

A Critical Assessment of Service

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The efforts to get students involved in service projects as part of their higher education is accepted as a virtue by large numbers in higher education. The chief criticism seems to come from the defenders of academic specialization, who fear any distractions in time or resources from the cloning of people such as themselves. Having been an early proponent of service learning and a continuing supporter and practitioner in several academic projects described below, the author is a critic of our failure to confront the major challenges to effective service-learning. Having made that rather presumptuous statement, however, the identification of those challenges is a daunting challenge itself.

Before identifying the challenges, this paper will first review two specific service-learning experiences: Comparative Environmental-Health Policy and the Pine River Superfund Project. The first is a specific course, although taught within the structure of a one-month term allowing for intense engagement in the course, including travel to remote sites outside the U.S. The second of these is a non-course specific service-learning program that engages students from a variety of fields of interest in independent assignments helping an environmentally stressed community. The second project is a complex mix of academic opportunities, ranging from brief class assignments to semester long independent studies and practica.

In different ways both of these projects have been recognized nationally as exceptional and a few students have moved from participation in one or both to related vocations and, in a number of cases, remarkable individual recognition. One response of the College (and myself) is to see these projects as models; however, there also are reasons to worry greatly about these projects for three reasons:

1. Relatively few students want to participate, despite the advertised success,
2. Relatively few of the students who participate show marked change in their understanding of communities and of their responsibility for community problems, and
3. Institutionally, the projects have had little impact on our understanding of «service.»

Although there is a clear danger in having a participant-observer prepare this report, the strengths of that position in a negative critique should outweigh the weaknesses, given that there should not be

second-guessing or misunderstanding of the intent of others. After reviewing the two projects, data on the impact of the service experience will be reviewed. Then the various challenges to successful service learning discovered in the process of the two projects will be summarized. The conclusion will propose steps to address the challenges, assuming they have been identified accurately.

POL 242: COMPARATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH POLICY

In alternate academic years since 1996, this course has been offered as part of Alma College's one month Spring Term. The course includes a visit to the U.S.-Mexico border region to study and work with community institutions and non-governmental organizations. The course is designed for both political science majors and the many students at the college interested in health careers and environmental studies. This course takes advantage of the one-month spring (May) Term [semester], when students enroll in only one class and can give it 24 hours of time. Students are expected to do intensive reading in the first ten days, in addition to class meetings of about four hours daily. The readings begin with a basic review of Mexico and United States history and government, followed by study of selected health and environmental problems and public policies designed to address those problems. After those ten days, students travel to the border to observe conditions and to study and undertake a service-research project related to environmental-health issues. The service project requires that students utilize public health and environmental skills to assist low-income populations in the border region, hopefully learning to value the skills they are learning to meet health and environmental needs.

The major projects in the four class offerings (1996, 1998, 2000, 2002) included the following:

1. Conducting a community health study in Sunland Park, New Mexico, a suburb of El Paso, with its southern boundary being the international border. Student helped public health researchers check for exposures to heavy metals. The students went door-to-door collecting toenail samples.¹
2. Conducting a soil, plant, and water sampling study in Las Rusias, Tamaulipas, a small village west of Matamoros, along the Rio Bravo/Grande. The village suspected agricultural yields had been impacted by fluoride emissions from a nearby chemical plant.²
3. Working with health clinics in the lower Rio Grande valley of New Mexico, gathering data from health records for a study of health needs among the families of agricultural and migrant workers.
4. Conducting a door-to-door social survey for a community health clinic in a zip code along the Rio Grande in El Paso.

Because of the varied interests and backgrounds of students in the class, some students also worked on other projects specifically linked to their interests, ranging from legal work with Texas Rural Legal Aid to soil sampling in Ciudad Juarez. The projects of three of the classes required extensive post-class analysis of data and production of reports. For example, a report on soil samples from the 2002 class was analyzed and a report written in 2003. Only a few students from each class have participated in these later projects. The host organizations have varied, but several have been affiliated with the Texas Industrial Areas Foundation (TIAF) and related institutions in northern Mexico. Generally, all host organizations have emphasized models of community empowerment to meet human needs and are not organized to recruit outside volunteers.

The border region is the focus of this class because it is close and it is one of the most environmentally and demographically stressed regions of the world. Working on the boundary of the first world and the developing world, students cannot ignore the comparative differences in policy goals and implementation resulting from the contrasting cultures, political systems, and economic resources of the two countries.

In addition to short-run course objectives, the goal of Political Science 242 is to encourage participants to consider vocations related to globalization, the borderlands, or public health and environmental service. Former students in the first three courses have continued their educations in law, medicine and especially public health and environmental policy at institutions such as Tulane, Indiana University, the University of Michigan, Michigan State University, the University of Wisconsin, and the University of North Carolina. Three former participants have won Udall Scholarships, a national undergraduate award for environmental students. In many other ways, a number of the participants in the class have been specially recognized or rewarded for after their participation.

THE PINE RIVER PROJECT

Alma College is located in an environmentally stressed watershed. In the late 19th century the European settlers deforested the region, leaving the name «Pine» attached to the local river, but almost no trees on the surrounding lands. Briefly, mineral springs with high bromine content became the core resource upon which a small resort grew. By the early 20th century, however, chemists found a more lucrative use of the brine, supporting a chemical extraction industry, called Michigan Chemical, which left massive wastes in the river. At about the same time, petroleum deposits in the region spurred a refining boom, with three refineries developing by the late 1930's. As with the chemical company, the river provided a drain into which the oil companies, eventually owned by the large French refiner, Total Petroleum, could flush their wastes. While there were local complaints about the pollution and loss of resource use by many citizens as early as the first year of operation of each industry, the complaints failed to result in significant enforcement actions before the 1970s.³

This failure to respond left the region not only with pollution but also with dis-empowered citizens. The final owner of Michigan Chemical, Velsicol Chemical even had the arrogance in 1962 to threaten the publishers of *Silent Spring* with a libel suit if they published the work.⁴ Both Houghton Mifflin and *The New Yorker*, which was serializing the book, eventually defied Velsicol's attorneys and printed the work.

