

Community-based service-learning: Partnerships of reciprocal exchange?

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Community-based service-learning (CBSL) integrates experiential learning and academic goals with organized activities designed to meet the objectives of community partners. CBSL has potential to enhance (1) academic learning, (2) foster civic responsibility, (3) develop life skills and (4) transform student attitudes. However, little research supports claims that benefits are mutual amongst host counterparts. A lack of empirical research into community partner conceptualizations of best practice approaches and impacts, reflects a uni-dimensional understanding of the mutuality of programs, and fails to challenge dominant power relations embedded in traditionally uneven partnerships. It remains problematic to engage with service-learning without considering neocolonialist ideologies underpinning the ways community service, international development, and volunteering are defined and practiced. Drawing on development discourse, this paper first demonstrates how intertwined CBSL is with contemporary development agendas; second, brings attention to the absence of partner perspectives and involvement within CBSL studies; and third, outlines a CBSL research agenda. (*Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 2013 14(3), 171-184)

Keywords: Community-based Service-learning, Reciprocity, Mutual benefit, Community development, International service-learning, Community-based research

The institutional enthusiasm surrounding the potential for community-based service-learning (CBSL) to transform both learning and teaching, has seen the expansion of service-learning activities in higher education and an increase in community-campus partnerships over the last two decades (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002). The increased growth of the service-learning phenomenon mirrors the increased popularity of student volunteerism within the local and global community (Mooney & Edwards, 2001). These two movements have been traced historically through time, however little attention has been given to their intersection within the development arena. This is despite the rise of public participation in social, environmental, economic and community development initiatives. This paper focuses on CBSL programs that combine international travel, cultural exchange, academic credit and learning objectives with service activities designed to assist the priorities of community partners². Such programs are distinguished from other service-learning initiatives by their intentional engagement with issues of social justice, oppression, poverty and inequality (Jones, 2002).

Although development practice has been predominately dominated by government agencies and nongovernmental organizations (NGO), higher education institutions through service-learning programs are increasingly becoming involved in the industry. As a community-based intervention/interaction, service-learning is inherently historically and ideologically connected to participatory community development discourse and practice. However, service-learning research and practice has yet to engage critically, in any significant way, with community development thinking, or draw on alternative models of development and community-based research (CBR) practices (Stoecker, Loving, Reddy, & Bollig, 2010). It is imperative that practitioners and researchers alike recognize and critically engage not only

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² For the purpose of this paper, 'community partner' refers to those who are external to the university and are either actively involved with (e.g. as members of community-based NGO's), or influenced by CBSL activities.

with the pitfalls of doing development but also its possibilities. Crabtree (2008, p.24) for example argues:

Our ability to incorporate an understanding of development's complex history, some knowledge of comparative ideologies of development, and analysis of the contexts where we work will all be crucial if we are to engage in ethical and responsible ISL (international service-learning) work.

The ethical complexities of engaging in development work and research, has gained much attention in development related literature (Mikkelsen, 2005). If service-learning is to avoid reinforcing a student centered charity model, the development field (including participatory, action-based and feminist approaches to CBR) provides an alternative framework for universities to collaboratively develop and conduct ethically appropriate projects with community partners that are based on mutual respect, understanding and joint participation and negotiation. A CBR methodology, for example, would not only inform community centered service-learning, but also guide critically reflective research, and ongoing project monitoring and evaluation (Crabtree, 2008).

This paper uses a development lens to reframe service-learning theory and practice as a way to analyze power relations embedded within CBSL partnerships and to further deconstruct the notion of mutual reciprocity between universities and community partners. Issues of power have been at the centre of participatory development research and practice for the past two decades (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003). A development perspective brings to the surface the often hidden, but deeply embedded ideologies that inform service-learning, also evident within community development and international volunteering. In the context of CBSL the legacy of colonialism pervades any attempt to collaborate, participate and interact. The hierarchies and binaries between the researcher and researched, and community and campus are so evident within the body of CBSL research that it does not reflect the current collaborative practice with which it advocates (Stoecker, 2009a). Furthermore, a continuing bias toward research into student-learning goals, to the exclusion of any consideration of community development outcomes, means little is known if programs support community partner interests (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009). As such, this paper will 1) demonstrate how closely intertwined CBSL is with contemporary development agendas; 2) bring attention to the absence of community partner perspectives and involvement within CBSL studies; and 3) outline a CBSL research agenda.

INTERNATIONAL SERVICE-LEARNING FOR DEVELOPMENT

Combining international travel with voluntary developmental service is by no means a recent concept. Developmental volunteering in its earliest form can be traced back to early missionary movements and the commencement of long term United States Peace Corp projects in the 1960s. Only in recent years has it been characterized by the rapid expansion of specifically short term, organized student/volunteer programs (Ehrichs, 2000). Government and nongovernment organizations and more recently university institutions have encouraged public participation in community development programs in areas such as poverty reduction, business development, community work, environmental preservation, and cultural exchange (Lewis, 2005). International service-learning (ISL) programs and international development interventions are intimately connected, not only by the type of work (i.e. construction, education, healthcare and other tangible based outputs) but by their

aspiration to intervene and ‘make a difference’ to the lives of others (Crabtree, 2008; Mountz, Moore & Brown, 2008).

