (affective, behavioral, cognitive, self, others, systemic) (Welch & James, 2007). The complexity of students' thought ranges from unsupported personal beliefs and superficial observations to conflicting multiple perspectives with detailed evidence (Bradley, 1995).

When reflection is intentional, strategic, and rigorous it more consistently leads to positive academic learning outcomes (Dubinsky, 2006; Eyler & Giles, 1999). One intentional strategy is the "What, So What, Now What" model based on Kolb's experiential learning cycle (Eyler, Giles & Schmeide, 1996; Toole & Toole, 1995). This model suggests teachers facilitate the reflective observation phase by asking what happened, facilitate the abstract conceptualization phase by asking why it is significant, and facilitate students' planning for the active experimentation phase by asking "Now What?" (Eyler, Giles & Schmeide, 1996; Toole & Toole, 1995). In order to facilitate moral development reflection questions should be tailored towards this desired learning outcome (McEwen, 1996).

The design of a reflection activity impacts the resulting learning outcomes (Hatcher and Bringle, 1999). Reflections can be "guided and open, structured and

unstructured, critical or descriptive, incremental or cumulative, formal or informal. These variations can make a difference” (Mabry, 1998, p. 43). In order to engage people with different learning styles it is crucial that reflection activities are varied and include choice whenever possible (Eyler, Giles, Schmeide, 1996).

One category of structured reflection is written reflective activities including journals, researched biography, problem solving or experiential research papers, ethical case studies, reflection essays, self evaluation essays, portfolios, analysis papers, press releases, letters to students/clients/self/ politicians, grant proposals, volunteer agency training manuals, and electronic web-based reflection (Crossman & Kite, 2007; Dubinsky, 2006; Eyler, Giles & Schmeide, 1996; Felten, Gilchrist & Darby, 2006; Hatcher & Bringle, 1997; Ikeda, 2000; Welch & James, 2007). Writing activities can be either for the community, about the community or with the community (Adler-Kassner, n.d.). Journals are especially useful to help individuals reflect privately (Adler-Kassner, L. (n.d.); Ash & Clayton, 2004; Ikeda, 2000; Welch & James, 2007) and combined with instructor feedback can contribute to student learning (Greene & Diehm, 1995). Collaboration on and coauthoring of written assignments can challenge students to reflect with each other and clearly express their thinking and learning (Crossman & Kite, 2007). In one study written reflection showed less impact than other pedagogical variations and may be more effective when used in partnership with other types of activities (Mabry, 1998).

Oral activities, or telling, should include several of the following: focus groups, peer group discussions, informal discussions, story telling, and individual conferences with faculty or project sponsor (Eyler, Giles & Schmeide, 1996; Freidus, 1997). How a discussion is structured can impact how students focus their ideas and should therefore balance personal insights with systemic exploration (Boyle-Baise & Langford, 2004). It may also be beneficial to limit group discussions to ten people for not longer than one hour (Scheuermann, 1996). Writing, reading, doing, telling all necessitate different guidelines for effective design and facilitation (Eyler, Giles & Schmeide, 1996).

In addition to activities in which students are asked to write or to tell, reflections should also focus on reading, and doing (Eyler, Giles & Schmeide, 1996). Reading activities can be varied by including case studies, books about social issues, government documents, professional journals and classic literature, directed readings. (Eyler, Giles & Schmeide, 1996, Hatcher & Bringle, 1997). Reflection while doing can include: goal based scenarios (Steinke & Buresh, 2002); simulations; art journals; role playing; slide, dance, music or theatrical presentations; interviews; planning public relations events for the agency; analyzing and creating agency budgets; and program development (Eyler, Giles & Schmeide, 1996; Hatcher & Bringle, 1997).

The structure of reflection activities can vary in other ways. They can take place in large or small groups, with partners, and/or individually (Eyler, Giles, & Schmeide, 1996; Eyler, 2001), and can be conducted in or outside of the classroom (Mabry, 1998). As either an intrinsic part of the service, such as participating in staff planning meetings, or an extrinsic part of service, such as an in-class guest participant, reflecting with community members can be very powerful, (Eyler, Giles & Schmeide, 1996). “The key to selecting reflection activities is to look critically at the kinds of ideas, exercises and experiences that connect with each individual in the group” (Eyler Giles Schmeide, 1996, p. 54).

The 5 Cs of reflection: connection, continuity, context, challenge & coaching.

Service-learning is fluid, unpredictable (Ikeda, 2000), and calls for an adjustment in pedagogical emphasis from that of teaching to one of learning (Ehrlich, 1990). Factors involved in creating a learning environment that maximize the effectiveness of reflection will be explored in the next two sections. This section reviews the literature about the necessary factors of connection, continuity, challenge, context and coaching, or the Five Cs of effective reflection (Eyler & Giles, 1999).

Connection, a central concept to the effectiveness of service-learning, should be maximized in service-learning reflections (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Service experiences should be clearly and transparently connected to course goals and

objectives during reflections (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999; Eyler, 2001; Mabry, 1998). Instead of treating service as an add-on to the course curriculum, it is essential that reflection and learning are well integrated throughout the service experience (Dubinsky, 2006; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Eyler, 2001; Mabry, 1998; Ogden & Claus, 1997).

Separation of service and reflection is a false construction rooted in a misunderstanding of how people think and learn most effectively. In it, reflection is seen as an intellectual endeavor that follows and is applied post-hoc to the more physical and social activity of service. In this way, the separation reinforces the classic and harmful distinction so often made in U.S. schools between mental and manual work, or between thinking and doing (Ogden & Claus, 1997, pp. 72-73).

In well integrated reflection, students often do not know that they are reflecting (Ogden & Claus, 1997).

Reflection should be continuous, occurring throughout the service-learning experience (Eyler, 2001; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Mabry, 1998; Ogden & Claus, 1997). Reflection before service prepares students to fully engage in the experience; during the event encourages problem solving and increased effectiveness; and afterwards allows students to evaluate the experience, integrate the learning, and plan for the future (Eyler, 2001; Eyler, Giles & Schmeide, 1996). Engaging in reflection once,

solely during the moment or after the fact is insufficient (Mabry, 1998; Rogers, 2001). Without reflection students are often unaware of their growth over the semester (Eyler, 2001). Combining on-going weekly reflection with a summative reflection gives students perspective of their development over the semester and enhances moral and civic outcomes (Mabry, 1998). “It is through multiple opportunities for service and reflection that students have the opportunity to test and retest their ways of understanding and thus to grow and develop.” (Eyler & Giles, 1999, p. 184).

Reflection should be appropriate for the context of the service-learning experience (Eyler, Giles & Schmeide, 1996). How formal or informal to make the reflection should be based on the setting in which reflection occurs (Eyler & Giles, 1999), the topics covered, the proximity to the service site, and the inclusion/exclusion of community members (Eyler, Giles, & Schmeide, 1996). For example, while students may not feel comfortable reflecting about personal frustrations at the service site, a discussion about relations between the college and the service site could benefit from being within the context of the site (Eyler, Giles & Schmeide, 1996). In an academic service-learning course, in-class reflection appears necessary for academic learning (Mabry, 1998). The messy context of a community setting provides students the opportunity to reflect on how to apply tools, concepts and facts and is in this way integral to learning (Eyler & Giles, 1999).

Service should provide students with a new experience or new information that challenges their current perspectives (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Mabry, 1998). Sometimes when providing service students can be unaware when their intentions do not match their behavior and furthermore can be unconscious of this lack of awareness (Menlo, 1993). In order to move beyond superficial understanding towards more complex insights and ways of observing reflection in a service-learning course should be structured to be challenging and analytical (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Mabry, 1998). However, the challenge should meet the needs of the student and not be overwhelming (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Without sufficient support, a challenge “is likely either to discourage the student or lead to the rejection of new insights and information so that the student falls back on previous ways of viewing the world” (Eyler, & Giles, 1999 p. 185).

Students may need to be taught or coached on how to reflect (Dubinsky, 2006; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Freidus, 1997; Menlo, 1993). A clear understanding of expectations, learning outcomes and assessment processes combined with regular feedback is helpful to this process (Hatcher & Bringle, 1997). To move students away from superficial dear-diary type journal entries, a rubric can guide students in their learning reflective practices (Welch & James, 2007). Specific skills that may need to be taught include: reflective listening, asking authentic clarifying questions, seeking feedback about one’s behavior, acuity in observation, and mindfulness in

thinking (Menlo, 1993). In addition to learning the habits of reflection, students may need to learn how to conduct and summarize their experiential research, and to become fluent with the issues related to their service (Dubinsky, 2006).

It is clear that when students do not know how to reflect they need to be taught (Freidus, 1997), however, the amount of guidance needed depends on students' learning styles and skills (McEwen, 1996). Some students who have previously completed many courses where reflective practices were taught may still be confused about the process (Freidus, 1997). More highly structured reflection activities may be particularly helpful for those with less experience and skills (Hatcher & Bringle, 1997; Higher Education Quality Committee, 2006). Although students may prefer the flow and spontaneity of less structured activities, a specifically structured and guided activity to teach reflective practices may be a necessary intervention and can increase the students' metacognitive abilities, skills and effective engagement (Freidus, 1997). Once students become comfortable with a specific reflection process, they may no longer need the same structure and may find it restrictive. (Freidus, 1997).

In order to enhance their learning, students may need emotional and intellectual support (Eyler & Giles, 1999) including the opportunity to discuss their service experience with their teacher, other students and/or site supervisor (Mabry, 1998). While reflection activities that are led by other students, community partners

or other non-faculty can be effective learning experiences, teachers should lead some of the reflection activities in order to be sure to provide clear expectations and guidance of reflective processes (Hatcher & Bringle, 1997). Because less learning occurs when groups are facilitated by a fellow student, the key to enhancing peer led reflection may be to use careful advanced planning with the teacher (Rogers, 2001).

The most effective reflections are “continuous in time frame, connected to the ‘big picture’ information provided by academic pursuits, challenging to assumptions and complacency, and contextualized in terms of design and setting” (Eyler, Giles & Schmeide, 1996). They also include coaching in the form of emotional and intellectual support (Eyler & Giles, 1999).

Other factors of quality reflection.

In addition to connection, continuity, context, challenge and coaching, other factors that may impact the quality of reflective practices in service-learning include the service site, emotions, the students and the faculty.

There is significant variation in types and quality of service experiences (Mabry, 1998) which in turn impact the quality of reflection and learning (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Enhanced learning outcomes result from sites that provide students with: 15-19 hours at the service site (Mabry, 1998), frequent contact with service beneficiaries (Eyler, Giles & Schmeide, 1996; Mabry, 1998; Rhoads & Neururer, 1998), and the opportunity to discuss service with their site supervisor (Mabry,

1998). On the other hand, community members may share their own unconscious biases with students, which makes it important to both prepare students for this possibility and to carefully plan for students to interact with a wide range of community members (Boyle-Baise & Langford, 2004). The amount and type of feedback a student receives from the service site (Eyler, 2001) and whether or not students are involved in planning along side community members (Eyler, Giles & Schmeide, 1996) are also factors to consider. Whether intrinsically part of the service placement or part of the classroom experience, when students and a community member reflect together students can gain powerful insights (Albert, 1996; Eyler, Giles & Schmeide, 1996; Ogden & Claus, 1997).

In addition to factors about site selection and placement it is important to consider the role of emotions throughout the service-learning process (Felten, Gilchrist, & Darby, 2006). The literature largely downplays to role of emotions, usually assigning them the role of catalyst of rational thought and learning (Felten, Gilchrist & Darby, 2006; Ikeda, 2000; Welch, 1999). Given the difficulty students may have in integrating new experiences it is important that students feel safe expressing their emotions (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Welch, 1999). Additionally, ignoring the emotional component of service-learning “may lead students to do their most difficult course work alone” (Felten, Gilchrist, Darby, 2006, p. 43). If students are anxious, do not understand guidelines, and/or do not have skill in reflecting, they

can become each others emotional cheerleaders instead of challenging each other to think deeply and reflectively (Freidus, 1997). Similarly, some students need to be encouraged and supported in taking risks (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999; Freidus, 1997). Learning to trust one's self, each other, and the group process helps create a synergy that can increase students' willingness to take risks, ask for clarifications, critique peers and share one's own ideas (Freidus, 1997).

Students from diverse ethnic and social class backgrounds may need to be assured that the teacher is genuinely interested in multiple perspectives (Crossman & Kite, 2006). For some students the word reflection may connote an uncomfortable religious context and should be replaced with less emotionally charged phrases such as check-in, discussion, or thoughts and opinions (Scheuermann, 1996). Similarly, if students previously had a negative experience with service-learning they may find it difficult to approach reflection openly (Ogden & Claus, 1997). Students from diverse backgrounds have varied communication skills, learning needs and experiences with reflection, collaboration and community service all of which must be respected and supported in order to engage them in critical reflection (Crossman & Kite, 2006).

Some students easily and naturally engage in reflective practices while others resist (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999; Ikeda, 2000). Ways to stimulate engagement of everyone including reticent students should be sought out (Boyle-Baise & Langford, 2004). In designing reflection activities it is important to consider how students

structure knowledge (Steinke & Buresh, 2002) and the different assumptions they bring with them (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999; Trosset, 1998). Rather than desiring to engage in a process of critical reflective thinking through investigation of the sources of discomfort or puzzlement, some students may prefer a discussion in which their opinion is not questioned as they advocate for their own beliefs (Trosset, 1998). Students may expect to be handed answers, and therefore have a negative reaction when asked to openly engage in reflecting on perspectives that differ from their own values (Rogers, 2001). It is important to remember that service-learning pedagogy asks students to move out of their traditional passive role and actively reflect on their emotions, opinions and personal experiences (Ikeda, 2000).

Likewise, faculty are required to become reflective practitioners (Hatcher & Bringle, 1997). In this shift from focusing on teaching to an emphasis on learning, teachers must face their own beliefs and emotions about learning (Felten, Gilchrist & Darby, 2006), understand the significance of reflection (Ikeda, 2000), value students' experiences as primary, model reflective practices such as self disclosure and vulnerability (Rogers, 2001), risk looking critically at their own tacitly held beliefs and embrace being one person of many engaged in dialogue (Freidus, 1997). Teachers must be willing to adapt in the moment to the unpredictable results that occur when individual students engage in community service (Rogers, 2001). They also need to recognize and utilize opportunities to engage students and service

recipients in meaningful reflective exchanges (Ogden & Claus, 1997). Such a shift in pedagogical approach is essential if reflection is to be truly integrated instead of an add-on (Rogers, 2001).

To make the shift from a traditional teaching pedagogy to that of reflective practitioner can be challenging and frustrating even for a highly skilled educator (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Nsibande, 2007; Rogers, 2001; Welch, 1999; Welch & James, 2007). Further complicating the process may be an unconscious disconnect between an educator's teaching philosophy and practice (Nsibande, 2007). In order to help teachers be successful with the challenge of engaging students in integrated and meaningful reflective dialogue they need tools such as templates or rubrics (Welch, 1999; Welch & James, 2007) as well as training and institutional support (Eyler & Giles, 1999).

Reflection and alternative spring breaks.

Structuring reflection on week-long immersion service learning trips, or Alternative Spring Breaks, poses its own particular challenges (Albert, 1996). In this section I will first look at important considerations of structured and/or unstructured reflection opportunities before, during and after the trip. I will then examine the literature about curricular and co-curricular Alternative Spring Breaks and how this difference may impact the reflection process.

Before the trip begins there are several things to consider. The variation of student motivation for attending Alternative Spring Break trips can positively or negatively impact learning and overall group synergy. (Boyle-Baise & Langford, 2004). Some form of team building before the trip begins should be used to create a sense of group cohesiveness (Rhoads & Neururer, 1998) and a greater desire to share on a personal level with a diverse group (Boyle-Baise & Langford, 2004). Additionally, the site selection process is a good time for students to pre-reflect on expectations and preconceptions (Albert, 1996; Eyler, 2001). All of these factors will impact the quality of reflection during the trip.

Different challenges towards reflection emerge during the trip. “Although many settings offer rich opportunities for interaction, reflection, critical thinking and learning, some issues and sites may require greater student preparation and support than others” (Albert, 1996, p188). Housing with service recipients or host families can provide opportunities for informal conversations that broaden perspectives and encourage reflection while group housing can foster unstructured reflection in the evenings and on daily van rides to service (Albert, 1996). Group journals can offer a structured question of the day to reflect upon, or an unstructured place for students to semi-anonymously record their reflections (Albert, 1996). If the group splits up to work at different sites during the day, evening reflections in which students share

experiences, emotions, and deep impressions can lead to teachable moments that enrich everyone's learning process (Rhoads & Neururer, 1998).

With guidance of peers, staff and/or faculty, students can construct meaningful learning about themselves, others and community (Rhoads & Neururer, 1998). During reflections and service it is important for staff to model an openness to experience and a willingness to take emotional risks (Rhoads & Neururer, 1998). It is also important to provide time in the field for reflection of critical incidents that arise (Boyle-Baise & Langford, 2004). After the trip students may need support in integrating their immersion experience with their pre-trip lifestyle (Eyler, 2001).