However, the arrogance of Velsicol was verified by this attack, which linked any criticism of the chemical industry to support for communism. The irony of this corporate behavior was that Velsicol was owned by one of the great philanthropists of Chicago, Joseph Regenstein and in the mid-1960's became a subsidiary of Northwest Industries, a Chicago conglomerate owned by another upstanding business leader, Ben Heineman, who served on Lyndon Johnson's civil rights commissions.⁵

In 1974 the price of earlier attacks on the region's environment and civil institutions became clear. A year earlier, Velsicol made a catastrophic environmental mistake, shipping a load of fire retardant rather

than cattle feed supplement to a feed supply facility run by the Farm Bureau. Undetected until the next year's calving season, when deformed calves were born throughout the state, the private and public response to the discovery only made the mistake worse. With the Farm Bureau implicated in the mistake, the state agriculture college and Department of Agriculture tried to minimize criticism and responsibility, allowing tainted farm products to enter the food chain for at least eight million people. With intense criticisms of the failure mounting on the brink of the 1978 elections, state officials then reversed course and conducted what one state attorney called «a corporate execution.» Under a settlement developed over a four-year period, the company shut down in September 1978, initiated a demolition of its facility, and eventually signed an agreement to cap the old plant site, in exchange for release of other liability. The state got the symbolic closure of the factory. The company got protection from additional liability if it helped contain what became three superfund sites in St. Louis, Michigan. The local community lost 450 union jobs, a large slice of its tax base, and was left with a heavily contaminated river and three superfund sites with questionable containment systems.⁶

The region's petroleum industry continued to operate for another 20 years, with lingering concerns with the trade-off of jobs and contamination. As with the chemical company, there had been repeated problems in earlier years with the refineries. In the 1940's the city of Alma had to shift its water supply from ground to surface water after the U.S. Geological Survey confirmed contamination of the aquifer with phenol.⁷ However, citizens misunderstood the shift of water supplies, when the city said it resulted not from contamination but from the refinery's need for colder water. As late as the mid-1990's, the citizens were misinformed, or more correctly, not informed about events at the refinery in order to keep jobs. Finally, in 1997, the U.S. EPA brought several dozen charges against the refinery for violations of the federal clean air and water laws.⁸ However, the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act had more impact.⁹

Since Total Petroleum was about to strike a deal with the Iranian government for oil field development, the company had to pullout of the U.S. and sold its North American operations to a Texas firm that found the Michigan refinery peripheral to its operations and closed the facility.

The consequence of these problems has been to leave the region with both fundamental civic and environmental problems and the College with an exceptional opportunity and obligation to serve. In a variety of courses, from the natural sciences, social sciences, and the humanities, and especially through many independent studies and practica, a host of the college's students have applied course content to the real world problems of their host community. Such engagement has extended back into the 1960s but intensified in the 1990s after the college received a service-learning grant from the Kellogg Foundation. In the 1991-1992 academic year, a half dozen students in chemistry, communication, history, and political science produced an interdisciplinary report on the lessons of the 1970's food chain contamination accident, called the PBB-incident for the chemical involved - polybrominated biphenyls.¹⁰ This project received considerable attention and planted the seeds for student-faculty research on the community.¹¹

At the start of the 1997-1998 academic year, the U.S. EPA returned to the community in two ways, eventually to become entangled. Charges were brought against the refinery and continued decay of the river fishery caused a reopening of the superfund settlements with Velsicol, with the responsible party now being the underwear manufacturer, Fruit of the Loom. Following a heated public meeting in

October 1997, attended by a number of faculty and students, a community advisory group (CAG) was formed for the U.S. EPA, chaired by the author and assisted by other faculty and students, well as many citizens.

This shared sense of indignation and frustration empowered the community in 1998 to incorporate the CAG, named the Pine River Superfund Citizens Taskforce.¹² In addition to citizens not holding office or representing groups, the Taskforce includes city and county officials, members of conservation groups, representatives of the Chippewa Indian Tribe, and former workers from Velsicol and Total. US EPA staff responsible for the remediation attend all meetings. Taskforce leaders have been invited to brief the ministerial association in St. Louis, the public schools, civic organizations including the Rotary, Lions and women's clubs, students at area colleges and universities and area medical professionals. They also have presented status reports on the remediation to the county «Evening in the Park,» summer lecture series and on public access TV. The elected co-secretary of the CAG in 2002-2003 was an Alma College, student who won an Udall Scholarship in recognition for her work.

The Taskforce provides a model forum for communicating with residents about risks and learning from them possible sources of risks. Such communication can improve the effectiveness of any research about risks in the three communities. The advantages of including communities in research on environmental risks from contaminated sites have been documented in many studies.¹³ These advantages include:

1. Special information and data are available to concerned citizens and community activists that are unknown to outside experts. These people can provide hints on unknown routes of exposure and health effects and can guide inquiries of specific problems.
2. Recruitment for individual investigations and acceptance of findings, whatever their message is, are increased by community involvement.
3. Community involvement can identify special objectives of investigation, eases acceptance of investigations, and can therefore reduce costs.
4. Involved citizens can take control of key research functions. This can increase transparency of scientific decision-making, the possibility of including diverse perspectives, and through independent commentary on research, enhance objectivity.

By working with the CAG, students have witnessed in detail the procedures for insuring citizen control over policy. They have noted a number of CAG policies that contribute to this success. A precondition for CAG effectiveness is that various individuals and groups have equal rights. The requirement to successful cooperation is to draw up binding rules for communication and ways of decision making, besides the allocation of responsibilities. The citizens should preside over meetings and keep the minutes, which document the statements of all participants, including the researchers.