If the trip is co-curricular it is critical to integrate reflection into the flow of the experience (Eyler, Giles & Schmeide, 1996). In co-curricular service-learning much useful reflection is informal, taking place naturally, for example, between peers or during the van ride home (Eyler, Giles & Schmeide, 1996). In this more relaxed setting, students may protest if reflection is structured in a way that it feels too formal or school-like (Eyler, Giles & Schmeide, 1996). In this case it may be helpful to encourage students to put their experiences into a wider context (Eyler, Giles & Schmeide, 1996). To help integrate reflection into the natural fabric of the co-curricular experience, team leaders can intentionally stimulate reflective conversation on the van ride home by sharing a personal impression of the day and

asking for feedback, or by encouraging students to share their impressions throughout the trip with a buddy (Eyler, Giles & Schmeide, 1996).

A week is a limited amount of time to provide in-depth learning about an issue, especially with a social-justice framework (Boyle-Baise & Langford, 2004). In order to deepen understanding of relevant issues, some Alternative Spring Break programs sandwich the trip in the middle of an academic class (McElhaney, 1998; Rhoads & Neururer, 1998). In curricular models “readings, presentations, projects, research reports, and other written assignments can serve as catalysts for reflection. However, the type of immersion experience may dictate the use and nature of additional reflective methods.” (Albert, 1996, p. 191).

In a comparative study of curricular and co-curricular Alternative Spring Break experience several differences were found (McElhaney, 1998). The curriculum-based trip resulted generally in a greater number of outcomes, and specifically in deeper knowledge of issues, development of community problem solving skills, more positive affective outcomes, greater empathy for the situations of community members and more profound, long-lasting friendships (McElhaney, 1998). Students on the co-curricular trip maintained more distance with the community even though they were living within it and more often experienced feelings of frustration, tiredness, and helplessness (McElhaney, 1998).

Even though it is difficult to identify causality of these outcomes in part because of the different motivations and attitudes towards learning of the two student groups, it is clear that reflection was a critical piece (McElhaney, 1998). While the curriculum-based group participated in evening reflections, the co-curricular group went out on the town in the evenings (McElhaney, 1998). In addition to reflections, the significant difference between the two groups seems to be class time and readings, which gave the curriculum-based group background on and language about the issues in order to better understand and discuss their experiences (McElhaney, 1998). Reflection in the curriculum based trip also allowed students to challenge each other's lack of empathy and understanding and to better comprehend multiple perspectives (McElhaney, 1998).

Summary

Whether curricular or co-curricular, academic, intensive, immersion, short-term or a one-time event, high quality service-learning balances the two elements of service and learning in order to enhance both. The bridge between these two components is reflection (Dewey, 1933) which is an essential part of the experiential learning cycle. Kolb describes this cycle as fully and openly engaging in a new concrete experience, engaging in reflection and observation from many perspectives, creating abstract conceptualization by integrating observations into logical theories, and active experimentation in order to solve problems or make decisions (Kolb,

1984). As such reflection is best integrated into the process of learning and doing instead of added on as a separate activity. In this way reflection actively engages students in examining their preconceptions in light of a new situation in order to integrate the new understanding (Rogers, 2001).

Represented by the hyphen in the term service-learning, reflection is the key to successful learning outcomes, including academic, cognitive, personal and social (Dubinsky, 2006; Ikeda, 2000; Ogden & Claus, 1997). In fact omitting reflection from a service experience can negatively reinforce pre-existing stereotypes and ideas (Blyth, Saito, & Berkas, 1997; Ikeda, 2000; Mabry, 1998). The quality of the reflection process is critical and reliant on a complex and interdependent set of factors (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Reflections can be “guided and open, structured and unstructured, critical or descriptive, incremental or cumulative, formal or informal” (Mabry, 1998, p. 43). They should involve a variety of writing, telling, reading, doing (Eyler, Giles & Schmeide, 1996), allow for different learning styles and should include the five Cs of reflection: Connection, Continuity, Context, Challenge & Coaching (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Other factors that influence the quality of reflection include the service site, students’ emotions, the students and the faculty. In particular, students and faculty both need to be willing to engage in a reflective contract and move from a more traditional role of student and teacher to that of reflective practitioners.

Although these are factors that can affect the quality of reflection for all types of service-learning, we must move “from a one-size fits all service-learning to service-learning as a pedagogy carefully modulated to specific disciplinary and interdisciplinary goals.” (Zlotkowski, 1996, p. 171). Co-curricular and curricular Alternative Spring Breaks, as a week-long immersion service-learning experiences, may each call for a particular combination of factors that make up quality reflections. To this end, this thesis asks the question: What are the perceptions of a selected group of northern California university students on their reflection experiences during an alternative spring break co-curricular service-learning trip?

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This research utilizes a case study approach to focus on a selected group of northern California university students' perceptions of their reflection experiences during an alternative spring break co-curricular service-learning trip. On the week-long student-led trip I was both the primary investigator and the instructor of record and as such acted in the research role of participant observer. For this case study I gathered information about students' experiences through pre- and post-interviews, participant observation, field notes, and document analysis.

Because co-curricular service-learning experiences are informal experiences with little to no academic assessment, this case study began with the intention of identifying learning outcomes of students on this co-curricular alternative spring break (ASB). Pre-interviews were designed to assess prior knowledge and experience that could then be compared and contrasted with students' understanding expressed during post-interviews. However, as this ASB trip progressed the component of daily reflection stood out as an important dynamic to examine more closely. The trip evaluations confirmed students' negative perceptions of the structured reflections as a critical component of the trip. Because of this, I modified

the research and redesigned the post-interview to include two additional questions about both formal and informal reflection experiences on the trip.

Data analysis focused on students' perceptions of reflection and resulted in identification of six themes about the student participants (forced reflections, prior experience with reflection, lack of relevance and challenge, structure of service, contextual factors, group dynamics), three themes about student leaders (reading the group, understanding the goals of reflection, leadership team dynamics) and one theme (lack of reflective paradigm) about all of the students.

Setting

This student-led trip took place over a six-day period during the University's Spring Break. The trip's themes of sustainability and community influenced the choice of site, which had a concentration of organic farms and was the home of a student leader, Jess. The group of 15 students and I set up camp on the undeveloped property of Jess' family. We camped in tents, cooked and shared meals, drove two vans to daily service sites, had daily structured reflections and enjoyed sitting around a fire in the evenings. This was the first time the university sent a group to this area.

In order to give students a range of experiences and lenses about sustainability within this rural community, service was at a different site every day. The sites and service included: weeding and composting on a small organic farm,

planting a hedgerow on a cattle ranch, planting trees and preparing a garden space at a middle school, doing restoration work in a nature conservancy and weeding on a large organic farm. In addition to providing service at these sites, students were given tours or talks about each site in relation to issues of sustainability. Students had limited opportunity to interact informally with community members. Additionally, we attended two one-hour educational talks: one at a local Rancheria about the history of the local tribe and one from a local Latina health worker about Latino farm workers.

The trip was led by three students. Fall semester these student leaders met weekly with me as their advisor to choose a theme, a community to visit and service sites within that community. Together they coordinated the recruitment of students, fundraising efforts and all of the necessary logistics for a trip of this magnitude. Students recruited at the beginning of Spring semester joined the leaders in the fundraising and planning efforts. This was the first time any of us planned a trip like this. Reflection activities were not planned ahead of time.

Based on the emphasis on reflection in service-learning and the positive impact of daily structured evening reflections mentioned in *Alternative Spring Break: Learning Through Community Service* (Rhoads & Neururer, 1998) I asked the student leaders to lead structured daily reflection activities in the evenings. These were planned on the trip usually the same day as the reflection. The student leaders

acted independently for these activities for the first two days and then planned the remainder in consultation with me. On Tuesday and Thursday of ASB the four of us sat down to plan a detailed agenda for the day's reflections. I fully participated in these reflections and took notes about the reflections shortly afterwards.

The following chart delineates each day's service and reflection activity.

Table 3.1

Service and Reflection Activities by Day

Day	Activity/Service	Reflection Topic(s)/Questions	Form	Setting
Sun	Drive to site & set up camp	Morning: Hopes and expectations ----- Evening: What makes you happy/what's one thing about you you'd like to share?	Talking Stick ¹	On campus standing near the vans ----- After dinner around fire
Mon	Tour of small organic farm. Service: Farm work	What did you learn today/what are you thinking about?	Popcorn style ²	After a late dinner ³ approx. 9-10 pm. around the campfire
Tues	Morning service: Planting hedgerow on cattle ranch Afternoon: hour slideshow & lecture about history of the local tribe	What is your impression of... 1 st round: ...a community? 2 nd round: ...the organic farming community? 3 rd round: ...commercial farmer/rancher community? 4 th round: ...tribal community 5 th round: ...how all three communities work/live in the larger community?	Concentric Circles ⁴	Standing in two concentric circles around campfire. Facilitator participated ⁵

Table 3.1 continued

Day	Activity/Service	Reflection Topic(s)/Questions	Form	Setting
Wed	Morning service: planting trees and gardening @ local middle school Afternoon: hour conversation about Latino farm workers	What does it mean to be part of a team? (How does this relate to our theme of community? ⁶)	Blind Jumprope ⁷	On grass in school yard, standing in circle after activity. Popcorn style discussion
Thurs	Morning: service at conservancy district in groups that did not rotate (picking up trash, weeding, protecting trees from beavers with chicken wire) No tour/talk. Afternoon: tour of small goat farm & cheese making demo	What is the vision of a sustainable community from each community group's perspective (organic farmer, rancher, tribe, conservationists, Latino farm workers)? ----- What is your vision of a sustainable community?	small group assigned topic of one community group's perspective ----- large group	Late around campfire with a last minute change in plans about how to facilitate this & mistake in facilitation question. ⁸
Fri	Tour of large organic farm. Service: Farm work	What do you want to remember about this trip?	Letter to self ⁹	After packing the vans right before leaving

¹Talk moves around the circle. Everyone can share or pass. There's no interruptions or cross talk.

- ² Popcorn Style discussion: anyone who wants to talk does so in any order.
- ³ The first day of camp life a schedule was not established, consequently dinner & reflection were late.
- ⁴ Inner and outer circles face partners who talk then rotate to the next partner for the next question.
- ⁵ Mike was sometimes so engaged in conversation that he left people waiting for instructions.
- ⁶ The facilitators ran out of time on the debrief. They did not have a chance to ask the second question relating this activity to the larger context of the week.
- ⁷ First sighted partners lead blindfolded partners through spinning jump rope. Then partners combine in small groups, and later the whole group run through the spinning rope.
- ⁸ We moved camp this evening. There was lots of energy expended taking down then setting up tents. The reflection was originally planned to be indoors with tables and electric lights. Each small group would start with one piece of chart paper with the name of a community group at the top. Papers would then be rotated among all of the small groups, so that each student group had the chance to add to all of the chart paper conversations about all of the different community groups. Because students instead opted to stay around the fire, there was no chart paper and each group was directed to specifically talk about only one specific community group. In the large group, one facilitator mistakenly asked a secondary prompting question instead of the main question, which changed the emphasis of the discussion and made the entire process longer than would have been otherwise.
- ⁹ Students wrote a letter to themselves, which was then collected and mailed to them at a later date.

Participants

In order to participate on this ASB trip, all students were enrolled in a one-unit leadership class with myself as the instructor of record. I invited all students we

to participate in the study both verbally and via a letter of informed consent. Because of my dual role of instructor and researcher, I assured students that their participation was not a requirement of the class, and that if they chose not to participate it would in no way affect their credit for the class.

Out of the 15 students who enrolled in the Alternative Spring Break Trip, 14 agreed to participate in this research study. Three of these were the student leaders, one of whom had participated in two previous Alternative Spring Break trips. Of the eleven female and three male student participants, one was Mexican-American, one was biracial El Salvadorian/European American and the rest were European American. Students on the trip ranged in age from 18 to 23 and majored in a variety of subjects from soils to education. Five of them lived in the dorms and knew each other to some extent, two were best friends, while another five students did not know anyone on the trip prior to deciding to participate. Including the three student leaders, I had previously worked with five students, who all knew each other through their leadership roles in a service-learning volunteer organization which I manage.

Data Collection

I employed multiple methods of data collection. These included pre- and post-interviews, participant observation and document analysis. The combination of these three methods allows for richer data, triangulation of the data and therefore better validity of the results (Glesne, 2006).

Pre-interview questions were based on a study reported in *Alternative Spring Break: Learning Through Community Service* (Rhoads & Neururer, 1998). In this study, the researchers' initial interviews were aimed at gathering information about students' motivations, expectations, community service experience and knowledge of the community being served (Rhoads & Neururer, 1998). Similarly, I designed my questions to inquire about students' motivations to participate in ASB and past experiences with volunteering. Because the Rhoads & Neururer study identified learning outcomes about self, others and community, I included pre-interview questions about students' prior experience in being part of a team, collaborating with others, and working with people they don't know. In order to establish a baseline for learning outcomes about the trip's themes of sustainability within a community context I included questions about students' prior understanding of sustainability and their experiences with and/or expectations about the different community groups who lived in the area we were visiting. These community groups include: organic and commercial farmers, a small Indian tribe with a Casino, Latino farm workers, and impoverished families. The pre-interview protocol included seven semi-structured questions with prompt suggestions. (See Appendix A.)

Pre-interviews were conducted with a purposeful sample of six students. Because the student leaders' experience was very different from the other 11 students and would consequently lead to different learning outcomes, I eliminated

them as potential interviewees. Based on students' applications as well as my informal conversations with them, I sorted the remaining students into three levels of prior experience with volunteering and teamwork. I chose two students (Jim and Betsy) who seemed the least experienced, two (Melissa and Joyce) with a medium amount of service and/or team experience, and one (Violet) with more than average. It turned out that Jim had much more than I realized. To compensate for this I interviewed one additional student, Joseph who had little prior experience with service and group work. In total I pre-interviewed six of the 11 non-student-leader participants: two in each of the three loosely defined levels of experience.

Ideally, informed consent and pre-interviews would have been completed before the trip began. Unfortunately, because of delays in the Human Subjects approval process, students were informed of the study right before getting in the van to go on the trip. Therefore, the first pre-interview was done after breakfast the next day. The next four interviews were carried out whenever there was enough free time to accommodate a 30-60 minute interview in a quiet space removed from the group. The five originally planned pre-interviews were completed by the end of the second day of service. The last pre-interview, which was added for balance after I interviewed the first five, was completed during a lunch break on the third day. Because most of the questions in the first interview were about experiences prior to the trip, it seemed that the information would still be useful despite the fact that

students were already experiencing a lot on the trip. To account for the potential influence on answers to specific questions, such as preconceptions of sustainability and specific communities, I asked interviewees if they thought their answers might have been different if answered before the trip started. They were all thoughtful and honest about possible influences. These comments were taken into consideration when analyzing the data. Due to technical difficulties, all of the pre-interviews were not recorded. Instead I relied on detailed notes.

In addition to interviews, I collected data as a participant observer. I spent time every evening fleshing out any daytime notes and writing detailed observations and reflections. With the exception of one structured evening reflection activity for which I was asked to be scribe and took copious notes to share back with the group, I felt it was more important to participate in the discussions than take notes in the moment. (The tape recorder I took on the trip did not work, otherwise I could have recorded all of the discussions.) Within two hours of the reflection discussion, I began detailing my field notes for the day. In addition to writing about the structured reflection activity I wrote about the day's dynamics, the leadership team, students' engagement in service, conversations about what they were learning and anything that seemed paradoxical or problematic. Because one's ability to remember the needed details for field notes quickly declines after the first day (Glesne, 2006), it was important for me to allow time every evening for this process.

I also used document analysis whenever possible to add thickness to my data. Student trip applications included information about motivation, prior experience, future goals and leadership skills. Students were encouraged to write thoughts and reflections in a group journal, which is another source of data analysis. At the end of the trip students wrote a letter-to-self, which two of the 11 students allowed me to photocopy before it was mailed to them at a later date. Student evaluations included ten questions that employed a seven-point Likert scale as well as eight open-ended questions about their experiences and learning outcomes on the trip. (See Appendix B.) The evaluations were filled out on the last day immediately before the van ride home. All of these documents combine to add different perspectives on students' experiences on the trip.

Based on information which was gleaned primarily through participant observation and the student evaluations of the trip, it became clear that many students had a negative reaction to the structured reflection activities. As a result of this, I decided to refocus the post-interview questions and ultimately this thesis on students' perceptions of reflection on the trip. For the post-interviews, in addition to asking the pre-interview questions again I added two questions about students' experiences with reflection on the trip and their understanding about the similarities and differences between classroom- and service-learning. (See Appendix C.) This

latter question was intended to assess students' awareness about of the role of reflection in service-learning.

Four of the original six interviewees participated in their second interview during the later half of Spring semester. Despite several attempts to set up interviews for the remaining two interviewees, I was not able to connect with them until the beginning of Fall semester. Despite the amount of time that had past, they were able remember a lot of details.

Given the new focus on reflection, four additional students emerged as important interviewees after the trip. Because the reflections on the trip were student-led, it seemed important to investigate the leaders' perspectives about the reflection component of the trip. In order to set the framework and have comparable data, Mike, Linda and Jess were asked the same basic questions about the trip as the other interviewees with slightly modified questions about their experience leading the group in general and reflections in particular. (See Appendix D.) These three student leaders were interviewed over the summer after the trip. One of them (Mike), because he had moved out of the area, was interviewed by phone. Additionally, another student (Maggie) from the trip emerged as the leader for the following-year's ASB trip. Because she had also participated in two other immersion service-learning trips prior to this one, I thought it would be interesting to gain her perspectives. She was interviewed the beginning of fall semester.

During all stages of data collection every effort was made to both accurately collect data and to protect student confidentiality. Due to equipment difficulty, pre-interviews were not recorded, so careful notes were taken. Instead of using participants' names in my field notes, I implemented a system of coded initials for each participant. The first four post-interviews were recorded on a handheld audiocassette, which worked well for two of the four interviews. For my interview with Violet, the recorder stopped undetected about 15 minutes early. To compensate for this, I immediately typed up my notes and memories of the last part of our conversation and emailed it to her for comments and changes, which she emailed back. The fourth interview with Joseph was inaudible in many places. Despite attempts to reschedule, he and I never succeeded in doing so. I have my notes from the interview, but some of the nuances of his perspectives may have been missed. The remaining six post-interviews, including the phone interview, were recorded with a digital recorder that worked very well. All recorded interviews, transcriptions, applications, and consent forms were stored in a locked file cabinet. Pseudonyms of these participants are used throughout this report in order to maintain their confidentiality.

Data Analysis

As I collected data I typed everything into separate documents. Pre-interview notes, field notes, evaluation responses and relevant application information were all

entered into word processing documents. The first four post-interviews were transcribed verbatim. In order to expedite the transcription process, for the remaining six interviews only the sections pertaining to reflection were transcribed verbatim, the remaining sections were transcribed more loosely with gaps in wording noted in such a way that the substance of the conversation was captured. This ensured my ability to return to the original data if during analysis an exact quote turned out to be relevant.

As themes emerged I developed a color coding system. I color highlighted relevant quotes and sections on hard copies of each document, which I then used as a guide to compile data groups by themes in a word processing document. Through this process several themes salient to reflection emerged. They were: individual motivation, group and leadership team dynamics, formally structured reflection including the feeling of forced reflection, students' idea of the benefit and best type of reflection, factors that are perceived to influence reflection, and the leadership team's perspective.

In working on the analysis of this data into categories about student participants, I finally settled on the following six themes about the student participants: forced reflections, prior experience with reflection, lack of relevance and challenge, structure of service, contextual factors, group dynamics. Additionally, I identified three themes about student leaders: reading the group, understanding the

goals of reflection, leadership team dynamics. Ultimately, there was one theme, the lack of reflective paradigm, that applied to both student participants and student leaders.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter presents research results of students' perceptions of reflection experiences on an Alternative Spring Break co-curricular service-learning trip. Central to answering this question are student comments about reflection activities on the trip evaluation forms. In addition to providing thick description of these student comments, I will outline data from interviews, participant-observation field notes, and document analysis in order to reveal many complex layers of perceptions of reflection on this ASB.

Because of the complexity of students' perceptions of the reflection activities, I will begin this chapter with descriptions of students' motivation for attending the trip, the group and leadership team dynamics and specific dynamics of planning the reflection activities. After explaining students' perceptions about the context in which reflection occurred, I will include detailed descriptions of students' reactions to the structured reflection activities, the feeling many students had of being forced to reflect, students' perceptions of the benefits of reflection, and their comparison and contrast of ASB's informal conversations with the trip's structured reflection activities. I will also provide data regarding students' perception of factors that influence reflection. The final set of data in this chapter will focus on the three

student leaders' perspectives on the reflection on this trip. Their perspectives will be sorted into the following: the benefits of reflection, perceptions of structured reflection activities, and leading reflection. This last category includes sparking conversations, reading the group, improving the reflection element of ASB trips and training for leading reflection.

Motivation

In their initial applications, students indicated a range of motivations for participating in this ASB trip. These included an interest in volunteering, learning about sustainability, traveling to a new place, having something to do over break and meeting new people. Half of the students mentioned the importance of having something to do over break as one of their primary reasons for attending ASB. Meeting new people was mentioned solely as an extra, not as a determining factor. Every student mentioned either an interest in learning about sustainability and/or interest in volunteering as a primary motivation for participating in this ASB trip. The following chart breaks down volunteers' motivation based on these two different interests.

Table 4.1

Volunteers' Interest in Sustainability and Volunteering

<i>Interest in Sustainability</i>			<i>Interest in Volunteering</i>					
<u>High(H)</u>	<u>Medium(M)</u>	<u>Low(L)</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Medium</u>	<u>Low</u>			
3	5	3	6	5	0			
<i>Interest in Sustainability/Volunteering</i>								
<u>H/H</u>	<u>H/M</u>	<u>H/L</u>	<u>M/H</u>	<u>M/M</u>	<u>M/L</u>	<u>L/H</u>	<u>L/M</u>	<u>L/L</u>
1	2	0	4	1	0	1	2	0
Violet*	Melissa* Rebecca		Laura Maggie* Jenny Joyce*	Mary		Jim*	Joseph* Betsy*	

* = interviewed (Maggie participated only in the post-interview)

The interest levels cited in this chart were determined through a combination of analysis of applications, field notes, and interviews. For both sustainability and volunteering, a high interest was indicated by a direct statement from the student as well as a demonstration of some depth of prior knowledge/experience as an area of interest. A medium interest was indicated when students named the area as secondary in importance and/or described it in general terms as something to learn about with no previous depth of understanding indicated. Students categorized as having a low interest either did not state the interest or stated it as unimportant.

This difference in interest level was also evidenced in comments students made about various activities. For example by Friday's tour of the second organic farm, and our third experience with different hedgerows, Betsy's (L/M) comment was:

I probably know more than I ever wanted to know in my life about hedgerows.... We learned about them when we planted them at the cattle ranch and then we went to Blue Bird Farm and Heather gave us that intense talk about them, and I was like 'I already know about hedgerows. I don't care.'

Another student, Violet (H/H), who volunteered on an organic farm and who in general was disappointed with the lack of depth of information on the trip commented:

Blue Bird Farm was great. That woman Heather was really animated and loved what she did which was refreshing to see. And she had a lot of information too.... I learned about hedgerows. They're a really good thing that I didn't know about.... That was good to learn about. And something that I can easily apply to my living situation.

These two students represent the range of interest students had in the topic of sustainability.

Group Dynamics

Overall students got along well, enjoyed each others' company and bonded as a group. All six of the interviewed students agreed that the group worked well together. Five of the six also mentioned that they were impressed with the diversity of majors, ages and interests that were represented on the trip and enjoyed hearing and getting to know people and their different perspectives. Melissa felt this was important:

I think if 15 people, all relatively good friends did the same thing, I really don't think it would have been as enriching of an experience. I think it was good that we were all just kinda like strangers for the most part. We knew each other vaguely. It was pretty cool.

There did not seem to be any cliques to the exclusion of others. Whether in the van, around the campfire or elsewhere, there were open conversations with whoever happened to be around. Students gravitated towards the fire until late at night, some who talked more and some who mostly just listened. Jess recalled, "Most everybody sat around the campfire at some point."

Mary and Violet were noticeably less present in the whole group during free time. Maggie talked about Mary's shyness: "We all knew that she was really quiet, so we were trying to get her involved in everything that we were doing." Mary reflected that she got along with most of the other volunteers, enjoyed herself, and

“made the best decision in how to spend my spring break.” Violet described herself as a self-imposed outcast until halfway through the trip when she decided to participate more as part of the group: “The people who were on the trip, weren’t people that I would normally socialize with. I just didn’t feel an instant connection with them, or really relate to them well.... I guess I was a little bit judgmental at first.” As the week went on she decided to connect more: “I’d just go sit with people and talk with them, interact, joke around, see what they thought of the trip.” Jess, one of the student leaders picked up on Violet’s reticence to join the group, encouraged her to do so, and felt over all that the group dynamics came together in a positive and natural way.

Jess also noted Jim’s different motivation for being on the trip:

He didn’t really care about sustainability. Hot dogs, he doesn’t know where they come from. I think he had a really different view of the trip than other people.... I know he had fun. Different people get different things out of the experience. Some people open up their eyes to working on a farm, or if they should start buying organic food, or ‘I worked hard and had fun and I don’t really care about organic food.’ It’s just, people are different, but as long as everybody has fun and gets something out of it.

Contrary to Jess’s perceptions, Jim learned a lot about sustainability as he immediately started talking about in his interview. Referring specifically to the same

conversation with Jess he talked about how he'd like to be able to eat more organically:

Like Jess said. To eat from people that you know. She knows where she gets her cheese, she knows where she gets her beans or something, she knows her butcher. That's how civilization grew up. I mean there were small towns and everybody knew everybody and what everybody did....There's a lot of benefit to the smaller.... It's more sustainable. Both for earth and also for us.

Some students were more engaged than others in reflective conversations about the things they were experiencing. For example, Mike and Rebecca often had passionate conversations about issues emerging from their experiences on the trip. These two students came to the trip with a more complex understanding of the issues, were taking classes that related to the topics, and were also interested in pursuing careers that tied in to the trip.

Conversations about sustainability and experiences on the trip were always happening. Melissa explained how a conversation would continue from day to day:

Conversations that would begin maybe the night after, you know, an activity or something like that, around the fire, but then would continue over into the morning. They would bear relevance to what we had actually been doing. It wasn't just all like, talking about favorite movies or something like that you know. It was, people bringing in ideas. I wish I could think of some

examples. There were some really like poignant observations that were made and I felt like there were themes that were being entertained.

The leadership team also noted how well each day's activities built on the next, how people were initiating discussions, making connections, and having similar conversations to the ones they had had during the trip planning stage. Melissa found it "...invigorating to see that people have so much more to say and have so much of a different spirit than you can really calculate from a brief interaction."

Like the flow of conversations over the course of the week, service work also flowed extremely well. Jim's comment sums up what most of them expressed: "I think the group was amazing. Everybody as an individual has something to bring to the group. They have their own stories, their own personality, their own characteristics. But when we came together and worked, we worked as one solid team."

Students offered various reasons for the group bonding that occurred. "I think the key thing is having a campfire at night. It just brings people together." Linda, one of the student leaders felt students came together primarily through the fundraising before the trip and then from just hanging out together. Three student participants all echoed the importance of the pre-trip meetings and fundraising as a bonding experience.

Melissa expressed surprise at the group's cohesiveness and theorized that coming together because of similar interests "was kinda like the initial glue or something." Linda and Jess agreed that the group came together naturally. On the other hand, Mike the third leader, felt that leadership plays a role in determining group dynamics. He expressed the importance of "setting up the atmosphere so that people can actually share" in order to help create a cohesive group. He echoed the other leaders' feelings that "we had an incredible group of people. They're really cool.... you never really know who you're going to get."

Maggie, a participant on this trip, felt that the group dynamics could have been stronger if they had had more time to get to know each other before the trip:

The thing that I remember most was the first dinner.... Everyone is a little wary of each other, no one really knows who this person is, what they believe in, and they didn't want to offend anyone at the very beginning, so we didn't have much conversation. It was, not awkward so much, but it was definitely quiet. So I think if we had already gone through that awkward, 'we don't know what to do, we don't know what to say,' I think it would have given more opportunity for conversation from the very beginning to the very end. We could have been discussing what we were expecting for that day or the next day, so, it was just quiet. That was a big thing that stuck out about the group dynamics of the trip.

The anonymous evaluations also revealed some challenging aspects of group dynamics. One student expressed that “The whole trip was challenging.” Another mentioned that the most challenging aspect was “being part of the group because I was distracted by thoughts concerning non-trip stuff, and I did not feel motivated to join.” The most challenging aspect for one student was trying to get everyone to work together effectively without getting angry.” In response to a question about teamwork, some of the students’ comments were:

1. It’s been a while since I’ve been on a ‘team’ and a big thing that I’ve noticed is having to work around other people and sometimes just let things go that may bother you, because it doesn’t help anybody to fight.
2. That people who create stressful environments affect everyone.
3. It’s hard! Small groups work best.

One student summed up the challenge and the reward with the comment, “I now know that anything is possible.”

Although there were these challenging aspects of the trip, the evaluation comments were predominately positive. Nine out of twelve evaluations mentioned the significance of the group bonding experience and their making friends. For one, an important part of the trip was “creating relationships while trying to pitch a tent.” Another student wrote, “I recall fondly an evening back at camp. Four of five chopped, cooked, cleaned, while others dug the fire pit. A little village we had.” For

one student the experiences on the trip “taught me how to work with other people.” For another, the best part was “bonding with friends because we all cared about the same cause.” Positive comments also included: “when you put a group of strangers together they will bond and become their own community.”; “It was nice to do physical work with people as a bonding experience. Teamwork happened most with things like packing and food.” and “I met 16 other amazing people.”

Leadership Team Dynamics

Half of the twelve evaluations noted difficulties within the leadership team. They noted lack of communication, a disconnection between me and the three student leaders, the indecisiveness of the three leaders and long drawn out decision making processes. One student mentioned that “sometimes I didn’t feel like Jess was a part of the group, just leading.” Another noted “It seemed that Linda and Jess were very exclusive and secretive.” Positive comments included that they “got along really well,” “cared about everyone’s opinions and respected our decisions” and that overall there was “good execution and enthusiasm.”

All three of the student leaders expressed that they worked well together. Jess explained that she loved working with the other two because “We all had our different areas we were focusing on, we would check with each other about things, help each other.” Mike appreciated their openness with each other and their ability to work things out as they went along: “We didn’t have the organization like pretty

much ready before the trip, so we were kinda figuring it out on the fly. We were able to do that quick enough I think.” Linda expressed that “because we all worked together we were able to do a lot more.” Specifically in terms of reflections, while the team worked to plan them, they did not recall any debriefing of the reflection activities after they occurred.

On the other hand, interactions were rather mixed between the student leaders and myself. During the post interviews all three explained that it was sometimes challenging to work with me. Jess spoke about the tension she felt between her desire to let things be free flowing and my desire to have them be more organized. Jess and Linda also both reacted negatively to my suggestions during the trip that we remove ourselves from the rest of the group to check in and plan. They felt that it was wrong to leave the group and “go off in secret” in that it created a separation between them and the other students. Jess surmised that our differences in priorities stemmed from our different roles as student and staff. Linda agreed that it was stressful for her to feel my emphasis on details when she was more oriented on the big picture. At the same time she also expressed appreciation for my orientation to details. “There were a lot of things that the three of us didn’t think about.” The tension was perhaps most pronounced within the context of structured reflection. This aspect of our interactions will be discussed in detail in the next section.

Formally Structured Reflection

Evaluations show a problem.

Unexpected comments on the student evaluations were the impetus for changing the focus of this study from learning outcomes to students' perceptions of reflection. Even though the evaluation questions did *not* ask about reflections, seven of the twelve student participants felt reflection activities were a significant enough part of the trip to mention them. For example, in answering a question about how the trip informed their understanding of community, one student mentioned that she liked the reflection on that topic. When answering a question about the leadership team, another student observed that "there seemed to be some difference of opinion when it came to reflection activities." The remaining five comments used words such as "forced," and "long" to describe their dislike for the reflections. One complained that the organization "abuses reflections and plans excessively." Another student said that reflection was the most challenging part of the trip: "Some of the questions were too specific or too broad that I felt I was giving the wrong response. Other times I felt like I was put on the spot."

Leadership team on planning reflections.

During the post-interviews, the student leaders talked to me honestly about our interactions in planning the structured reflections. Mike felt that the largest problem between the four of us came down to reflections. "I think it started to get a

little bit daunting when it was like structured, which, I mean it makes sense because you want to have it planned out, you don't want to kinda have frivolous questions of people." He went on to explain:

I think, or at least the impression that I got is that you were worried that we were going to fall short on the educational and the sort of reflection pieces. And so you really wanted to get that going, but from us, from our perspective was like well how are we going to structure that? I kinda felt that, talking with Linda and Jess I sort of got the same impression from them like that it's not as easy to structure it.

Talking to me, Linda explained that in coming up with reflection activities for the day "it was really helpful when you sat down with us and helped us, because, we couldn't think of any." Jess felt very frustrated with what she felt was an imposed expectation:

Jess: "I was already feeling like it wasn't working, structured reflections. So it was kinda hard to plan those because I felt differently, that we should just all sit around the fire."

Lorena: "Did you verbalize that? I don't remember."

Jess: "Well, I think it was posed that we had to have a reflection every night, so I just tried to do the best with it."

Although I did my best to coach from a professional and emotionally neutral place, the tension they felt was real, as I was also frustrated. Here is an excerpt from my daily notes during Tuesday's lunch break, which at that time were focused on learning outcomes instead of reflection:

Is the lack of preplanning the learning component of this trip the reason people don't seem as engaged? Will I find they've learned anyway? Could we be doing more to set up the experiences so that the learning would be deeper?

My struggle with student leadership: I hope to be able to talk to them tonight re: reflection activity. Linda and Mike are letting Jess take on the bulwark of the leading. I think the reflection could have been stronger – more could have participated... or do I just let it happen without forcing? How to balance between planting seeds, tending the garden and giving it time to grow?

Overview of Reactions to the Reflection Activities

Interviews of student participants confirmed a general dislike of the structured reflection activities on the trip and at the same time revealed many complexities. Of the seven student participants interviewed after the trip, one generally liked the reflections, one felt mixed about them while the other five had an

overall negative reaction to them. When discussing the activities in detail, all students had positive things to say as well.

The following chart, (of which the first four columns are explained in the methodology chapter) summarizes six students' interview comments about the specific activities. (In interviewing Melissa, I neglected to prompt about the specific reflection activities and so have no data on this.)