PROJECT CONSEQUENCES

A superficial review of the two projects would indicate those interested in the same type learning should adopt these models. In addition to *the* course and student recognitions mentioned earlier, the Comparative Envi-

ronmental Health Policy course has been assessed using a common instrument developed by Jeffrey Howard and Wilbert McKeachie of the University of Michigan. As a requirement of the Corporation for National Service grant that funded the creation of this course, use of this instrument was required. The data have been consistent through all four offerings of the class in 1996, 1998, 2000, and 2002.¹⁴ The survey asks two sets of questions before enrollment. An additional set of nine questions is added in the post class use of the test. The questions on the pre-test are shown below in Table 1. The questions added in the post-test are listed in Table 2. While some of the questions are problematic, the survey seems to provide a reasonable opportunity to test the impact of a service class. The class has no content related to prison inmates. Also several of the questions are nationally focused on the U.S. in ways that might complicate answers from students with Mexican experiences.

TABLE 1: PRE and POST -TEST QUESTIONS

Part I: *Using the scale below please indicate the importance etc. to you personally of the following:*

1. not important 2. somewhat important 3. very Important 4. essential

- working toward equal opportunity for all citizens
- developing a meaningful philosophy of life
- becoming involved in a program to improve my community
- being very well off financially
- volunteering my time helping people in need
- giving 3% or more of my income to help those in need
- finding a career that provides opportunity to be helpful to others or useful to society

Part II: *Using the scale below please indicate your responses to the following items:*

1. strongly disagree 2. disagree 3. undecided 4. agree 5. strongly agree

- adults should give some time for the good of their community or country
- having an impact on the world is within the reach of most individuals
- most misfortunes that occur to people are frequently the result of circumstances beyond their control
- if I could change one thing about society it would be to achieve greater social justice
- I can learn from prison inmates
- I make quick judgments about homeless people
- individuals should be ready to inhibit their own pleasures if these inconvenience others
- people, regardless of whether they have been successful or not, ought to help those in need
- people ought to help those in need as «payback» for their own opportunities, fortunes, and successes
- if I had been born in poverty, chances are that I would not be attending this college
- I feel that I can make a difference in the world

For example, the first question asking about equal opportunity for U.S. citizens could be difficult to answer for a student exposed to the grave violations of human rights and equal opportunity implicit in border immigration interdiction efforts. Likewise the question about adults giving time to their community or country causes problems for those impressed with their global service responsibilities. Finally some of the post-questions imply an attitude toward service directly rejected by some of the community organizations to which these students are exposed. Those organizations tend to oppose charity and emphasize community empowerment. Finally, it is hard to imagine that a four-week exposure would give a «sense of purpose of direction in life» to one without these at the start of the class. Nonetheless, the result for the 2002 class seems positive.

TABLE 2: POST-TEST ADDED QUESTIONS

Part III: *Using the scale below please indicate the degree to which participation in this course has increased or strengthened your.*

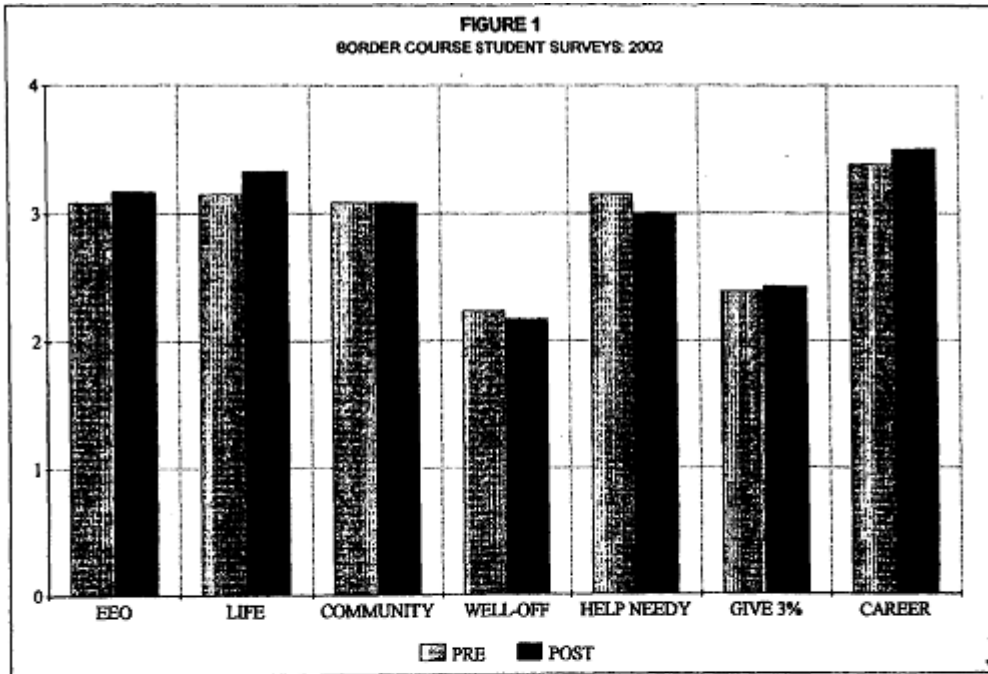
1. not at all 2. somewhat 3. quite a bit 4. a great deal

- __intention to serve others in need
- __intention to give to charity to help those in need
- __sense of purpose and direction in life
- __orientation toward others and away from yourself
- __intention to work on behalf of social justice
- __belief that helping those in need is one's social responsibility
- __belief that one can make a difference in the world
- __understanding of the role of external forces as shapers of the individual
- __tolerance and appreciation of others