Table 4.2

Summary of Students' Comments on Activities

Day	Reflection Topic(s)/Questions	Form	Setting	6 Students' Interview Comments (number = # of students)
Sun	Morning: Hopes and expectations ----- Evening: What makes you happy/what's one thing about you you'd like to share?	Talking Stick	On campus standing near the vans ----- After dinner around fire	No one recalled or commented on these
Mon	What did you learn today/what are you thinking about?	Popcorn style	After a late dinner approx. 9-10 pm. around the campfire	1 - liked open format 5 – not mentioned.
Tues	What is your impression of... 1 st round: ...a community? 2 nd round: ...the organic farming community? 3 rd round: ...commercial farmer/rancher community? 4 th round: ...tribal community 5 th round: ... the entire larger community?	Concentric Circles	Standing in two concentric circles around campfire. Facilitator participated	5 – the best activity 1 – “forced” but “kinda worked”
Wed	What does it mean to be part of a team? (How does this relate to our theme of community?)	Blind Jumprope	On grass in school yard, standing in circle after activity. Popcorn style discussion	3 - fun activity, a good metaphor & reminder, unproductive discussion 1- insultingly elementary

Day	Reflection Topic(s)/Questions	Form	Setting	6 Students' Interview Comments (number = # of students)
Thurs	What is the vision of a sustainable community from each community group's perspective (organic farmer, rancher, tribe, conservationists, Latino farm workers)? ----- What is your vision of a sustainable community	small group assigned topic of one community group's perspective ----- large group	Late around campfire with a last minute change in plans about how to facilitate this & mistake in facilitation question.	2 - not mentioned 3 - long, late, uninspiring, boring 2 - good conversation, good structure 1 - good conversation, too structured
Fri	What do you want to remember about this trip?	Letter to self	After packing the vans right before leaving	2 - tired, didn't know what to write 1 - goofy, cool 3- not mentioned

Tuesday's concentric circle activity on the topic of community was clearly received as the favorite. All six students agreed that they enjoyed the one-on-one aspect of the discussion. Jim stated that "It's one of the better reflections I saw on the trip because there's more personal interaction." Betsy appreciated talking "to

everyone at a different level” and felt they had interesting conversations “because that one was a little bit more structured.” Maggie on the other hand, while appreciating interacting with others and acknowledging that she learned “a few things” complained that the conversation felt forced and “it just didn’t work out.”

Violet also had a mixed reaction to the activity:

It was kinda drawn out because some of the questions were kinda similar, but at the same time it’s good to talk to different people. I guess it was kinda good that it had similar questions, because you could talk about the same idea or concept with different people and hear their ideas. It kinda influenced your opinion and stuff. And so that was good because it got you thinking about what other people thought.

In terms of process Jim felt that “the questions were just the tip of the iceberg. Enough to get people talking with each other. Once you’re talking with a person, then you create your own questions and answers and stuff, and there’s more interaction about the question you’re trying to answer.”

Students had the most negative things to say about Thursday’s reflection activity on vision of a sustainable community. Betsy found the entire activity long, drawn out, too late in the evening (after moving camp) and uninspiring: “It was late and I was tired and I was tired of doing reflections....I think my group had to talk about the Native Americans, and I didn’t really know what their vision for

sustainability was. So therefore I didn't really know what to discuss and it just seemed really long." Joseph found it "kinda hard" and Jim thought it was "...just kinda alright. My group wasn't that enthusiastic because we had migrant workers and I'm not too enthusiastic about the subject. I understand it. I grasp the concept. It's not my favorite topic. I would have much rather been with the organic farmer group, or the conservation group."

While Maggie felt that Thursday's activity prompted a good conversation she also felt it was too long and too structured: "It was like question, everyone answers, everyone answers, everyone has their response, next question. Everyone, everyone answers. There wasn't just like conversation. There was bullet points of questions to be answered."

Others enjoyed Thursday's activity. Joyce liked both her small group conversation and the large group debrief: "It brought all the things from the week that we learned together and gave us time to think about what we now think about this sustainability thing." Violet also appreciated the small group discussion "because rather than a big group kinda just touching the surface of just like everything, getting into groups so that just a few people can penetrate deeper into that specific thing like the Rancheria... That was good because it was a little deeper and more thought out."

Students expressed mixed responses to the rest of the week's reflection activities. For Betsy the most memorable was Monday night's open-ended discussion, which she felt had more discussion than with the other evening activities. Especially in contrast to the other more idea-oriented activities, most students appreciated the fun interactive game approach to Wednesday's activity. Joyce felt that it demonstrated a good point about the importance of teamwork. Betsy felt that because she'd participated in lots of teambuilding activities during Girl Scouts that "the discussion wasn't as meaningful to me." Violet did not like the activity at all because she's "done this five times in elementary school I'm kinda done with that." On the other hand, Maggie loved the jump rope reflection:

The jump rope reflection was awesome.... You can't always be learning and serving. You gotta take some time out for just fun. So it was a good way to laugh with everyone. That's a big thing.... And then blindfolds, we had to trust each other. So when we did the one line [running through the jump rope], I don't know, that was a really good reflection.

Friday's letter to self also had mixed reactions. Joyce appreciated the opportunity to write down her thoughts in the moment and recalls that she was in a goofy mood. The two students who allowed me to read their letters before mailing them both took the prompt seriously and reflected on their learning from the trip. On the other hand, both Betsy and Jim expressed their dislike for the activity and how tired they were at

that point. Betsy explained her mood “I’m not so good at the letters to self. ‘Yeah. I’m on ASB, where I just don’t know what to write.’” Jim felt that it “reminded him of 8th grade” and added that “I was a little bit delirious, because I didn’t sleep too well the night before. So I have a feeling I’m going to get a rather entertaining letter. At that point I was also done with the trip. I wanted to go home.”

The feeling of “forced reflection.”

Many students complained about the structure of reflections. In this regard, three of the interviewed students used the word “forced” when explaining their difficulty. Maggie expressed how “it feels like we’re being forced...[when] the conversation doesn’t feel as real as a regular conversation.” Joyce explained “If we’re all talking by the fire anyway and then it’s like ‘Okay. stop everything. We have to do this, and this is what you need to do.’ That was forced.” Melissa commented:

I could have been tricked into reflecting. I think that we could have ended up reflecting without the formality of like, now we’re going to reflect. And I felt like that broke the pace or the rhythm that we had. And then it would end, it would be like, now we’re done reflecting.... I feel like that shouldn’t have even been verbalized.

Melissa explained that, because the reflection questions asked about topics they were already thinking about, natural transitions would have been better.

Other students also expressed the belief that reflection is a natural process that cannot and should not be forced. For Joyce it “was kinda hard to be forced to reflect because I think just the act of sitting around the campfire inspires that anyway.” Similarly, Maggie explained about a structured reflection:

I think the conversation just goes there without having a structure, because if we don't feel like we are being, not so much judged or graded, it's kinda like, more, open and free-form instead of just super structured. Let's go deep because I'm asking this question instead of going deep because people talking about it want to go deep.

Along with feeling that reflection cannot be forced, some students felt put on the spot. Joyce explained that when posed a basic open-ended question it can be hard to come up with something to say:

I guess the one where everyone is supposed to go around the group and say what you learned, that's what feels forced because it's like, 'Oh my God I've gotta think of something that I learned,'...I think when it's such a generic [question] and in such a [predetermined] order, your answers are a lot more generic because the inspiration is not really there to say something original.

Both Maggie and Violet echoed this idea that going around the circle can make someone nervous about having to speak or nervous to the point that they aren't able

to formulate thoughts to share. Maggie summarized: “When you are forced to talk, it’s better that you don’t talk, because you don’t know what to say.”

A couple of students mentioned that they would prefer to reflect individually at their own pace. Violet explained that while the reflections on ASB felt forced, she liked reflecting in general.

I think it’s very useful. But for me it’s not something where everyday I have to write in my journal; everyday, I have to think and reflect. It’s just something that comes naturally. So I’m not going to force it if I find myself in a situation where I’m by myself and I’m meditating or just thinking I’ll write it down afterwards.

Jim echoed the idea that there was too much structured reflection on the trip: “To be honest, I didn’t like the constant reflection.... I find that more reflection isn’t necessary with the group. But it’s you just looking at what has happened, what you learned. Yes if your sitting it does help to facilitate that, but it’s more of a personal thing.”

Over the course of the interview, Maggie shifted her thinking a bit about the use of the word forced. When she was explaining that the concentric circles activity felt forced, I asked her to explain what she meant by the word. Her response was that: “We all knew it was going to be reflection time. We kinda had a joke, we were reflecting on reflecting. We just knew at the end of the day we had reflections. So

concentric circles was kinda... It's more structured. Forced and structured have blended in my head." After a bit more conversation she concluded, "So I guess forced was a big, strong word. A bit too strong for it [concentric circles]. But it was a little too structured for the feeling of the night and just sitting around a campfire, when it could have been conversations."

Like Maggie, over the course of their interviews Betsy and Joyce also revised their complaints about structured reflection. Betsy started out saying that she didn't really like the reflections:

Sometimes it felt like people wanted to talk and other times they didn't really want to. And I think that really kinda happens when people are like, dead tired and like 'Do I really have to learn about hedgerows some more? I don't care about the hedgerows.' So I don't know, I think that there were times when we were really up to the whole reflection thing and there were other times when we were like, 'can't we just go to bed?'

When asked about the specific reflections each day she responded that she liked "a more unstructured kind of learning" and the ones that were "more of like a guided discussion as opposed to the ones where we had to answer a specific question." Later on during the interview after talking about each reflection activity and realizing that they "were all really kinda helpful." I reminded her of her comment at the beginning of the interview about liking unstructured reflections more. Her response was "I

should have said less structured as opposed to really structured situations.” Through the course of our interview Joyce also realized about the reflections that “there were things I liked about them.” She went on to explain that the difficulty was “just the we’re-doing-this-now thing... and then there’s sometimes the one that you’re not that into.”

Students’ idea of the benefit of reflection.

While there was a general dislike of structured reflection activities, all seven of the interviewed student participants expressed the value of reflecting. There was a general agreement that reflection is about learning from other people and making you think deeper. Joseph recognized that the reflection activities challenged his thinking more than simple conversations. Jim appreciated that reflection provided the opportunity to interact and learn:

One of the things that’s beneficial in my mind, is relating experiences to another person. Because it’s kinda like trying to teach another person. You learn most when you’re teaching. You experience most when you’re experiencing for someone else. It’s reflection when you’re trying to get a certain impression of someone else or an experience. That’s when you do the most learning yourself.

The others agreed that the best reflections expose you to other perspectives, help you gain insights, stimulate your thinking, and make you think at a deeper level. Betsy

felt that the structured activities on ASB met their goal, “even the ones I didn’t particularly like, because we did think about and talk about things, it was just too long.” Joyce expressed conflicted feelings about reflections:

[it] forces you to come up with your own things that you learned and like say your own things instead of being taught at and then being tested on what you’re taught.... so I think that’s good. [But] learning is good when it’s more of a discussion off of each other’s thoughts instead of just formulated questions, like going around the circle.”

For Maggie, during the best reflections:

everyone is passionate....They’re using their own experiences to defend their viewpoints. Like they say I saw this and I think people can change this by doing this and this and this. They’re using their experiences from the things they had just experienced in the past few days, the past day...And then everyone else just throwing those together so it’s just topics flying everywhere and everyone’s ideas flying above everyone.

From Jim’s perspective, “When we got into the group situation, I listened to what everybody else was saying, I reflected then. So when I wasn’t necessarily talking or putting forth effort to the group, I was thinking about it.” He felt that, small group discussions and personal reflections on one’s own time are better than “sitting around the campfire hanging out and just having one person talk. Everybody else is

thinking, yes. The person who's talking is trying to express what they felt. But I have the feeling it's not the most effective way to go about reflection." He agreed that "to think and reflect on your own without necessarily a structure is more liberating than asking specific questions."

Conversations viewed as the best reflection.

All seven of the interviewed student participants preferred unguided conversations over the structured reflections. Joyce commented: "I see how the reflection is trying to, like it inspires that, but... sometimes it feels like it happens on its own." For Maggie "conversation is the biggest reflection.... You learn things I never would have thought about, other people's opinion... and then that changes your, and then it just shapes you." Joseph stated that reflection "challenged your ideas more, where the side conversation was just like friendly chatting or learning little new things. But with the being there and talking about it, I was usually good."

Melissa felt that conversation provided opportunity for the best reflection

Because I think some of the best reflections were on par with very good conversations, they were kinda the same... I think it's just a little bit different, when you have the context of being asked a question, and it seems structured, it influences your ability to share. But then if you take that element away for some reason, people just want to talk, people want to talk more when you're not having an activity. An activity seems like something to

get through. I don't know why that happens, but I felt aware of that to a degree.

Violet offered that if she were running ASB, she would not include reflection activities but would instead sit down for more natural discussions.

Maggie had a lot to say about reflection not only from the perspective as a participant on this ASB trip, but also as a student leader of a volunteer program and as a participant in two other immersion Service-Learning trips during which she felt the leaders prompted conversations that flowed with open-ended questions to start things off. On ASB Maggie explained that there was one night in particular when

we had an outlined reflection first and then it went into a regular conversation which was basically questions and then we were just talking about it. We just went off and we started this big conversation which I thought was the best.

We talked for hours... So that was the best reflection. It didn't feel forced.

In terms of leading ASB herself, Maggie agreed with Violet: "I wouldn't have specific talking points. If we needed a prompt, then we could have specific prompts to maybe start it, but if we don't need those prompts then we don't need to use them. I would definitely schedule free form conversation." During this reflection as free-form conversation Maggie would actively facilitate in order to provide openings for the shy students to participate:

If you just ask the people that were quieter what they think and give them time instead of having to jump in with all of the people talking which is the scariest thing, having to jump into a huge pool of people ... you don't want to put people on the spot... but if you just ask questions, don't ask so direct... kinda give her time to say it her way.”

Other Factors that Influenced Reflection

Besides the tension between structured and non-structured discussions, students mentioned other factors that also impact the quality of their reflection experiences. Betsy and Jim both mentioned that it is more difficult to process information with lack of sleep (staying up late, cold nights camping, early morning service, etc.). Jim added that time is also an important factor in gaining new understandings:

Sometimes it isn't even immediate. Even now I still go back and say 'Hey that was cool.' I've looked back on things that have happened even a year ago and start realizing the connections. And everyday you assimilate your interactions with people. It all just piles on to the same pile, kinda like compost. There's a whole bunch of crap that gets piled and eventually if you keep turning it, it'll turn into good stuff. I tend to think that sleep and time are the most beneficial things.

Additionally, my field notes describe Friday's service as a time ripe with connections, but lacking of student energy. After the tour and service at Blue Bird Farm, which was on the morning of our last day, I wrote: "There were so many good connections made for me then. Especially what Heather was saying about corporate policy driving farming practices. What a mess we've made of the world. It was also very clear that the group was tired and burnt out on the idea of reflection."

Mike noted that "people feel a lot more motivated, especially when it comes to the reflection activity if they feel like their service actually means something and that they can use it in their own life." Maggie felt that learning more beforehand would have enhanced the experience:

If you're informed when you go in, it makes that experience so much better.... It gives you like the broader understanding.... I think there'd be a little more learning if we'd had packets or papers or even just learning objectives. That would be a lot more structured. Definitely I think learning objectives would be cool.

Along similar lines, several students mentioned connections they made on the trip to academic courses they were enrolled in that semester. Course topics that enhanced students' connection to the ASB experience included: Ethnic Studies, Political Science, Soils, Native American Studies, and Technology and Development.

Encountering an issue that is thought provoking can also lead to richer dialogues. After sitting through an uncomfortable, mostly-disliked, hour-long talk and slide show at the Rancharia, both vans were full of animated discussion. Maggie explained:

Just coming out of the Rancharia I was overwhelmed... Even though we didn't spend much time there, I think that sparked the most conversation and the most thought.... I think we have our own personal bias towards what a reservation is, and how they live. I don't think any of us were expecting them to be that rich. I thought it was interesting that they were SO rich.

Maggie also felt that discussions would have been deeper with a better sense of group cohesion. "When you're more comfortable with people, you say more things and you feel like these people will understand you better." In this regard the amount of interaction with local community members was a factor. Jim spoke about this in terms of the local tribe:

I'd like to get in touch with the people. Kinda like how I went on this trip. I learned about the Valley. I knew the Valley was there, I knew there was a community there. But I have experience in the Valley now. I know the feel of it. I can understand the people more. I wanted to get some more of that experience with the native tribe.

My field notes also captured Jim's desire to talk directly to a Native American who was approachable in a setting that allowed for time to get to know each other and ask honest questions.

Maggie reflected about the importance of connecting with local community members: "When you add people to anything, it's going to be a more robust interaction. Especially when they're really different from you. That's one of the key components of the *learning* too. You want to learn from other people." Based on her experiences on other immersion service-learning trips to Canada and Arizona Maggie knew that interactions could have been a lot deeper on this trip. Recalling powerful conversations with individuals who she'd "never forget" from the other trips, she explained that on "ASB we didn't interact that much with the people or with kids it was more LEARNing and some interaction, as opposed to ALL interaction in Canada. Arizona was interaction and learning, but less." She explained further: "When you talk to the people about their situation... you get to hear... opinions on the situation that you would never ever hear if you didn't talk to the person."

Like Maggie, some students offered insights stemming from other immersion trips they had been on. Both Betsy and Violet recognized that the bonding on this ASB trip was not as deep as bonding that they had experienced on other trips. For Betsy "it wasn't quite such an in depth thing.... [On ASB] we talked about what's

going on now and how that affects us more so than like ‘why we are the way we are,’ which you tend to get in more church retreats.” Violet believed during a high school immersion adventure trip she was: “more willing to openly participate in the reflections because I was passionate about the people, the topics and the experiences that we were discussing. The reflections dealt with strategies or topics that we dealt with everyday so they were more meaningful and pertained to our everyday life.” She also found that the structured reflections on the high school trip fit the context better because the trip and the activities had a much greater academic focus. Based on her experiences with previous trips Maggie mentioned that going with close friends, being immersed in a culture very different from her own, and the intensity of the topic being studied all have an impact on how engaging the experience is as a whole. For example, “it’s a harder hitting topic with poverty than with sustainability. Sustainability isn’t so much dealing with disparities.” This made the other trip more challenging and therefore had more of an impact.

Leadership Team’s Perspective

Benefits of reflection.

All three student leaders agreed that reflection is an important tool for connecting service and learning. For Jess, reflection should allow people the space to express their own opinions and thoughts about “what we did that day and what we learned and how that ties together with the service that we did.” Mike explained that

reflection is “pretty much the bridging point between the service and the learning aspects of it.” For him, a good reflection is structured in a way that “gives people a reference point to look back on,” helps them synthesize information, and contemplate how the experience relates to their own lives. Mike explained that people should be made aware they are reflecting: “You want people to realize that, if they’re going to be using reflection activities themselves or if they’re going to use reflection in their own lives, that the purpose of the reflection is what’s really important. How it’s structured is up to them.” Linda expressed that “having structured reflections helps students really think about what they learned more and maybe vocalize it.... It helps it stick more or it helps you realize what you’ve learned. So I think reflection is good.”

Perceptions of ASB’s structured reflections.

Jess, Linda and Mike shared some common perspectives about reflection on this ASB trip. They also differed in their analysis. During the trip they did not debrief any of the reflection activities. However, by the time they were interviewed, they had all read the student participants’ trip evaluations and debriefed with each other about the trip. They acknowledged that this feedback influenced their perceptions. They attempted to identify when they were speaking from the experience on the trip and when they were speaking from the information on the evaluations. Because I interviewed the student leaders during the summer their

recollections were not as vivid as the participants who were interviewed immediately following the trip.

When asked about the specific reflections on ASB Jess only remembered the concentric circles activity, which she likes in general because “you talk to a lot of people.” She did not remember the other reflections but summarized them as “a lot of questions and going around talking about things and it didn’t feel very good.” She recognized that “we could have done a better job in thinking about the questions, because some of them ended up being redundant.”

During reflections she observed that students’ answers “might have been really short, whereas if we were sitting around having a discussion on whatever we did that day, or some issue that came up, it just felt a lot more natural, instead of like, ‘okay, here’s a question, everyone go around the circle and answer it.’” She explained that

one of the hardest moments for me everyday was when it came to reflection.

Because I think it was really forced on them a lot of times. I feel like in that situation simply sitting around a campfire talking about what we did that day would be enough reflection on a daily basis, you don’t have to do an activity.

Having heard some students’ comments on the trip and having read the evaluations afterwards Jess summarized: “It just didn’t sound like it was engaging to them.” She explained that in general she has “no problem with reflecting.” However, she did not

like the structure of the reflections on this ASB trip. Jess did not feel empowered as a leader in this regard “I’d have done it differently but ... I had to do reflections.”

Mike only recalled the two reflection activities which he thought were the best. One of these was Tuesday’s concentric circles reflection which he thought went well enough aside from his difficulty simultaneously facilitating and participating. Mike also thought that Wednesday’s jump rope activity was successful in that it was “a good change of pace.” When asked how the activity helped the students reflect, he responded that it reenergized everyone. He added that he enjoyed asking people to reflect on the dynamics of working together and “to actually just reflect on how the trip has been going thus far. I thought that was kinda cool.”

Out of the three student leaders Linda was the most animated and recalled the most detail about the daily reflection activities. More than the other two she brought up logistical issues about leading reflection. From the concentric circle activity she concluded that the facilitator should not participate in the activity they are leading. The negative comments about the jump rope activity on the evaluations lead Linda to reflect that some of the students’ resistance might have been because it was “something small. Maybe they were more ok talking about sustainability and talking about the activities that they did and the farms that they went to and service sites, but just a 15 minute activity I don’t think they really were into talking about it all that much.” Based on Thursday’s activity, in which she had planned to have groups write

on chart paper, Linda concluded “I think when you’re camping it’s really hard to do any type of activity. I think it’s better to just sit, maybe talk around the campfire and have it more relaxed. It’s hard to put up paper and have people write things.” She explained further that “earlier that day some of the students said that they wanted something more relaxed, and that sitting around the campfire was the best. I think the first night we did something more relaxed, asked them what made them happy, or something like that, and they liked that a lot better.”

Linda felt that while structured activities are good for helping people make connections, “without them, I think people would still realize what they’d learned.” She could tell that students were learning a lot “just by watching them over the week and during reflections...just little things that they would say seemed to show that they got something out of each day.” She went on to show her mixed feelings about structured reflection by saying, “I think everyone reflects naturally at some point but a part of service-learning is reflecting.”

Mike’s leadership role in informal reflection.

In addition to helping lead the structured reflections, Mike also played an intentional role in facilitating informal reflective conversations. Melissa recalled:

on the drives back from activities and stuff like that I rode in a car driven by Mike kinda often. He would talk about things that he’d been learning in his political science classes in light of the activities on the farm and stuff like that

and other people would join in. There were pretty good conversations just based on that. It wasn't like, you know, we're just going to turn it off the second we leave. It seemed to kinda flow throughout the entire trip.

Mike explained that he intentionally initiated these discussions in order to “spark up conversations so that people can lead it on their own and to give them ownership, especially with conversations. I don't ever see it as being that structured. Let's be very genuine, and speak from whatever your position is.” He excitedly recalled how Joyce and another student actually came up to him at the last farm to talk about what they were seeing: “They were sort of synthesizing the information too like, comparing and contrasting the different methods that were being used.” As a facilitator, Mike explained that it is important to encourage the natural leaders to “keep the ball rolling themselves.... The role of the leader is more like walking around and having conversations with people.” Mike pointed out that this was especially true for the handful of quieter people who are less likely to engage on their own. “I didn't realize how important it was until this trip.”

Reading the group.

Through the experience of leading this trip all three student leaders recognized the importance of reading the group. Linda was very surprised after reading the trip evaluations: “I didn't feel like I was bored learning about what we were learning. I guess some other people thought it was redundant.” She reflected

about the students' experience of reflections as forced: "Some of them were [forced]. Like we came up with some ones that we really liked and we really wanted to do." She explained that sometimes, like with the jump rope activity, they read the group wrong. Jess also mentioned on more than one occasion the importance of reading the group. Mike thought about reading the group and "the question of what it means to facilitate." He noted that by observing the group:

you can kinda tell. Are people getting tired of this stuff? When you say reflection, what's the expression that they wear on their face? That's how I would guide time for the conversations and how I would guide maybe what's appropriate for this particular reflection activity based on that group energy.

Mike suggested that before the trip starts it would be good to get to know the group enough to understand what high energy for this group looks like. This would be a "good reference point to what they look like when they're having fun." Linda emphasized that "The main thing is learning to read the group and go from there, that's like one of the big things."

Jess' Insight

For Jess this notion of reading the group deepened over the course of our interview. This began with her revealing that she had formed her opinions about reflection from her experience on two previous Alternative Spring Break trips. On one of these trips there Jess felt that there was no difference between the participants

and the leaders on that trip in part because most of them knew each other within the context of other cocurricular service-learning experiences at the University. On the other hand, a lot of students on this ASB trip were new to both each other and to service-learning. In comparing this year's reflections to previous ones she concluded "There were probably a lot of the same activities, it's just that the group was different. Like I'm pretty sure we did concentric circles." Comparing and contrasting the trips in detail prompted Jess to shift her ideas about reflections:

Well now that I'm thinking about it, I'm thinking that could have been why the reflections were so different. Because most of us on the other trips were familiar with this type of reflection and so it was just kinda like, oh yeah. blah blah blah. If it's completely new to you, it might feel kinda forced.

On the other hand, students who are familiar with the idea of reflection activities who have "already done this sort of thing know you don't have to stay exactly on topic."

Jess went on to consider that leaders of people new to reflection might need to "make it more normal for them, like just sitting around talking or pair up with another person you haven't talked to, versus like, some new structured thing that may feel kinda awkward for someone who's never done that sort of thing before." Jess reflected that for those new to reflection it would be important to introduce the idea "slowly."

like maybe building up the structure and varying it too. Starting with something with a lot of structure where they have to speak in front of the whole group about something that's really specific they might be like, 'oh man this is what reflection is, I don't want to do service-learning.'

Leadership team's thought on improving reflection.

All three leaders felt that structured reflection should be a part of ASB and shared their ideas about how they would make improvements on this year's structure. Linda suggested that instead of organizing reflection activities every evening, it might be better to do them after each service "because maybe they're more energized from the day, and it's light out so that we can do bigger activities." Jess preferred the idea of organizing a structured reflection every other night and then one at the end. She especially thought the paired reflections were effective. For Mike reflection on a trip like ASB "should be worked into pretty much every day" being sure to vary how structured it is. This should begin with a structured reflection to set the tone and expectation and then alternate with "more just free flow conversation around the campfire." Mike explained further that "when you have a week of people together you need to just switch it up or else it just seems like the same thing over and over." It is important to avoid a "trap with the whole structure thing." He explained that "if you over use the structure then people will focus on the structure and they'll start to turn it off," which is what Mike saw happen on the trip.

Linda explained that reflecting on camping trips is especially challenging, “I think if students are into it, they could get a lot more out of the structured one, but it’s really hard when you’re camping....So I think on that kind of trip it’s better just to talk to them and like come up with questions.” She went on to explain that you don’t want to have open-ended conversations every night “because then the quiet ones never really get to talk. I don’t think I’d do paper and pencil or anything like that. I would probably do things around the campfire, break them into pairs and small groups. Or yeah, probably just more questions, maybe some journaling.”

Jess agreed that structured reflections are important if you want to provide a chance for everyone to speak:

Sometimes if you have a conversation around the fire, not everyone is going to say something. So I guess if you want everyone to say something you make it so you go around the circle or whatever. I think having a structured activity isn’t necessarily bad, I just think every night is a little bit much.

Jess felt that without structure everyone would still have a chance to reflect. “It’s just a matter of them feeling comfortable enough to share.” She went on to say that “It just really depends on the group and what you want them to get out of it.”

Jess attempted to explain how to best come up with reflection questions: “Think about what you would want to talk about that day and then have the reflection based on that, instead of like, well here’s our topic and making it so

structured.” She struggled to figure out if questions should be more or less specific: and then went on to emphasize the importance of not being too repetitive while at the same time recognizing that repeating information helps ingrain concepts.

Linda and Mike recognized the impact leaders can have on reflection. Linda thought it would be better if the reflection activities were prepared further ahead of time and leaders “were more into them.” She also recognized that being “more organized without being controlling” would be important: “like at night, having everyone sign up and starting dinner at a certain time, so we would have time for everything: to eat and then reflect before it got to late and then have more fun afterward.”

While Mike thought it would be good to plan reflection questions to fall back on, he felt that it would be important to incorporate the days experiences into the evening reflections:

Some of the more interesting questions or discussions that I ended up having I wouldn't have known until we actually went out to the service site.

Because... actually being out on the farm or out doing the restoration work, seeing how that actually went, I mean that's when I started to get some of the questions for the reflection activities. So... I guess you could structure it in a way where you have questions you could fall back on to if you needed to.

Ideally for Mike the leaders would then revisit this plan and modify it based on the day's service experience.

According to Mike, one of the biggest setbacks they had on the trip was “organizing who was going to be doing reflections.” He felt that having more planning time would have helped significantly: “I started to realize having more planning time so that you can actually deconstruct the structure. So you know what you want to ask of people, you know what you want to get out of it, but at the same time, making it really fluid.” In other words, this construction and deconstruction of the activity helps the facilitator keep in mind the goals of the reflection and therefore makes it feel more fluid and less like “busy work.” Mike explained that this is “easier to say than to do.”

Leadership perspectives on training.

During their interviews, I asked all three student leaders how well prepared they were as student leaders and if they'd recommend any additional training in terms of leading reflections. While Jess felt prepared, Linda was surprised that she did not feel as prepared as she had expected to be: “We did some reflections throughout the year, but I guess they just didn't come out of me really easily.” Mike felt that his experience in leading one-time reflections before the trip gave him the “experience to go free form in the moment.” He was not sure how much more one could be trained for ASB. This was because on the trip reflections were for a “longer

period of time... and you're doing more reflection activities, you're with that same group and you can kinda see what their expressions are. I mean that's kinda hard to do prior to that."

All three agreed that the most important thing for student leaders to understand is how to read the group and adjust. Linda said, "that's like one of the big things." Jess agreed and mentioned that future leaders might benefit from talking about the individuals in the group and what they can handle. Mike felt that, "The most important things is to gauge the energy of the group. Make eye contact with them. See what are their expressions? Does it look like they're into this sort of stuff? I mean if they kinda give that blank stare sort of thing, it's kinda hard."

Summary

Before analyzing the results, I will recap the main findings listed in this chapter. These include background information, student participants' reactions to structured reflection, and student leaders' perspectives on leading the week of reflection activities.

Background information about volunteer motivation and group dynamics helps ground the results in the realities of the trip. Volunteer interest and motivation on the trip varied from high to low in providing community service and in learning about issues of sustainability. Additionally, all of the volunteers indicated an overwhelmingly strong sense of positive group dynamics while noting the occasional

challenge. Part of this dynamic was the ongoing flow of casual conversations, including reflective ones on service sustainability. In terms of leadership team dynamics, while the student leaders worked well together, there was noted tension between the three of them and myself as professional staff on the trip. From their perspective, my expectation of holding daily structured reflections was imposed on them. They did not reflect together during the week or discuss their perspective with me.

Evidence of students' negative perceptions of reflection emerged initially from the trip's anonymous evaluations and was confirmed through post-trip interviews. These interviews offered insights into the sense of forced reflections and revealed many complexities. While it was revealed that students valued the process of reflection in general, they had difficulty with the structured format and felt that informal conversations were the best reflections. Interviews also revealed many complex factors that impacted the perceived quality of reflection including prior experience with reflection, perceived relevance of the topic, amount of challenge presented, timing of the reflection, group dynamics, amount of service engagement with community members, and the context of camping. All of these factors will be analyzed in the following chapter.

Additionally, results about the student leadership team were reported. Similar to the student participants, student leaders recognized the importance of reflection

and disliked the way we structured reflection on the trip. All three leaders drew conclusions about the importance of learning to read the group. Based on this group's reactions, they suggested altering the amount and flow of structured reflections on future trips. Collectively, they suggested trainings for future student leaders on leading episodic versus week-long service and reflections, learning to read the group and make adjustments, internalizing the goals of the reflection, and asking good questions.

CHAPTER FIVE

ANALYSIS

“Service-learning is anything but fixed, controllable and predictable.”
(Shumer, 1998, p. 79)

Introduction

According to service-learning literature, reflection is the key to connecting service with academic, cognitive, personal and social learning outcomes (Dubinsky, 2006; Eyler, Giles, Stenson & Gray, 2001; Ikeda, 2000; Ogden & Claus, 1997). On the other hand, the data presented in the results chapter of this study clearly indicate that on this week-long co-curricular service-learning Alternative Spring Break trip most students felt that the daily structured reflection activities impeded their learning process. Specifically five out of twelve trip evaluations, all of the interviewed student participants and all three student leaders unmistakably indicated that aspects of the daily structured reflection activities felt forced, long, uncomfortable and too structured. Given that emotions play an important role in the service-learning reflection process (Felten, Gilchrist, & Darby, 2006), it is important to analyze this wide-spread feeling of being forced to reflect. In doing so, I hope to shed light on the apparent contradiction of this study’s data with the established literature.

I will begin this chapter with an analysis of what interviewed ASB students meant by forced reflections. Included in this analysis will be what Mike described as

a “trap with the whole structure thing” or what I will dub “The Structure Trap.” In order to better understand this trap and explore how to potentially avoid it, I will examine factors that contributed to this phenomenon, analyze students’ perceptions of the value of reflection and explore their inferences about how to best create reflections on a similar ASB trip. I will also discuss the role of student leadership of structured reflection activities and the paradigm shift necessary to avoid the structure trap.

Forced Reflections

The strength of students’ negative feelings about the trip’s structured reflections is an indicator that we, the organizers of the trip, fell into the structure trap. The power of students’ perceptions that reflection was forced is clearly indicated by the number (five out of twelve) of negative comments about reflection as compared to the one positive comment in the evaluations. The fact that questions on the evaluation did not specifically solicit feedback about reflections magnifies the significance of these comments. Interviews confirmed the prevalence of negative reactions to the structured reflection times in that all students interviewed express some level of dissatisfaction with the reflection activities. Even more significant is that the word “forced” was used in three of the twelve evaluations, by three of the six interviewed student participants and two of the three student leaders. Among those interviewed who did not use the word, their general feeling of dissatisfaction with

the reflections seems to be the same as those who used the word forced. Before analyzing the factors that contributed to students' feeling of forced reflection, it is first important to take a closer look at exactly what students meant by this word and their discomfort with the process.