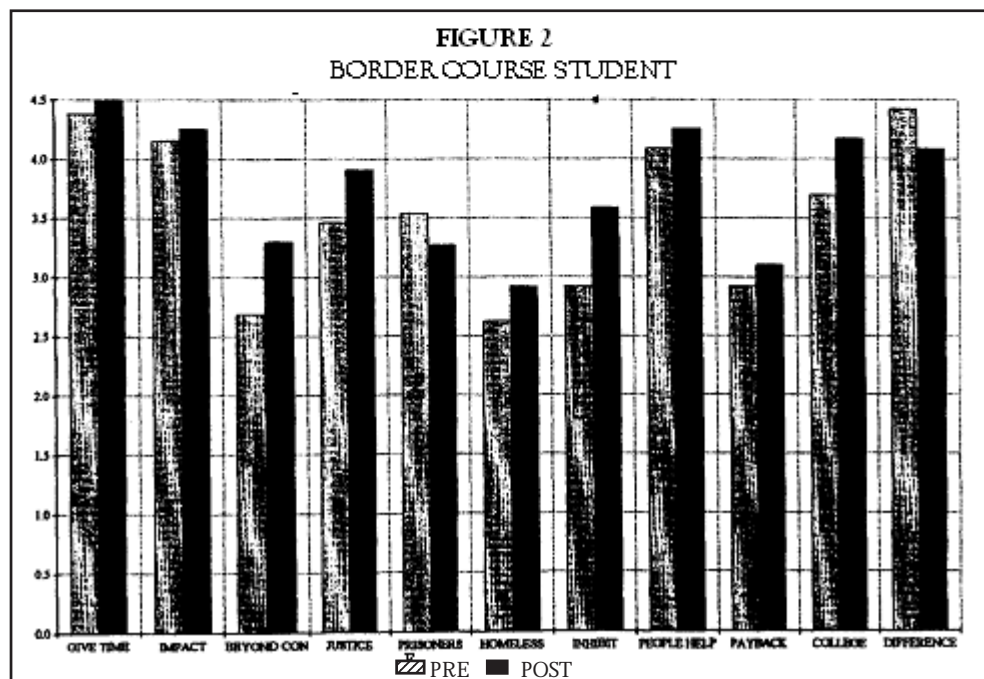
As reflected in Figure 1 on the following page, which contrasts pre and post class responses for the questions in Part 1 of the instrument, there is a small positive change over the time of the class. Given that a score of three, means the respondent finds the matter very important, the students who enrolled in this class already were socially oriented, giving the two lowest scores to being well-off and giving to charity. Figure 2 shows the responses to the more complex options in Part II of the survey, where a three means undecided and essentially negative scores are any under three. Here again the post test results are modestly better than before, and the students slightly are negative on only three questions, one of which probably is positive (to be negative); that is that they :make quick judgments about homeless people.»

Figure 3 which shows responses to the questions only asked after the class, also tends to show modest results. Except for providing a sense of purpose, again a tall order in a four-week class, generally more student than did not found the class influenced their values quite a bit. However, only the tolerance questions evoked answers approaching «a great deal.» Clearly the class does not undermine student concern with social justice, a potential consequence given that living and working conditions frequently are uncomfortable. Students answered the post-survey a few days after moving out of an un-air conditioned hospice for refugees, where roaches were not hard to find. The temperatures frequently climbed to near one hundred and there was dust and noise.

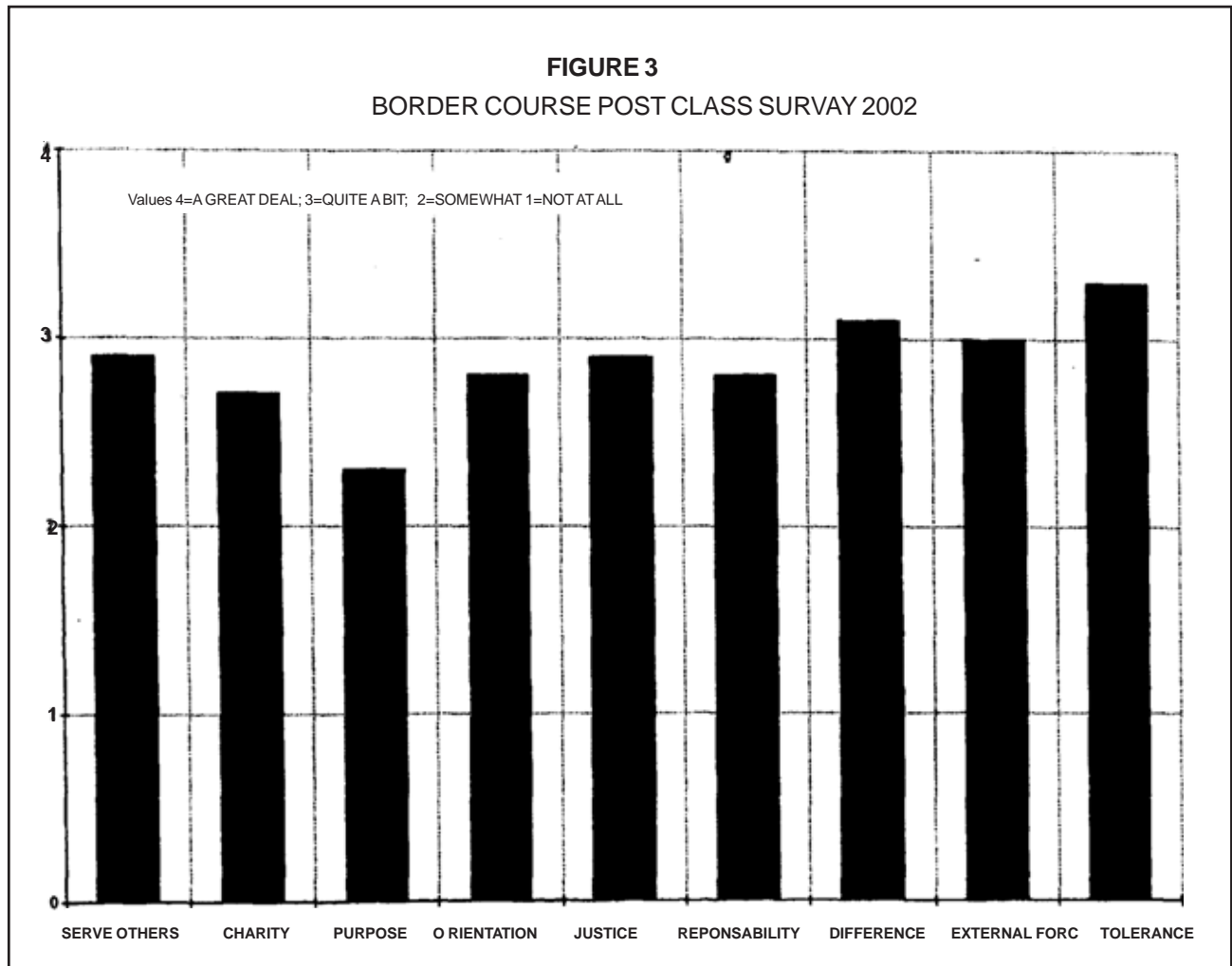
Despite the modestly positive results, honesty would require emphasis upon several indications the projects achieved very minor changes in many student participants. In addition to the slight change in answers to common pre and post questions, the numbers and gender mix of those enrolling seems to reflect a major problem, not in the students who engage in the projects, but in their absent peers. Despite the students winning more Udall Scholarships and admissions to prestigious graduate and professional schools, it is difficult to find students to participate in the classes. More worrisome is the gender gap in the classes, where enrollment has been 84 percent female. Going into the hot desert to work, such as sampling in Mexican villages, seems to be women's work. Helping an environmentally stressed mid-Michigan town is even more female.