Five of the six interviewed students contrasted their dissatisfaction with the trip's structured reflection with their satisfaction of natural free-flowing conversations on the trip. In other words the structured reflections on this trip were perceived to confine and constrict the formulation and expression of ideas, the very opposite of what they were designed to do. Students perceived the forced nature of the structure to impact the flow of conversation and therefore limit the amount of dialogue that occurred. Implied in this, is that they could have made more connections, i.e. learned more, if the dialogue had felt more natural and open-ended.

How reflections are structured has been shown to make a difference (Mabry, 1998). On this particular ASB trip, there are four different aspects of the structured reflections that according to students limited their reflective process. These four elements thereby delineate characteristics of the structure trap.

One element is the structure of the reflection prompts. Some students perceived questions as too confining like "bullet points of questions to be answered." The prompts during Thursday's reflection about the topics which we had had limited experience with (i.e. the local tribes and the Latino farm workers) were too narrow in

that students in these groups did not have enough to talk about. Additionally, questions were perceived to be too general, such as Monday's open-ended questions about what was on their mind after the day and Friday's Letter to Self, in which students were asked to write about what they learned on the trip and what they wanted to remember, for which the "inspiration is not really there to say something original."

Forced was also about transitions, feeling put on the spot and unprepared/unwilling to reflect at a given time. Comments such as "We could have been tricked into reflecting" and the activities "broke the pace or the rhythm" clearly indicate that transitions from fireside free time to structured reflection activities felt forced. This parallels the literature that states in well integrated reflection, students often do not know that they are reflecting (Ogden & Claus, 1997). The third way students felt forced was by feeling put on the spot, in that the structure of activities, such as for example going around the circle, created pressure for students to speak when they did not necessarily want to. This connects to the above analysis of prompts that do not stimulate dialogue. Furthermore some students felt strongly that reflection is an individual process that could not be made to happen at a given time. Overall students seemed to equate the word forced with the idea of structure. As Maggie commented "forced and structured have blended in my head."

In addition to looking closely at what was meant by the word forced, it is also important to examine what students did not mean. Most students did not equate open-ended discussion questions with structured reflection because these questions did not feel forced. Their dislike of structured reflections also does not equate to dislike of the content. In fact, they acknowledged that the reflection activities provided them with some new ideas and perspectives and that the content of the structured reflection was often the same as what they were talking about in their conversations.

Some students demonstrated a lack of clarity about the difference between the structured activity and the process of reflection. For example both Maggie, a student very experienced with service-learning reflections, and Mike, one of the student leaders, referred to Wednesday's jump rope activity as a fun reflection. In this way they were confusing the activity with the reflection, which was supposed to happen afterwards during the debrief. This confirms the literature that states the differentiation between the structure of reflection and the cognitive process can be confusing (Hatcher & Bringle, 1997; Rogers, 2001).

In summary of this section, students' descriptions of the feelings of forced reflections, when the process does not stimulate connections between service and learning, have given us some insight as to what contributes to the structure trap. Some ways this can happen is when questions do not stimulate thought, either by

being too narrow or too general; when transitions feel abrupt and interrupt informal reflection already occurring; when students feel put on the spot; and when they are not individually prepared and/or motivated to reflect. Referring to the focus on the type of activity such as jump rope or concentric circle, Mike reflected about all of this: “if you over use the structure then people will focus on the structure and they’ll start to turn it off.” This equation of the structured activity with reflection instead of a means to reflection is a structure trap.

Other Factors Influence the Perceived Quality of Reflection

In order to examine how to potentially avoid this structure trap it is important to understand the complexity of factors that students perceived as impacting the quality of reflection on this trip. Similar to the complexity of factors that impact quality service-learning reflection outlined in the literature review of this thesis, students identified several factors that contribute to the quality of reflection including: prior experience with reflection, perceived relevance of the topic, amount of challenge presented, timing of the reflection, group dynamics, amount of service engagement with community members, and the context of camping.

Prior Experience with Reflection

Results of this study indicate that it may be important to consider students’ prior experience with reflection in order to avoid the structure trap. On this trip student leaders were very familiar with the idea of reflection yet unaware of the need

to read the group. Student experiences with service-learning reflection ranged from those who had little to no experience with intentional reflective activities to those who were very comfortable with the process of reflecting about service-learning. The feeling of forced reflection came from both of these groups but for apparently different reasons.

Jess' suggestion that ASB students who were new to reflection probably felt awkward and forced because they were being asked to do something unfamiliar seems to be one worth considering. Jess surmised that students new to reflection activities would not know how to take the initiative to adapt in the moment to small group or partner questions that were too narrow or general. This could certainly result in feeling confined by the prompt. For these students, as Jess pointed out, there is a need to make reflection "more normal for them" so that they understand and enjoy the structure instead of feeling turned off by it. The literature suggests that more highly structured reflection activities may be particularly helpful for those with less experience and skills (Hatcher & Bringle, 1997; Higher Education Quality Committee, 2006). However, given student experiences on this trip, it is important to realize that one cannot only focus on the structure with students new to reflection, or one may fall into the structure trap.

As a leader on the trip, Jess knew that the reflections were feeling forced, but did not realize that some students were not familiar with the role of reflection in

service-learning. Consequently she could neither explain the situation nor attempt to adapt in the moment (even if she had felt empowered to do so). All three student leaders did not discern between the needs of students new to service-learning and those with experience. For example, Maggie, who was also very vocal about her dislike for the structured reflections, was an old-hand at co-curricular service-learning and possessed the skills, experience, awareness and motivation to reflect with impromptu conversations throughout the trip. It seems likely that her perceptions of being constrained by the questions may have resulted because she already knew how to make connections and found that the structure limited her desire and ability to have conversations that flowed and bounced with everyone's ideas. This seems to reinforce the literature that states students who are comfortable with a specific reflection process, may find the structure restrictive (Freidus, 1997). For Maggie and other students with experience reflecting, the structure trap seems to involve forcing them into a structure too confining for their skill level.

Lack of Relevance and Challenge

Another factor that appears to contribute to the structure trap is a lack of relevance and challenge provided for in the reflection's structure. For example, Tuesday's reflection specifically focused on students' perception of community and Thursday's on their vision of sustainability. During these reflection activities students were not invited to share connections they were making other than those

that directly related to the questions asked. Just as Jess and Mike had no idea about the extent of what Jim had learned about his own personal relationship to food, I wonder how many connections made by individual students were not shared with the group because of the structure chosen for reflections. In this way, how many potential connections were lost because students did not have much structured opportunity to learn from each other's insights?

It seems that ASB students did not find the structured reflections as relevant or challenging as the informal discussions on this trip. Many of the trip's impromptu discussions, such as the one about the guilty feelings of eating a banana and the difficulty of shopping in a sustainable way, included many more personal connections that seem to have provided both more relevance and more challenge. Connections to academic course work also occurred much more frequently during informal conversations. In general the more buzzing and thought-provoking conversations happened informally. Alternately reflections such as the jump rope activity and the Letter to Self were compared to elementary school activities. This lack of challenge could have greatly contributed to students' perception that the informal conversations were more valuable than the structured reflections. How much more relevant and challenging would the structured reflections have been perceived if they could have focused on the "really poignant observations that were

made and... themes that were being entertained,” as Melissa stated occurred during the informal conversations?

Another part of our difficulty in creating challenging reflections that connected service and learning outcomes may have been that outcomes were only loosely established. As one student commented: “I think there’d be a little more learning if we’d had packets or papers or even just learning objectives.” While the trip’s themes were community and sustainability, we did not all agree that a goal of the trip was to draw deep and meaningful connections about these themes. This is the same challenge Scheuermann (1996) and McElhaney (1998) identified for co-curricular service-learning because it lacks the structure of an academic class. If on this trip we had developed the themes into stated learning outcomes and asked students to agree to their importance, we may have provided more of a bridge for students to be more receptive to the structured reflections.

As is evident by the results of this study, we often fell short of this goal to challenge students to make deep connections. Hindsight has shown me that we did not follow established best-practices of creating reflections to maximize meaningful connections (Eyler & Giles, 1999), balancing personal insights with systemic exploration (Boyle-Baise & Langford, 2004) and providing challenging and analytical reflections (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Mabry, 1998). Our over reliance on our self-imposed structure somewhat constricted students’ thoughts instead of allowing

for maximizing the strong, relevant and challenging connections that were made. In this way it seems that the lack of opportunity for students to share many of their insights with each other during structured reflections contributed to the forced feeling and is part of the trap that needs to be avoided.

Structure of Service

Another factor that seems to have influenced students' perceived quality of reflection was the lack of opportunity on this trip to interact with community members. This was pointed out as a missed opportunity to have "a more robust interaction" and would have created more fertile opportunities for exploring "harder hitting" topics such as poverty, racism and cultural differences. Personal or honest questions that felt uncomfortable to ask during a group tour or talk could have been asked one-on-one at a time and place that felt appropriate for each individual. As it was, I saw some of these questions go unasked in the large group setting. This seems to confirm the assertion that "the more intensive a student's service-learning experience is the more profound and complex are the possible outcomes" (Albert, 1996, p. 184) and that enhanced learning outcomes result from sites that provide students with frequent contact with service beneficiaries (Eyler, Giles & Schmeide, 1996; Mabry, 1998; Rhoads & Neururer, 1998).

When adopting another ASB's structure of nightly reflections, I did not take into account the significance that on the other trip students split up and worked daily

in and alongside members of an impoverished community (Rhoads & Neururer, 1998). In that situation it seems that there may have been much more need for these nightly debriefs to reflect on their cross-cultural experiences. Hindsight allows me to see that trying to impose this structure onto the less emotionally challenging topic of sustainability and a service experience with hardly any individual interaction with community members may have been partially responsible for the feeling of forced reflection. In this way our reliance on a pre-established structure was part of the trap.

Contextual Factors

Another aspect of the structure trap on this trip was the fact that in designing the structure we did not consciously recognize that this trip's context is very different from service-learning's typical academic curricular focus. In other words, we did not fully take into account the context of a co-curricular week-long camping trip. During interviews this distinction emerged as important not only in terms of the non-academic informal setting but also in terms of the amount of conversation that flowed throughout the trip and the timing of structured reflections.

Because the trip's structured reflections did not fit into the rhythm and pace of camp they were perceived as disjointed, interrupting and abrupt. Based on these experiences, students emphasized that it is important for reflection to feel like a natural part of the trip. They explained that on a camping trip it is better for reflection to be "more relaxed," with a "more minimal introduction to it and

departure from it,” and with a conversational tone. As Linda, a student leader explained: “I think if students are into it they could get a lot more out of the structured one. But it’s really hard when you’re camping.” This parallels the research that states co-curricular reflection should be integrated into the flow of the experience or else students may protest that it feels too formal or school-like (Eyler, Giles & Schmeide, 1996). Instead of doing so, we trapped them into a structure that felt forced.

Camping for a week also resulted in other challenges regarding the timing of reflections. This was especially true on Monday, when dinner was late and consequently reflection occurred too late at night. Near the end of the trip when the cumulative effects of lack of sleep were taking its toll, some students found reflections difficult because they were “dead tired” and “a little bit delirious.” By Friday when our community partner was talking about the politics of food production, an experience rife with reflective potential, some students were “tired of doing reflections” and “wanted to go home.” In hindsight, it would have been better to have this experience earlier in the week. Additionally, asking students to write a letter-to-self immediately before we got into the vans to go home was too late in the week for many of the students to be motivated to engage in meaningful reflection.

Clearly, taking the context into account is important. Because of the nature of this camping trip, student leaders suggested that instead of reflecting daily after

dinner, reflections could occur directly after service and/or could alternate between informal reflective conversations around the campfire with more structured activities. Certainly it now seems clear that one should not decide ahead of time about the timing of reflections and stick to the plan unquestioningly, as we did on this trip. This decision was based both on research which clearly indicates that reflection should be continuous, occurring throughout the service-learning experience (Eyler, 2001; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Mabry, 1998; Ogden & Claus, 1997) and on another ASB trip in which they reflected every night after dinner (Rhoads & Neururer, 1998). Continuous, does not necessarily mean daily in every week-long camping situation. I have always felt that a structure and routine are important to establish so that people can relax into knowing what to expect. However, it is clear that by following the planned structure without noticing contextual needs we once again stepped into the structure trap.

Group Dynamics

While background to the larger discussion of how to structure reflections, group dynamics are important to remember. While the group dynamics on the trip were consistently described as positive, some students on this trip felt that discussions would have been more powerful with a better sense of group cohesion. Students suggested that creating a solid sense of team before the trip would have enabled more people to engage in meaningful conversation “from the very beginning

to the very end” of the trip. This also would have encouraged people to share more because they would have felt that “people will understand you better.” Perhaps a subtle aspect of our trap is equating a positive social environment with one in which people are willing to share their inner thoughts.

The advantage of having a group of students with diverse experiences, skills, interests and motivations is that they can learn from each other. On this trip some students were more engaged than others in reflective conversations. In general the students with the highest interest in issues of sustainability were the most verbal during both the structured and the informal reflective conversations. Most likely this is because they felt the most comfortable with the issues, the most motivated to learn about the topics, and therefore more inspired to be engaged. The challenge with this becomes how to create a quality reflective experience for all students. Students clearly considered that some form of structured reflections were important in that the reflections were less intimidating than open-ended whole group dialogue and provided a chance for everyone to speak. Perhaps part of why Tuesday’s concentric circle activity was perceived as the most successful is the opportunity to have one-on-one discussions with several different people.

In summary of this section, it seems that creating a deep sense of team bonding would have allowed for more deep sharing and in this way increased the value and impact of reflections. This confirms that team building creates a greater

desire to share on a personal level with a diverse group (Boyle-Baise & Langford, 2004). When designing reflections it is also important to remember the variety of motivations students bring to a trip like this one. Variation of student motivation for attending Alternative Spring Break trips can positively or negatively impact learning and overall group synergy. (Boyle-Baise & Langford, 2004). While group dynamics on this trip could have been stronger they were positive and helped create a flow of conversations throughout the week. One can see however, how it is a trap to rely on structure while downplaying the importance of group dynamics and relying on one type of reflection to serve all students.

Student Leadership and Reflection

The dynamics of undergraduate students leading reflections further complicates the structure trap. While these students were all trained and experienced leaders of service-learning, they had never experienced the complexities of leading a week-long trip. Their learning curve on this trip may be a natural part of leading a trip such as this one for the first time. While it is not reasonable to expect any novice facilitator to expertly craft and facilitate reflections, it is still important to consider how to better prepare student leaders in order maximize their effectiveness.

Specifically, this section will analyze the results in terms of the importance for student leaders to both be aware of the necessity to read the group and to understand

the underlying goals of each reflection. All of these seem to be important components to consider in order to avoid the structure trap.

Reading the Group

In reflecting on their experiences leading ASB, all three student leaders felt the confines of the structure trap and agreed that their most important lesson was about the importance of reading the group and adjusting plans accordingly. As Linda put it: “That’s like one of the big things.” Specifically it is important to recognize the groups’ energy and adjust the timing and content of the reflection activities.” In addition to adjusting plans before a structured reflection begins, it is important that student leaders understand the importance of reading the group during facilitations. Mike spoke about this difficulty: “if they kinda give that blank stare sort of thing, it’s kinda hard.”

The importance of reading the group is something these student leaders learned through experience leading ASB. They expressed the hope that future leaders would not have to learn this the hard way. They suggested that future leaders might benefit from observing and keeping in mind what the group looks like when fully engaged and energized and to carefully observe body language and facial expressions in order to gauge their energy levels. They also suggested talking about what individual participants “can handle.” Given the analysis laid out in earlier sections of this chapter, it would also make sense for the leadership team to

specifically discuss the participants' levels of motivation, prior experience with reflection, their learning styles and preferences, and their level of engagement during discussions. Linda postulated that reflections on this ASB could have felt forced: "we didn't always read the group. Sometimes we really wanted to do a certain activity, so we did one." Instead, individual and group dynamics should always be the measure to use when planning reflections.

In order to provide future leaders with the tools to be able to read the group and respond in the moment, it is clear that leadership training should include the idea of getting into shoes and mind of the trip participants. Taking into consideration that student leaders did not fully realize the student participants' negative reactions to reflection until they read the trip evaluations, it seems like soliciting written and verbal feedback earlier in the trip would also be a vital part of learning to read the group. A solid mentoring relationship with the professional staff on the trip would be another way to receive feedback. In this way student leaders could adapt more easily in the moment instead of relying on an external structure that doesn't necessarily fit. It is also important that leadership training involves supplying facilitation tools to adapt in the moment, once they recognize that the group is not responding well. While a skilled facilitator can adapt in the moment, beginning facilitators need guidance and a structure to lean on. In other words, student leaders would benefit from learning what Schon (1983) identifies as Model II, or reflective practitioner

skills, as is described in chapter two. It seems important to bring awareness to these skills and issues in order to help student leaders find a balance between an external structure and the flexibility of adapting in the moment.

Understanding the Goals of Reflection

Part of the difficulty in relying on an external structure seems to be the lack of internalization the leaders had about the process. In order to better respond to the group's needs it seems important that the leaders internalize the learning goals of the week and the specific objectives for each reflection activity. Given that for one leader reflection was "one of the hardest moments... everyday" and that all three leaders felt that the evening reflection was an expectation imposed on them, they all had some amount of disconnect with the structure of the reflections they were leading. Their struggle to come up with appropriate reflection questions is illustrated by comments such as "from our perspective it was like, well how are we going to structure that?" "I don't know, it's really hard" and "it was really helpful when you sat down with us and helped us, because, we couldn't think of any (reflection questions)." As a result the student leaders relied heavily on my own ideas, which I pulled from my own internal reflections about connections I was making as related to the two established themes.