VALUES: 4=ESSENTIAL; 3=VERY IMPORTANT; 2=SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT; 1= NOT IMPORTANT .



VALUES: 5=STRONGLY AGREE; 4=AGREE;3 UNDECIDED 2= DISAGREE 1=STRONGLY DISAGREE



When males participate, they disproportionately are minorities. On a campus with five percent minority enrolment, the males in these projects have been 20 percent minority. These trends are reflected beyond these projects. The past president of the Alma College environmental organization, a woman who won a Udall Scholarship, said they should change the name from SUN, Students United for Nature, to GUN, for «Girls United for Nature.» Likewise Alma's remarkable success with five Udall Scholars in the last four years reflects this trend with all being female.

THE CHALLENGE

These results have led to the following tentative list of barriers to effectively using service learning to help students see beyond self-interest to community responsibility, intergenerational sustainability, and social justice? A review of the literature on education related to community, sustainability, and justice suggests that fundamental cultural barriers threaten our success. These barriers should lead us to question if simply offering a service experience is enough.

While not claiming to be exhaustive, a list of cultural barriers would include:

1. The emphasis upon a marketable specialty has limited the meaning of vocation.
2. Market concepts of choice have distorted our educational methods. The human tendency to justify success and condemn failure as evil,
4. The breakdown of community identity and sustainability in an age of globalization; and
5. The minimization of democratic governance by claims of expertise.

1. Specialization of the Vocational:

The primal problem with relating service to life arises from the carelessness inherent in our consideration of the relationship of education and work to life. We have both used terms carelessly and allowed the ideology of markets to distort our methodology with troubling consequences for our students. For example, there is our confusing use of the word vocation. «Vocational education» has been changed from a general description of schooling to prepare for life into a sub-standard form of training of those not fit for academic pursuit. If the students in «shop» courses are preparing for vocations, then the more academically able are getting ready for careers.¹⁵ Those who study such subjects occasionally emphasize the need for the «liberal arts,» not just specialized mastery of a single discipline, but then only because of the widely voiced truism that ‘the average person will hold any number of different careers in their lifetime.’ We have betrayed Hutchins vision that higher education could raise everyone to be reasonably wise and prudent people.

Much as general trends toward specialization, we have narrowed the meaning of calling to focus only on the religious life. Freeing the vast majority of any responsibility, we have forgotten the purpose of life for all people was to find a worthwhile calling, which united work, family, and service into a meaningful whole. We have distorted the meaning of the word so much that the following warning of John Cotton speaking to the early Massachusetts settlers is almost incomprehensible. He told them, not just their future ministers, «[I]t is only a clean person that walks with a divided hoof that sets one foot in his general and the other in his particular calling. He strikes with both: he serves both God and man, else he is an unclean beast.»¹⁶ Now we are urged to prepare for specific careers and perhaps throw in some volunteering. Yet, neither specific academic training nor a little volunteering addresses the need for a vocation.

In much of higher education we have lost the language to communicate to our selves and our students the role of that education in preparing for the calling. Yet, as Richard Foster has written, «We have a sense of calling ... We have a sense of responsibility to do something in our own time that has value.»¹⁷ Sharon Parks had added that young adults especially are engaged in the task of «meaning making,» that includes far more than help with a job-finding.¹⁸ Annual surveys of in-coming student attitudes at American colleges and universities tend to confirm these claims. Despite the rhetoric of community service, the reality seems to be that we use four years to convert the students to a more «practical» understanding of calling.

2. Application of Market Terms to Education:

A primary reason for this change is the ever-present ideology and language of the market place in higher education «requirements.» The voices of community service are just one of the products offered to

student consumers in modern higher education. However, these voices are not sufficient to overcome a fundamental barrier to helping the majority of students to see the links of their education to the wider needs of society. Especially arrayed against the efforts to promote service are the proponents of voluntarism. They have been so vociferous in their critique of compulsory exposure of anyone to the needs of the world that they have made service synonymous with volunteerism. After Robert Putnam's famed *Bowling Alone* appeared lamenting the weakening of community in modern America, the ideologues of volunteering went to work to prove there was no problem.¹⁹ Their defense made clear their real agenda. For example, Everett Ladd found that forty five percent of Americans had «Attended a meeting on town/school affairs.»²⁰ At a forum on National Service held at Stanford in 1989, Martin Anderson saw support for national service as a Trojan horse strategy to undermine our freedom, «one funds the sharp fangs of coercion and compulsion, the faint whiff of envy and hatred of the young, and the ideological yearning for elements of a totalitarian society,» or as Milton Friedman said, «an `uncanny resemblance' to the Hitler Youth corps.»²¹

Several factors have combined in the United States to undermine understanding of the moral dangers implicit in our economic system. Probably most prominent has been the appearance of a literature, almost a theology of acquisitiveness.²² The economic success after World War II implanted in the general public a powerful incentive to justify rather than critique the consumer culture.

As early as the 1960's, Harvey Cox warned of the ethical dangers arising from surrendering healing powers to the state.²³ Yet, how could that not happen when, as Philip Rieff noted in 1959, modern technology had provided the means to feed more of the hungry than compassion ever had.²⁴ Even the poor in America lived better in most cases than all but the richest in previous epochs. Yet, oddly, the fixation always is on getting.²⁵ The affluent families of most college students, who probably have succeeded because of their rational calculation of economic options, have difficulty finding a significant role for a transcendent God or ethical beliefs, no matter how formally religious they may be. Their religion is about being nice, including not stealing consumer goods from their neighbors. Service is promoted as helping the less affluent get the things of the more affluent, from tutoring to building «Habitat» houses. The theological concept that the service relationship should be inherently good is undermined by the acquisitiveness hidden even in much of the social gospel.²⁶ As one critic phrased this problem, «Is theology possible for North American Christians?»²⁷ As there may be no theology, so there is no ethics, only help with getting things? Consumerism has impacted all Americans in several ways. First, there is its materialism and focus on the self. Second, however, there are the institutional consequences. Americans generally have become much less dogmatic than in the past and hence more willing to move among institutions until they find a comfortable one.²⁸ Studies of church congregations point out how this process works, leading to rejection of hierarchical imposition of specific teachings, but welcoming general calls for «thoughtful and responsible ... moral living.»²⁹

The general citizenry, once they accept their role as consumers, see powerful institutions limiting their control over their lives. The government imposes taxes, which reduces their choice. Their pension plans impose control over the assets being saved for retirement. Their colleges have exceptional endowed assets, but those also cannot be controlled by individual decisions. Institutional managers who also are powerless to do anything but maximize returns for their powerless clients make all decisions.

The projects at Alma have attempted to address this challenge. A core component of each experience is to expose students to their participation and even profiting from the problems they observe. A basic step of the border course is to review the ownership of the manufacturing plants (maquiladoras) that dot the cities on the south side of the Rio Grande/Bravo. For some honesty, they are asked to review the TIAA/CREF stock listings to show how people such as college faculty profit from the low cost production facilities they come to abhor.³⁰ Students should easily understand the way they, as purchasers of products cheapened by content of cheap labor, benefit from and contribute to the system they observe. Reading brief excerpts from Robert Fogel's studies of the economics of slavery also should help get across the role of consumers in profiting from egregious labor exploitation.³¹ Yet, on average, only one student in the class has remained active in efforts to confront these issues.

Likewise, the Pine River Project exposes the hollowness of much market rhetoric about volunteerism if not guided by some communal laws that impose standards. Both Joseph Regenstein and Ben Heineman who owned Velsicol were models of voluntary service to their community, donating not merely some time to help with civil rights or the arts, but vast sums of money. However, they did not observe and even resisted any compulsion to protect their workers or the environments around their factories. While students have trouble accepting and living by the lesson, they have difficulty not seeing it, however, briefly. Yet, the voluntarism of the campus allows many to escape these essential lessons and launch a career, if not a calling, consuming more than they sustain.

3. Justification of Success and Condemnation of Failure as Evil

The tension between the popular culture and social responsibility has been at the core of culture since the time of the Hebrew prophets, and present in America since the European settlement and probably long before. The tendency for the religiously devout to move from the Christianity of a hill country carpenter to selfishness and greed has spawned some of the classic theories of western culture and historical causation, from Weber's thesis about Protestantism and capitalism, through more limited but important cultural studies.³² It is especially relevant to recall that Weber found the ultimate personification of his theory not to be some Dutch or Geneva Calvinist, where the founders of his Protestantism lived, but in the colonial American - Benjamin Franklin. Franklin's confident acceptance of success built upon rational planning and calculation had the impact of removing mystery from redemption for his followers.

It was easy for Franklin's followers, de-Christianized Calvinists, to move from his methodology for economic success to a theory of good and evil grounded in the personal effort to calculate and pursue economic advantage. As old as the ancient Manichean faith in a world governed by forces of good and evil, this anti-Christian Christianity would become a distinctly popular American heresy. The universal struggle against sin documented by St. Augustine became a struggle of the righteous American entrepreneur against the sinners of the world, clearly marked off by their lack of affluence. As generations of cultural historians, from Perry Miller to Andrew Delbanco, have reminded us, anti-Augustinian «realism» - Christian charity converted into Manichean righteousness - has been a dominant motif in American religious culture.³³

Such beliefs seemed so «holy,» only the most experienced and perceptive observers could critique it, any critic risks being painted as un-American or dismissed. Consider the fate of Harriet Beecher Stowe who wrote the most influential book in American history attacking Manicheanism, only to be dismissed as a second rate romantic. She had seen first hand her father personify the bigotry and self-righteousness inherent in American religion. She created an acceptable alternative vision in her merciful slaveholder, Augustine St. Clare.³⁴ But, since most Americans neither had Rev. Lyman Beecher for a father nor were blessed with the remarkable insight of his daughter, we generally missed the point and remember St. Clare as the drunken father of a saint. The blindness continues of course, and Manicheanism remains ubiquitous in the academy and the professorate. Usually, it remains unseen in its modern secular garb, such as when it justifies charitable tax deductions for higher education focused on preparing students for lucrative careers.

While most churches, since Augustine, repeatedly have attacked this heresy, the Augustinian critique has weakened in the modern world, especially in modern America. Hannah Arendt reminded us that the Manichean strain has become rampant throughout the world in the last century, distracting us with a search for radical evil and blinding us to the really dangerous «banal» form.³⁵ Students are not helped by the modern academy that is filled with partisans in engaged in varied cultural wars, certainly not the best milieu for learning the knowledge and academic skills to be self-conscious critics of our selves and our world. Even the socially concerned students in the Mexico border course were undecided if «most misfortunes that occur to people are frequently the results of circumstances beyond their control.» We can imagine what those who did not sign-up for class know about that question.