Perhaps part of their disconnect with the process of asking questions I had thought of, instead of their own, was that they had not fully internalized the goals

behind the questions. This was evident by situations such as when they forgot the previously agreed upon questions during Wednesday's reflection and asked the follow-up question instead of the main prompt to start off the conversation on Thursday. This also occurred when they decided to simplify and adjust Thursday's reflection structure in order to accommodate students' request of sitting around campfire. In doing so they moved away from the overarching goal of comparing and contrasting different communities by asking each small group to reflect on one of the communities instead of all of them. As Linda acknowledged: if the leaders themselves "had been more into them (the reflections)" perhaps the students would have also been more receptive. Another student mentioned this as well. It seems likely that in general the student leaders' mixed feelings towards leading reflections had an impact on the other students' perceptions of the structured reflections.

It seems vital to ensure that student leaders have a good understanding of the goals of each reflection. In part this involves what Mike identified as time to "construct and then deconstruct" the activity so that as a facilitator they could "keep in mind" the goals of reflection in order to try "to make it really fluid." Mike identified what for me is the crux of being well prepared to lead an activity or discussion. The student leaders needed more grounding in and ownership of the purpose of each structured reflection. In internalizing the goals, they would have

been much freer to be flexible in the moment in ways that allowed for more challenging and engaging conversations.

Another complication that should be pointed out to future student leaders is the difference between leading episodic reflections, which they had done before the trip and planning out a week of interconnected activities and discussions, which is what was called for during ASB. In this way it was a new level of reading the group and of understanding the goals and objectives of the reflections. This should be addressed both during pre-trip leadership training and debriefs during the trip in order to help student leaders with these new parameters.

All of this of course, as Mike pointed out, is “easier to say than to do.” I agree with Mike’s assessment that more planning time seems essential to ensure the students leading the reflection fully understand and buy into the intended outcomes. This ties in with Rogers’ (2001) conclusions that because less learning occurs when groups are facilitated by a fellow student, the key to enhancing peer led reflection may be to use careful advanced planning with the teacher.

Leadership team dynamics.

In addition to recognizing the need for student leaders to be able to deconstruct and reconstruct reflection activities, it is also important to examine what hampered this from happening during this ASB trip. As mentioned above, some of this can be explained by the learning curve of student leaders and a lack of sufficient

planning time. However, the quality and dynamics of that planning time also need to be discussed. The results from student evaluations, interviews and my field log clearly recognize that there was some amount of disconnect between myself and the three student leaders. This is especially significant in that the student leaders interpreted my desire for planning the details of a more structured reflection and ensuring higher levels of learning outcomes as a non-negotiable imposition and “tried to do the best with it.” In this section I examine how the leadership team dynamics may have hindered the success of reflection activities and therefore contributed to our over-reliance on a structure that in some ways did not work well.

It seems significant that I did not hear about the intensity of the student leaders’ negative feelings about reflections until after the trip. In some way, our group dynamics must have discouraged them from bringing up their discomfort during the trip. Perhaps if we had debriefed about reflections a couple of times during the trip, there would have been room for discussion and adaptation of our strategy. As it was, the student leaders’ desire to be seen as part of the group and not differentiated by having separate leadership meetings tempered my willingness to suggest more than what I felt was absolutely necessary meeting times. However, the solution of holding more planning, or debriefing would have only gone so far, given the student leaders’ reticence to discuss their discomfort with me. Interviews revealed that the two times I organized a meeting with the student leaders in order to

plan reflections there was an undercurrent of emotional reaction from them that I was not entirely aware of. The unspoken tension, especially between Jess and I, clearly impeded open communication. As it was, without open communication, we could not adapt and adjust and were stuck in what Schon identifies as Model I, as described in chapter two.

Within this it is important to grapple with the fact that the student leaders did not feel empowered about leading reflections. What is interesting is that Mike exhibited clear ownership of the reflection process as well as an ability to adapt in the moment when he sparked many informal conversations, drew out people's ideas and encouraged their ownership of the dialogues. Especially poignant in this regard is that he was at a loss when it came to thinking of structured questions for our daily reflections. Apparently there was something about our planning process that made Mike think my goals were different from his. Mike described his goals in sparking up conversation: "I don't ever see it as being that structured. Let's be very genuine, and speak from whatever your position is." Here again is the misperception that the importance of the structure overrides the process. Mike could not envision how to structure reflective activities because he saw them as intrinsically different from the informal reflections he was leading, instead of as a tool to ask the same kinds of questions and to have the same types of reflective conversations with a larger group.

It is also interesting to note that mid-week the leadership team observed how well each day's activities built on the next, how people were initiating discussions, making connections, and having similar conversations to the ones the leadership team had had during the trip planning stage. Yet in planning the reflections, we did not think to incorporate this observation into the reflection activities. Instead, given the student leaders' lack of response to my attempts to get them to come up with questions, I pulled out questions that I thought would be relevant. In this way it seems that I, and consequently we, treated the structured reflections as an add-on activity that was separate from the service learning cycle of reflective thought (Kolb, 1984).

I now find myself wondering how different our plans would have been if I had encouraged them to build reflections around observations of where the group was at and what they needed. The dynamics between the student leaders and I was stifled and lacked the same reflective flow that was missing from the daily whole group reflections. We were not engaging in reflective practice. Had we been able to have a more open flowing planning time I'm sure the students would have felt more ownership in the process. Instead we were caught in the structure trap.

Lack of Reflective Paradigm

At this juncture it is also important to note the disconnect in communication was not simply between myself and the student leaders it was also between the

student participants and the leadership team. This is evident by the fact that we were all surprised to read in the evaluations about the strong negative reactions to the reflections. Additionally, some evaluations mentioned a lack of communication, indecisiveness of the three leaders, long drawn out decision making processes, that Jess and Linda seemed removed from the group. Perhaps the student leaders in desiring to be seen as equals among their peers and in leading from behind, did not solicit feedback about their leadership and therefore created some of this disconnect. It's also interesting to note that while the student leaders wanted to be seen as equal peers, clearly some of the student participants saw them differently in that they did not communicate directly about their negative feelings towards reflections. In fact the student leaders and participants alike were all resigned to the idea of daily structured reflections that felt forced. In this way the status quo was established and unquestioned. So, on all levels, between myself and the student leaders, myself and the student participants and between the student participants and leadership team there was a lack of communication, a lack of flow, and a lack of understanding that things can be adjusted in the moment instead of being fixed in a certain way. In other words there was a lack of organized reflective practice.

As was stated in the literature review, being reflective practitioners is at the core of the service-learning model and requires practitioners to engage in a reflective contract in which teachers and students alike jointly and actively create learning

(Dewey, 1933; Schon, 1983). This unpredictable process requires risk taking, vulnerability and self disclosure, flexibility, adaptation so that together, everyone can explore the uncertainty and problem solve (Dewey, 1933; Schon, 1983). In so doing, teachers give up some of their power and become coaches and students must step into an active role in order to fully engage in the process (Dewey, 1933; Schon, 1983). Together, without pressure, everyone is called upon to openly explore value systems, ideas, assumptions and limits; engage in an exchange of perspectives; reflect on observations; and make joint decisions based on their observations (Dewey, 1933; Schon, 1983).

In failing to engage in the very core of the service-learning model, we in some ways failed to make the necessary shift from a modernist or positivistic model to a reflective one. The student leaders did not see me as someone to engage in joint dialogue, they saw me instead in the modernist role of teacher as inflexible imposer of expectations. I, in turn, in coaching the students to come up with reflection activities, focused on my pre-established learning objectives instead of what was most relevant and challenging to the students. In this way, I was not helping students engage the reflective cycle which should be sparked by a problematic new experience that elicits doubt and confusion (Dewey, 1933), conflict (Kolb 1984) or surprise (Schon, 1983). In failing to connect reflections to this cycle, reflection was

treated as an add on, an activity outside of the students' process, instead of an intrinsic part of the reflective process stemming from the students.

The result of all of this, was falling into the structure trap, which in this light can be seen as failing to fully understand and implement the required shift in paradigm. Even though I valued this shift in paradigm, it did not translate into action. This parallels Schon's assertion that when there are conflicts in the reflective contract such as the ones described above during this ASB trip, the unintended result is the engaging in the traditional model (Schon, 1983). The structure trap at its very core seems to be about the disconnect between model and practice, between traditional academic and reflective service-learning paradigms. In other words, the structure trap is to fall into and/or stay in the old paradigm.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

Almost invariably, when the topic of my thesis comes up in conversation, and I first mention that the students had a negative reaction to the reflection activities, people are quick to blame the students. Responses such as, “Didn’t they want to learn?” or “They always complain, but then they learn” are typical. In a similar vein, the introduction to the service-learning reflection toolkit (Geiger, 2001) speaks to reticent students about why they should reflect and addresses their potential negative reactions. This tells me that negative reactions to reflection may be a prevalent issue that educators are encountering. After reflecting in depth about this ASB trip and students’ perceptions of reflections, I challenge educators to deeply examine these types of responses when they occur.

My analysis suggests that instead of blaming students, interpreting their negative reactions as reticence towards learning, and/or trying to convince them to reflect, we should take a closer look at where their reactions are coming from. It could be indeed, as the reflection toolkit suggests, that reticent students simply need to be taught about the service learning model. It could also be that some students are not motivated to learn for a variety of reasons that have nothing to do with how we are teaching. We should however not assume this is the case.

Instead we should take students' negative reactions and feelings of forced reflections as a warning signal that there may be a disconnect between the model and the practice, as was the case on this ASB trip. Specifically, indications that one may be mired in the structure trap can include: a lack of free flowing conversation, bullet points answers because of narrow prompts, vague and uncertain answers because of wide-open prompts, and abrupt transitions that do not honor students' thought processes. Other indicators may include students feeling put on the spot, unmotivated and unprepared. Central to all of this is a lack of reflective practice and an abundance of students perceiving reflections as something they have no choice or voice about and must endure and get through.

I find myself wondering how I as an experienced service-learning educator fell into this trap. It's true that having been trained in elementary school service-learning in the mid-nineties, my new job at the university ten years later challenged my own learning curve. New to me was co-curricular service learning in higher education with skilled and motivated student leaders. For this reason I found resources such as the Reflection Toolkit (Geiger, 2001) and Eyler & Gile's (1996) Five C's of reflection reassuring and useful. There was a recipe I could follow for success (i.e.: create continuous opportunities, choose a structure that fits the context, add questions about what, so what, now what and stir to connect learning and

service.) I saw this as formulaic, not dependent on a multitude of complex factors that would defy scripting ahead of time.

Looking back over the reflection training guides, which I have often referred to since starting my new job, I realize that many of them speak to the importance of process. Yet, when I was pressed for time and searching for an activity to help structure a class, I would by-pass all of the writing, go right to the summaries of the activities and pick one.

As a professional who values reflection on my own, student voice, and the idea of student empowerment and leadership, it was not until writing this thesis that I realized the disconnect I promoted around reflection. Even with my background, interest and experience in moving education towards a new paradigm, I fell into the trap of overemphasizing the structure of reflection, and in this way of thinking of education as building blocks that can summatively build on one another, instead of a cyclical process. I cannot imagine that I am alone in this.

My mindset indeed remained mired in the traditional modernist paradigm of education, even though in many ways I had already come to embrace reflective values and approaches. For example, even as I write I find myself struggling with the urge to make black and white statements such as: on ASB we were non-reflective and therefore did not utilize the reflective paradigm that is integral to the service-

learning model. I've realized that this too is part of the modernist view that everything can be categorized into neat boxes of opposites. To view and analyze this ASB experience with a reflective lens is to explain that truly there are many shades of grey. On the trip, we were reflective in many ways. However, it is the point at which we unconsciously get stuck in the old paradigms in which I am interested and that is the focus of this thesis.

When one reviews the definitions of reflection found in the literature, it is clear that they emphasize the process. Collectively they state that reflection is an active engagement triggered by a surprising situation or experience, examining one's preconceptions in light of the new situation and integrating the new understanding (Rogers, 2001). As was the case on this ASB trip, the focus on process can get lost, especially with canned reflection activities. The literature speaks to a confusion that comes from the fact that service-learning is both a cognitive process and a structured learning activity (Hatcher and Bringle, 1997) and that reflection can be used as "a noun, a verb, an adjective, a process, and an outcome" (Rogers, 2001, p. 40). Furthermore, reflection is often misinterpreted as "an intellectual endeavor that follows and is applied post-hoc to the more physical and social activity of service. In this way, the separation reinforces the classic and harmful distinction so often made

in U.S. schools between mental and manual work, or between thinking and doing” (Ogden & Claus, 1997, pp. 72-73).

In other words, we stay in the traditional paradigm. Specifically, when reflection is viewed as a noun, the lens being used is the traditional paradigm which is for the service-learning model, excessively focused on the structure of the reflection. Alternately when reflection is viewed as a verb, the lens being used is true to the service-learning model and best practices. Reflection, in order to stay true to the model, should be first and foremost thought of as a verb and a process and the structure should only be viewed as a means to this end. In this way we can all be reflective practitioners.

In describing my thesis now, I no longer start with students’ negative reactions to reflection, but begin by describing the disconnect I discovered between the model and the practice of service-learning reflection. I then go on to talk about how this has already begun to change my own teaching practice. The remainder of this chapter includes a list of strengths and limitations of this research followed by my recommendations to come out of this research.

Strengths and Limitations of Research

This study draws conclusions on two levels. On the first level, that of how to structure reflections, there are several limitations to the findings. Alternately,

conclusions about the underlying paradigms and approaches to education are not constrained by the same type of limitations. Both the limitations and strengths of this study are elaborated below.

Limitations.

As an examination of students' perceptions of reflection, this thesis could easily have stopped with conclusions about the complexity of factors that need to be considered when designing reflection activities on ASB trips. However, given the small scale of this study, the make-up of the Northern State University's student population, and the unique characteristics of this particular service-learning program there are several limitations in the applicability of the findings to other ASB trips. This is especially true if, instead of co-curricular and student-run, they are academically integrated and taught by a professor. Other factors that may limit the applicability of this study's conclusions about structuring reflections may include the type of students, the type of service, the amount of interaction with community members and the emotional challenge of the trip.

Further limitations emerge out of the fact that I was not only a participant observer, but also a first time researcher. As such I did not think to tape record the reflections and found that the challenge of my dual role limited my ability to take detailed field notes. At times, my notes were brief and not very helpful. For example,

I did not record the exact reflection questions that were asked. Additionally, I did not know that I was going to be analyzing the reflections and so did not record these.

Another limitation may stem from interviewing students about their negative reactions to reflections. When reassured that I would not be offended to hear about the challenges they had with me, students were open to talking about their negative reactions. However, in an effort to protect my feelings, they may have censored some of their comments. For this reason, the data might not have captured a complete picture of the negative dynamics that they were experiencing.

As with every study, the focus of the question naturally limits the scope of the research. In this case focusing solely on students' perceptions of reflections consequently excludes my perspectives as an educator throughout the trip, the organizational history and policies, and the dynamics between myself and the student leaders during the planning period before the trip. It also does not address the learning outcomes of the trip nor the impact of the reflections on learning. In focusing on students' negative reactions, this thesis is able to hone in on a potential problem that others may also experience. It in no way reflects the overall quality of trip or the skills and efforts of the student leadership.

Strengths.

One strength of this study is the breadth and scope of the data. Because it not only draws on the potentially limiting dynamics of interviews with myself as a participant observer, but also triangulates from three different sources, potential bias is mitigated to some extent. Without the anonymous evaluations to refer to, interviews may not have succeeded in drawing out students negative responses to the same extent that they did.

Another strength of this study is its theoretical conclusions, which is a particular strength of qualitative research in general (Glesne, 2006). Because of its theoretical nature, the discussion of how we as educators can become caught in a trap of disconnect between model and practice does not seem to be limited in applicability to similar situations, but rather, seems to potentially have broad implications across different types of service-learning situations.

The fact that I was a participant observer on this trip should not only be seen as a limitation as described above, but should also be seen as an asset. Naming this a strength instead of a liability reflects the same shift in paradigm that the service-learning model calls for: from the expert researcher removed from the field to the reflective practitioner observing close up what they are a part of. In the words of Dewey:

The fact that man participates as a factor in social affairs is no barrier to knowledge of them. On the contrary, a certain method of directed participation is a precondition of his having any understanding. Human intervention for the sake of effecting ends is no interference, and it is a means of knowledge (Dewey, 1929).

It seems likely my insights came in part because of my involvement in the trip and in working with the student leaders. In this way my reflective research provides a parallel congruence between method and practice.

Another strength of this study is that I utilize the same reflective process that the service-learning model outlines. First, I was struck by the surprising contradiction that the trip's reflection activities did not seem to be as effective as they were supposed to. I then, risking the vulnerability of self disclosure, openly explore the uncertainty in my value systems, ideas, assumptions, and limits; actively reflect on observations; problem solve and draw conclusions based on these observations. All of this is done without judgment. As such I have embodied the qualities described as essential for reflective practitioners.

Recommendations

In the following section, I outline several recommendations for avoiding the structure trap. Central to all of this is that we must be mindful of where we are

unconsciously slipping into the familiar shoes of the modernist paradigm. We must remember reflection should first and foremost be thought of as a verb and a process. In this way the structure should facilitate this process. While this theme of aligning our practice with the service-learning model and a reflective paradigm runs throughout my recommendations, I have divided them into the following three categories: co-curricular service-learning immersion trips, working with student leaders, and becoming reflective practitioners.

Co-curricular immersion service-learning trips.

In order to avoid the structure trap, an environment needs to be established in which everyone can interact as reflective practitioners. Clearly, this trip shows a complexity of factors that impact quality reflection during co-curricular immersion service-learning trips. All of these need to be taken into account when organizing and leading reflections.

Certainly, a lesson from this trip is not to over rely on a regular schedule for reflections. Continuous does not necessarily mean daily in every week-long camping situation. One decision that should be made day to day is the timing and frequency of reflections. It is important to consider both how much fertile material for reflection has emerged from the recent experiences and how receptive the energy of the group is at a specific time. Some factors that may come into play are hunger, lack of sleep,

amount of daylight, amount of available down time, amount of interaction with community members, how challenging the service is to students' preconceptions and end of trip burn out. Services that have the potential to stimulate a lot of conversation should be planned for earlier in the week instead on the last day of the trip when everyone is tired.

Additionally, because of the intensive week-long nature of the trip experience, there may be a different necessity for structured reflection and a different set of best practices. It makes sense to pay attention to the informal conversations that are occurring and bring these themes into the more structured formal reflection times. Similarly, it is important for reflection to feel like a natural part of the trip. Activities that would work well in a classroom may not work so well here. There is a need for reflections to fit the feel of a camping trip. Therefore, reflections should be more relaxed, with a more minimal introduction and departure and with a conversational tone. When possible, it seems like a good idea to be aware of the dynamics of informal conversations and wait for an opening or an easy way to transition into a more focused dialogue or activity. Reflections also do not necessarily need to be named as such and in this way can be more integrated into the flow of the day.

It is important to recognize and try to maximize experiences that stimulate students' thinking and challenge their assumptions. Part of this is to arrange service experiences that maximize informal interactions between students and community members. Another way to stimulate their thinking would be to specifically state learning outcomes and provide students with reading materials or assignments to access background information. The bottom line, however, is to not force reflection time if the day's service experience turns out not to be thought provoking. In other words, remember the paradigm and focus on learning from observations that create questions.

Additionally, one cannot avoid the structure trap without bringing an intentionality to creating group dynamics that encourage reflective practices. One should focus on team building before and during the trip rather than falling into the trap of equating a positive social environment with one in which people are willing to share their inner thoughts. Given the nature of working and living together on trips such as these a certain amount of bonding is likely to occur. This should not be equated with students' willingness and readiness to engage collectively in the risky vulnerability of self disclosure that is asked of them as reflective practitioners. This will be addressed in the following section about becoming reflective practitioners.

One must also be careful not to fall into the trap of one-size fits all. In order to meet the needs of students whose motivation for attending the trip and prior experiences with reflection in service-learning differ greatly, it is important to create a variety of reflection opportunities.

Additionally, I am left with many questions about best practices for reflection on a similar co-curricular service-learning immersion trip. What factors in the environment need to be in place to create a structured reflection in which everyone is deeply engaged and making connections? How do we best set up reflective experiences for students on a trip like this? How do we reasonably maximize the reflective experience of the students so that they gain new insights rather than reinforce old ideas? How do you balance the needs of a group of students who were motivated to attend the trip for many different reasons? What kind of preparation is best in order for students to be most open and receptive to the idea of reflection activities on this type of trip? Perhaps some of these can be answered by future research and/or reflected upon during similar trips.

Working with student leaders.

At the core of my conclusions about student leadership is the need to create a working relationship that focuses on the reflective contract. This, will be addressed in detail in the last section of this chapter on becoming reflective practitioners. For

now, it is important to say that there should be an open and honest dialogue between student leaders and staff and/or faculty supervisors. Helpful to this would be establishing clear expectations about roles and processes that will be implemented. Below I will review some of my conclusions from the analysis section. These include: holding quality planning and debriefs during the trip as well as learning to read the group, facilitate well, internalize the goals of each reflection and solicit feedback.

Student leaders should be trained about the importance of reading the group. To this end training should include the idea of getting into shoes of trip participants. Additionally, the leadership team should talk about individual participants, keeping in mind their personalities, learning styles, motivation, prior experience with reflection and level of engagement during discussions. Training, practice and debriefs should cover learning to recognize the groups' energy and to adjust the timing and content of the reflection activities accordingly. Also helpful in this regard is to observe what the group looks like when fully engaged and energized and to carefully compare this to observed body language and facial expressions in order to gauge their energy levels throughout the trip.

Part of their training should include the importance of process over structure. As such they should be provided with concrete facilitation tools that allow them to

adapt in the moment once they recognize that the group is not responding well.

Equally important would be to help student leaders find a balance between creating an external structure they can work with and the flexibility of adapting in the moment.

In order to better respond to the group's needs it seems important that the leaders fully internalize the learning goals of the week and the specific objectives for each reflection activity. Student leaders should be asked to "construct and then deconstruct" the activity. In order to help them do so, student leaders should feel a grounding in and ownership of the purpose of each structured reflection. Both during pre-trip leadership training and debriefs during the trip, the leadership team should talk about the difference between leading episodic reflections and planning out a week of interconnected activities and discussions as is called for during ASB.

Vital to student leaders learning to read the group would be for them to receive feedback. They should solicit written and verbal feedback from student participants over the course of the trip. Debriefs and a solid mentoring relationship with the professional staff on the trip should also provide student leaders with on-the-job training. Crucial to this process is that there is enough down time scheduled on the trip for the leadership team to meet and debrief. Feedback should be available so that they can then reflect on and improve their own leadership effectiveness.

In addition to the above conclusions, I am left with more questions about working with student leaders. How does a professional staff work best with student leaders of reflection? What training do undergraduate student leaders need in order to facilitate engaging reflections? What are the limitations of undergraduate student led reflection? What is a reasonable goal for reflection and learning outcomes on a student led trip? Within the context of running all of the details of a week-long immersion trip, when is the best time for those teachable moments and how do you get student leaders to notice and take advantage of them?

Becoming reflective practitioners.

In order to fully engage in a reflective practice all participants must understand the model. Given that assumptions on the trip happened at different levels and in different ways, I would highly recommend that every time a group endeavors to begin a new service-learning experience they ground their practice in an understanding of the model. Essential in this, given the trap that we fell into, is an understanding that to engage in service-learning as the model and theory espouse is to recognize and describe the necessary shift in paradigm that accompanies this practice.

It especially seems important to compare and contrast the two paradigms as a group. This is essential not only for students new to service-learning, who need to be

oriented to the model, but also to students and teachers experienced with the model, so that all parties can bring a consciousness to bear on watching for missteps and traps. Students can watch out for acquiescing to ways that feel forced, can bravely offer their insights and opinions about the process. At the same time professionals can watch to ensure they are modeling and expecting everyone involved including themselves to engage in reflective practices.

Shifting paradigms takes time. Because paradigms are so much a part of the way we unconsciously move through the world, I imagine shifting paradigms also involves many missteps such as the ones we took on this trip. Best practices of service-learning reflection are established and important to understand. However, if we interpret them with the wrong lens, we will not actually be engaging in the best practices we think that we are.

In order to move successfully from understanding the model into fully engaging in the practice, we have to recognize whenever there is a disconnect and adjust accordingly. As stated above, anytime there are feelings of forced reflection, practitioners should look for a disconnect between model and practice. Perhaps the students need more time to adjust and understand the model, perhaps the teacher is unconsciously holding to a top down approach, perhaps the disconnect is appearing in another way. Everyone involved should keep an awareness towards catching these

places of disconnect as soon as possible. It is those points that we need to somehow recognize and adjust. In so doing we will be correcting the dissonance between paradigms and bringing our practice into alignment with the model.

An educator can play a vital role in naming the dissonance. Part of my struggle with the student leaders on this trip was that while I wanted them to engage in a reflective contract, they did not understand this because I never made it explicit. It now seems to me that where ever there is disconnect, there should be a conversation about what is happening. This should not only include naming the paradigms but also asking questions such as what kind of teacher are you perceiving me as? Why? How can we shift into a paradigm where we can reflect jointly? Likewise, during reflections, students can be reminded of the model and reassured that their task is not to come up with an answer for each question but to deepen their thinking and awareness of the topics. In this way they can be coached to see prompts as diving off points for rich and deep discussions.

Everyone should be reminded that first and foremost reflection is a verb and only secondly a noun. Nouns are concrete and therefore much easier to grasp, but education is about process and those intangibles that need to be kept in the forefront of our mind as we design and implement teaching activities. Anytime we fall into the structure trap can be interpreted as a good reminder of this.

Our goal in focusing on the process of reflection should be to create a strong community of learners. Part of this should be reflective practice at all levels. Educators should reflect together about their work and student learning; teachers and student leaders should reflect on group dynamics and leadership processes; and everyone should reflect about service. In other words, there needs to be a pervasive culture of reflection which on all levels includes an organized reflective practice. As such educators and those students experienced with the reflective process should model it for the other students in the group.

Additionally, it would be greatly beneficial to be exposed to service-learning practitioners and programs that seemingly have created strong cultures of learning with a strong reflective contract between all of the participants. Moving from model to practice is not simple. Hopefully this research will help some avoid the trap of relying too heavily on structure to the detriment of the process.

Finally, there are many more questions to be answered about becoming effective reflective practitioners. What successful models already exist? What are the key ingredients to their success? How has the model and process of service-learning been taught that moves participants into the reflective paradigm? How do we best do this with groups of students who range greatly in their reflective skills and experiences? How does students' understanding of reflection limit or encourage the

process? What training do staff/faculty need in order to train student leaders to leading effective and critical reflections? What kind of preparation is best in order for students, faculty and staff to be most open and receptive to the idea of reflection activities on this type of trip?

Ultimately we do not need to wait for the answers. Rather, as reflective practitioners our task is to be part of the process. This year, with my new group of student leaders, I have already begun emphasizing this process. They know that I expect us as a leadership team to engage in dialogue and reflection. Already this feels like a richer and more vibrant learning experience than I have facilitated in the past. I am benefiting from their insights as much as they are benefiting from mine. While I do sometimes see their hesitation to speak their mind, I can recognize it now as a need to step out of the old paradigm that we so easily slip into. It is my hope that wherever we are holding onto the old paradigm we all can find many ways to leave its remnants behind and foster the reflective practitioner in ourselves and each other.

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APPENDIX A

Pre-Interview

Thank you for meeting with me. I'd like this to be the first of two times we talk. This time, I'd like to get to know you a little and find out what kind of volunteering you've done in the past and what you expect to get out of this trip. Then at the end of the trip, I'd like to talk to you again about your experience.

As a participant in a service learning trip, you will work as a team member, perform community service, and learn about issues of sustainability within a community context. Please tell me what motivated you to sign up for this trip? (Probe for other motivations besides those listed, probe for similar past experiences and ask for elaboration about any past experiences they mention.)

I'd like to focus for a minute on any past experiences with service and volunteerism that you've had. Would you please describe how you've previously given your time and energy. (Probe for first service, family and school influence, feelings, values, beliefs, and depth and breadth of service experiences.)

During this trip you will be working and living closely with 16 other students. Please tell me about any experiences you have had with being part of a team or collaborating with others. (Probe for details, feelings, successes, lessons learned, challenges and goals for this trip in terms of working and living collaboratively.)

Think of a time that you were with a group of people you didn't know. Please describe the situation and what it was like for you. (Probe for best part, challenges, resolving challenges, lessons learned.)

This year ASB will be focusing on issues of sustainability in a small rural agricultural community. What is your idea of community?

What is your idea of sustainability?

Capay Valley region has organic farmers, traditional farmers, a small Indian tribe with a Casino and Latino migrant farm workers, families living in poverty. (show list of these groups for interviewee to refer to.) What if any experiences have you had with any of these communities? What do you think this experience will be like? What questions do you have about these communities?

APPENDIX B

Alternative Spring Break Trip Evaluation Form

Please rate the following 1=Awful 7=Awesome!

Monday at small organic farm

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7

Tuesday at ranch planting a hedgerow

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7

Tuesday at the Rancheria

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7

Wednesday at Middle School planting trees/starting a garden

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7

Thursday at conservation district

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7

Friday at large organic farm

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7

How did the group work together?

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7

The effectiveness of the leadership team

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7

1. What was the best part of the trip and why?

2. Please explain any of the above ratings that are 3 or lower. How would you have changed it?
3. What was the most challenging part of the trip and why?
4. How have the experiences on this trip informed your understanding of teamwork?
5. What did you notice about how the leadership team worked together/lead the week?
6. How have the experiences on this trip informed your understanding of sustainability?
7. How have the experiences on this trip informed your idea of community?
8. What else about this experience was important to you?

APPENDIX C

Post-Interview

Thank you for meeting with me. Last time, we talked about what kind of volunteering you'd done in the past and what you expected to get out of this trip. Now that the trip is over, I'd like to talk to you about what you've learned.

- 1. First I'd like to talk about how the trip did and didn't meet your expectations. Let's start with how it met them.**
 - details
 - feelings**How were your expectations not met?**
 - details
 - feelings
- 2. Before we talk about specifically about what you learned, would you please give me your impression of the group, how it worked together and how you worked as part of it.**
 - who hung out with, who talked to, worked with,
 - how approached various services, learning experiences, camp life
- 3. What insights did you have about yourself?**
 - strength in yourself that you didn't expect?
 - An area that you want to improve on?
- 4. How have the experiences on this trip informed your idea of community?**
 - ASB students
 - Capay Valley community: (farmers, Indian tribes, migrant workers, people in poverty, commercial farmers)
 - Remind interviewee about initial comments about this from the pre-interview.)
- 5. How have the experiences on this trip informed your understanding of sustainability?**
 - intersection, interdependence of land, food and people.
 - show group's collective vision.
 - Remind interviewee about initial comments about this from the pre-interview).
- 6. What ideas or beliefs of yours were challenged on this trip?**
 - questions they are grappling with as a result of this trip

- any ideas change
 - negative beliefs uncovered
- 7. I'm curious about how you processed the experiences and information presented on this trip.**
- formal reflections
 - informal conversations, memorable ones?
 - listening to other's talk about issues
 - journaling
 - thinking – was there time for this?
 - after the trip?
 - best practices for next time?
- 8. What do you see as the differences between classroom learning and service learning? Similarities?**
- your learning style?
 - example from trip
- 9. Have you made any small or big changes in your approach to living sustainably since coming back from this trip?**
- food choices
 - transportation
 - listening to news differently,
- 10. How do you think this trip will impact what you do in the future?**
- service
 - being part of a team
 - working with or for various community groups
 - issues of sustainability
 - ASB next year
 - other?)
- 11. What haven't I asked about this experience that was important to you?**

APPENDIX D

Student Leaders Post-Interview

Thank you for meeting with me. In looking at my notes from the trip, I realized that I was missing the perspectives of the student leaders experiences on the trip.

Emphasize: Confidentiality, don't worry about my feelings, I need to hear your honest opinion. So I have some questions for you now to help me better understand your perspective.

- 1. I'd like to talk about how the trip did and didn't meet your expectations. Let's start with how it met them.**
 - details
 - feelings**How were your expectations not met?**
 - details
 - feelingsYour approach leader/learner?
- 2. What was your impression of the group, how it worked together and how you worked as part of it?**
 - group as a whole
 - how approached various services, learning experiences, camp life
 - role of leadership in creating group dynamic
 - leadership team working together?: students, split?/with me
- 3. Tell me about your experience leading the group?**
 - role in creating group dynamic?
 - What was the best part about leading the trip?
 - What was the most challenging?
 - strength in yourself that you didn't expect?
 - An area that you want to improve on?
- 4. How did your experiences on the trip inform your idea of sustainability? of community?**
 - organic farmers, ranchers, Latino workers, tribe
 - **How did you process the experiences and information presented on this trip.?**
- 5. What ideas or beliefs of yours were challenged on this trip?**
 - questions they are grappling with as a result of this trip
 - any ideas change

- negative beliefs uncovered
- 6. What do you see as the differences between classroom learning and service learning? Similarities?**
- What's your understanding of reflection as a part of SL?
 - your learning style?
 - example from trip
- 7. Reflection is an accepted and established part of service learning curriculum. I'm curious what you think about this?**
- **Can you talk specifically about the reflections as they occurred on the trip.**
 - a. **Sunday night: what makes you happy, what do you want people to know about you?**
 - b. **Monday: open ended: what stands out for you today?**
 - c. **Tuesday: concentric circles re: idea of community, of each specific community (organic farmers, native Americans,**
 - d. **Wednesday: jumprope/trust**
 - e. **Thursday: goals for the future/ 5 target populations/ASB vision of sustainable future**
 - f. **Friday: letter to self**
 - **other types of reflection occurring other than the formal ones**
 - formal reflections
 - informal conversations, memorable ones?
 - listening to other's talk about issues
 - journaling
 - thinking – was there time for this?
 - after the trip?
 - best practices for next time?
- 8. Training?**
- a. how well prepared did you feel to lead the trip? lead reflections specifically?
 - b. If you were going to lead another trip like this, what else would you want in terms of planning or training?
 - c. What would you do differently next time?
- 9. How has this trip impacted you already, or how do you think it will impact what you do in the future?**
- service
 - being part of a team
 - working with or for various community groups

- issues of sustainability
- ASB next year
- other?

What haven't I asked about this experience that was important to you?