4. The Breakdown of Community Identity and Sustainability in an Age of Globalization:

Specifically related to concepts of service, though primarily on the domestic level, has been the disappearance of a commitment to a social compact to maintain order and justice. Early 20th Century leaders had pioneered such a compact on the local level.³⁶ Post-war laissez faire culture abandoned that compact. What good could come from restraining all the innovations of individual initiative? Now, the emphasis is on providing incentive for all to seek maximum accumulation by guaranteeing nothing to anyone.³⁷ In community after community, the elites abandoned any pretense of needing to worship and serve other beings. Even Christian elites came to worship their success, believing the illusion, as Christopher Lasch observed, «that human purposes coincided with those of God.»³⁸ The commitment to or awareness of community became especially problematic with the twin modern trends toward suburbanization and spatial mobility. Research repeatedly found that modern America lacked strong communities and was burying commitment to one another under a fierce commitment to individualism. We were retreating into the ex-urbs and gated communities, where our children could attend school voluntarily with more of their kind or even be home schooled without others.³⁹ In our weakened communities we needed more therapy to guide the self through a world where ties to others, whether spouses, extended families, or neighbors, were not stable.

Finally, in work related to the environment, there is the tension between individual wealth and community preservation. Whether Garrett Hardin's mythical tragedy of the commons or the daily small decisions of local developers to forget the sustainable for the quick «buck» that may bring «jobs to your community,» there is a popular perception that there is an inevitable trade-off between the environment and economic vitality.⁴⁰ So long as we allow students to volunteer for which community experience they will pursue, this perceptual conflict will not be resolved and the local will be sacrificed to the global.

5. Expert Dominance in Democracy:

Complicating facing the other challenges is one inherent in higher education, the challenge of the expert. Our students are preparing to be experts who control specific portions of the world, free, if possible, from the intervention of the uninformed. Medical experts with more knowledge of disease and human anatomy make health choice than ever conceived even a century ago. Education must be assessed by complex tests only understood by psychologists and various disciplinary professionals. Pollution is measured in parts per billion, fathomed only by the natural scientists. What is the citizen role? It is to select the most photogenic spokesperson for a faction of the professional elite.⁴¹

The core of this challenge is the assumption by students planning upon professional certification in some specialized expertise is the related promise of the right to control policy related to the profession. College students as most of their predecessors who currently control the private and public bureaucracies of modernity are not very sympathetic to yielding influence over their work to the uninitiated average citizen. Most importantly, they are trained not to see that yielding some power is what ought to be done to maintain a democratic society. Frank Fischer's recent book on citizens and environmental policy as much of the literature in community health has verified the value of «local knowledge» even in «scientific» fields.⁴² Student experiences with the CAG or with IAF organizations on the border has tended to confirm the lessons made in the literature. Average citizens often do «know» what experts cannot. Yet, only a handful of students want to get involved in these successful organizations. Only one, the 'valedictorian and an Udall winner, wished to serve as a CAG officer and is the only student regularly to attend meetings.

We have been somewhat successful in helping students see the value expertise on abuse of power, a very important insight.⁴³ Such an effort while worthwhile has the negative consequences both of making some experts more arrogant and for others hiding the accompanying tendency for more experts being in the service of power than be the critics. The field of environmental policy is especially one where these perceptual problems are the clearest. Inherently, environmental problems grow from the products and processes developed by experts. Only the most oblivious cannot see that expertise is as much a part of the problem as it is a core of the solution. The solution lies as much in democratic empowerment and professional modesty as in the exposure of the powerful to the will of the expert. That a powerful movement has developed in recent years to confront this problem provides a literature useful in exposing those students participating in projects to this challenge.⁴⁴

CONCLUSION

It is the contention of this paper and the experiences of the projects with which I have been involved at Alma College that we need to be very careful and very intentional in designing service experiences for our students. Service must teach students of their privileges, of the ethical complexity of the world, of the value of community, the complicating motives of consumer culture, and the benefits of democracy or it risks creating self-satisfied, complacent experts unaware of the world's complexity and of our potential to make it worse, as well as better. The projects at Alma have been targeted at these issues and yet have not succeeded in being institutionalized or in changing many students' perceptions.

The solution not only at Alma but throughout higher education would seem to be confronting explicitly the challenges identified above or any others which can be found that explain the limited success of service-learning.

NOTES

1. See Stephen Miller, *Science and Society: Redefining the Relationship* (Providence: Campus Compact, 1996), 67-72.
2. See Rebecca Rawls, Students Study Environmental Issues on U.S.-Mexican Border, *Chemical and Engineering News* (20 September 1999), 73.
3. On earliest complaint see Institute for Fisheries Research, University of Michigan. «Death of Fish in Pine River, Gratiot County, Michigan, Report 306,» 16 August 1935 and for complaint of 121 citizens in September 1941, see *St. Louis (Michigan) Leader*, 4 September 1941, 1.
4. Letter from Velsicol to Houghton-Mifflin, 2 August 1962 and 14 August 1962, in Rachel Carson Papers, Yale University Library, New Haven, CT.
5. On Regenstein see obituary in *Chicago Tribune*, 6 March 1999, 17.
6. Joyce Egginton, *The Poisoning of Michigan* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1980); and Edwin Chen, *PBB: An American Tragedy* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1979); and Edward C. Lorenz, «Containing the Michigan PBB Crisis, 1973-1992: Testing the Environmental Policy Process,» *Environmental History Review* 17 (Summer 1993), 49-68
7. Kenneth E. Vanlier, *Ground-Water Resources of the Alma Area Michigan: Geological Survey Water-Supply Paper 1619-E* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1963), E5, E40-42.
8. Letter from Nicole Cantello, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to John Wittenboro and LeAnn Johnson, Attorneys, 13 May 1997.
9. See, for example, Margaret McQuaile, et al, «Total Signs for Pars: U.S. Move Awaited,» *Platts Oilgram News*, 30 September 1997, 1, on Total needing to sell U.S. assets to avoid possible sanctions.
10. The six student presented their research at the Michigan Public Management Institute in May 1992, see *PA Times* (July, 1992), 8.
11. See *St. Louis, Michigan: The Fallout from the Michigan PBB Crisis* (Livingston, KY: Appalachia Science in the Public Interest Publications, 1993).
12. The CAG was formed under EPA regulations (OSWERD Directive 9230.0-28),
13. See for example: B. Barker and B. C. Peters, ed, *The Politics of Expert Advice* (Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1993); S. B. Brush and S. Stabinsky, *Valuing Local Knowledge: Indigenous People and Intellectual Property Rights* (Washington: Island Press, 1996) and D. Chess and P. M. Sandman, «Community Use of Quantitative Risk Assessment,» *Science for the People* (January-February 1989).
14. In that time period sixty-one students have taken the class, 51 women and 10 men. The women have included three minorities (two African Americans and one Hispanic) while the males have included two minorities.
15. An early critic of this trend was Robert Hutchins, the proponent of the general liberal education at the University of Chicago, see *The Learning Society* (New York: Frederick Praeger, 1968), 11-12.

16. John Cotton, «A Christian Calling,» in *The American Puritans: Their Prose and Poetry*, Perry Miller, ed. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1956), 174.
17. Richard Foster, *Streams of Living Water* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1998), 270.
18. Sharon Parks, *The Critical Years. Young Adults and the Search for Meaning, Faith, and Commitment* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1986), 14.
19. Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000).
20. Everett Carl Ladd, «The American Way-Civic Engagement - Thrives,» *Christian Science Monitor*, 1 March 1999,9.
21. On the conference see William M. Evers, ed., *National Service Pro and Con* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1990); and an interesting commentary by one of the conservative critics of Anderson and Friedman, William F. Buckley, Jr., *Gratitude: Reflections on What We Owe to Our Country* (New York: Random House, 1990), 49.
22. See Michael Liensch, *Redeeming America: Piety and Politics in the New Christian Right* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1993), 94-138.
23. Harvey Cox, *The Secular City* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), 163.
24. Philip Rieff, *Freud: The Mind of the Moralizer* (New York: Harper and Row, 1959), 293.
25. See for example the discussion of home communication technology «It Adds Up (and Up, and Up),» *The New York Times*, 10 April 2003, F1.
26. Susan Curtis, *A Consuming Faith: The Social Gospel and Modern American Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 179-227, on this transition in the social gospel.
27. Sallie McFague, *Life Abundant: Rethinking Theology and Economy for a Planet in Peril* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 25.
28. James Hudnut-Beumler, *Looking for- God in the Suburbs* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 200-205.
29. Dean R. Hoge, Benton Johnson, and Donald Luidens, *Vanishing Boundaries: The Religion of Mainline Protestant Baby Boomers* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 209, see also Nancy Taton Ammerman, *Congregation and Community* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997).
30. See for example: TIAA-CREF, *College Retirement Equities Fund, Semiannual Report 2002*
31. Robert W. Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1974), 246.
32. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1930); and his critic, R.H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (New York: A Mentor **BOOK**, 1926).
33. Andrew Delbanco, *The Puritan Ordeal* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 235-241 and Perry Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), 9.
34. Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1994), 190-206.
35. Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin Books, 1965), 126-134, and see the discussion of Arendt in Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Augustine and the Limits of Politics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 69-87.
36. Mary Lethert Wingerd, *Claiming the City: Politics, Faith, and the Power of Place in St. Paul* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), discusses generally the work of Father John Augustine Ryan and Archbishop John Ireland with James Hill to make St Paul a city with labor peace.

37. Benjamin Barber, *Jihad vs. McWorld* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1995), 211-214, examines the threat perceived to local communities from rampant capitalism.
38. Christopher Lasch, *The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy* (London: W.W. Norton, 1995), 228.
39. For the classic study of these trends, see Robert Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart. Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (New York: Harper and Row, 1985) and even older Phillip Slater, *The Pursuit of Loneliness* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1990 [originally published in 1970]).
40. Garrett Harden, «The Tragedy of the Commons,» *Science* 162, 13 December 1968; on the general debate see Mary H. Cooper, «Jobs vs. Environment,» *CQ Researcher*, 15 May 1992.
41. For a discussion of these issues see Matthew Crenson and Benjamin Ginsberg, *Downsizing Democracy: How America Sidelined Its Citizens and Privatized Its Public* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2002).
42. Frank Fischer, *Citizens, Experts, and the Environment : The Politics of Local Knowledge* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000) and I. Kandt N Osius, B. Holdke, and Wilfried Karmaus, «The Role and Advantage of Community Activists in Epidemiological Studies,» in R. Frenzel-Beyme et al., ed., *Environmental Epidemiology in Europe* (Bremen: Bremen Institute for Prevention Research and Social Medicine, 1995), 44-50.
43. D. Collingsridge and C. Reeves, *Science Speaks to Power: The Role of Experts in Polirymaking* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986); and J. Gaventa, «The Powerful, the Powerless, and the Experts: Knowledge in the Information Age,» in *Voices of Change: Participatory Research in the United States and Canada*, ed. P. Park et al. (Toronto: OISE Press, 1993), 20-46.
44. J. S. Dryzek~ «Strategies of Ecological Democratization,» in *Democracy and the Environment*, ed. W.M. Lafferty and J. Meadowcroft (Cheltenham, U.K.: Edward Elgar, 1996), 108-123; D. J. Fiorino, «Citizen Participation and Environmental Risk: A Survey of Institutional Mechanisms,» *Science, Technology and Human Values* 15: 226-243; R P. Hiskes, *Democracy, Risk, and Community* (N.Y.: Oxford Univ. Press, 1998); L. Hoffman, *The Politic of Knowledge: Activist Movements in Medicine and Planning* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), and P. Novotny, «Popular Epidemiology and the Struggle for Community Health in the Environmental Justice Movement,» in *The Struggle for Ecological Democracy*, D. Faber, ed. (New York: Guilford Press, 1998).

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[Back to current electronic table of contents](#)