In response to the overly Eurocentric nature of top-down economic models to development, and to address concerns of unequal power relations created and sustained through such approaches, current thinking within alternative development has been concerned with participatory and people centered approaches (Sanderson & Kindon, 2004). Arguments in support of participatory development are numerous and are predicated on the belief that such strategies are more likely to meet the needs of primary beneficiaries by giving them a voice and encouraging empowerment through inclusion. However, in practice, such an approach has come under increased scrutiny in its claimed failure to transform and redistribute power relations (Cook & Kothari, 2001; Cornwall, 2006; Mathie & Cunningham, 2003).

Relationships of power are particularly apparent in debates around the highly problematic concept of participation. Participation can be a mechanism for empowerment, but can also be a mechanism for rendering the ‘poor’ even more powerless by an agenda that was not theirs to begin with (Chambers, 2005). In a colonial context of dominance, invasion and intervention, service-learning could be viewed as a “conscious intervention” that promotes change (or disturbance) within highly complex and potentially vulnerable contexts (Butin, 2010, pp.18-19). Conceptualizations of service-learning are historically intertwined with imperialistic ideology. Cruz (1990, p.322) for example reflects:

...I resist the notion of service learning for U.S. students in the Philippines, my country of origin, because I think it perpetuates a “colonial mentality” among Filipinos and a kind of “manifest destiny” among U.S. students. To my way of thinking, the results of the history of U.S. dominance in the Philippines is so overwhelming that it is almost impossible for a U.S. student doing what is regarded on both sides as “service” not to deliver a message of superiority.

Development practice and international aid can easily, unintentionally, and sometimes unquestionably replicate forms of neocolonialism (Kahn, 2011). Although, contemporary development practice attempts to distinguish itself from the dominant development archetype by creating ‘bottom-up’ change that is collaborative, responsive and empowering to those who participate, discourses of colonialism remain apparent and the practice of participating problematic.

Although related, ISL does differ from alternative tourism-based volunteer activities (such as educational travel, volunteer tourism, and gap-year travel). Reflection and reciprocity are concepts used by CBSL scholars to differentiate service-learning activities from community service, volunteerism and other forms of experiential learning and community development (Butin, 2003). At its finest ISL has the potential to provide:

A structured academic experience in another country in which students (a) participate in an organized service activity that addresses identified community needs; (b) learn from direct interaction and cross-cultural dialogue with others; and (c) reflect on the experiences in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content; a deeper understanding of global and intercultural issues, a broader appreciation of the host country and the discipline, and an enhanced sense of their own responsibilities as citizens, locally and globally (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011, p.19).

Although programs are designed heavily around materially-based projects, ISL arguably, emphasizes a 'here to learn' rather than a 'here to help' paradigm, with a greater focus on mutual learning as opposed to difference making (Plater, 2011). In this sense, ISL is about changing people's place in the world, rather than about changing the place students happen to get that experience. Viewing ISL as a model with the capacity to bridge current cultural and ideological divides between the North and the South helps to revalue mutual learning, understanding and relationship building as a meaningful form of development work (Devereux, 2008, Grusky, 2000). ISL thus, "presents educational opportunities with complex ethical considerations" and as such requires further attention and critical analysis (Bamber & Pike, 2013, p.3).

Whilst I support the educational opportunities of ISL, what is of concern, is the lack of attention given to an analysis of service-learning within an international context, despite the strong intersection between international development, volunteering and ISL activities (Crabtree, 2008). Unfortunately, even less attention has been given to international community partner perspectives (notable exceptions being Baker-Boosamra, Guevara & Balfour, 2006; Camacho, 2004; Crabtree, 2013; Porter & Monard, 2001). Emerging research tends to be descriptive and focus on program design and logistics, while empirically-based research primarily examines the impacts of ISL programs from either a faculty or student perspective (Crabtree, 2013). One exception is Bringle, Hatcher and Jones' (2011) edited book titled 'International service-learning' which explores the ideological and theoretical foundations of ISL and in doing so begins to ask critical questions around ethics, politics and power as they relate to ISL research, practice, and partnerships.

Kahn (2011) for example focuses on ISL and its interception with neo-colonialist discourse, international aid agendas and dominant development paradigms. This contribution highlights the need for researchers and practitioners to acknowledge the interconnectivity and complexity of CBSL experiences and the broader historical, political, geographical, and ideological contexts with which they operate. Despite such contributions, scant research into ISL fails to recognize that 1) imperialist attitudes remain within the frameworks with which it originated and 2) service-learning still needs to undergo a process of decolonization (Kahn, 2011). This is especially important considering the dominant and perpetual discourse of Western concepts of development and aid as unidirectional pathways to progress; a model which community engagement and service-learning as a reciprocal exchange process is attempting to redefine.

LANGUAGE OF NEEDS AND DIVISION

Traditional understandings of public outreach and service have seen service-learning operate within a unidirectional framework of 'doing for', rather than 'doing with' (Ward & Wolf-Wendal, 2000). The emphasis placed on the one-way transfer of knowledge, expertise and service from universities to communities not only reinforces stereotypes of communities as helpless and in need of external others, but also further perpetuates dominant power relations embedded in uneven partnerships (Weertes & Sandmann, 2008). Reciprocity is commonly understood within the service-learning literature as the relationships between the 'service providers' and 'service receivers' and the mutuality between their needs and outcomes. For Kendall (as cited in Henry & Breyfogle, 2006, p.27) reciprocity is "the exchange of both giving and receiving between the server and the person or group being served". Furthermore, she believes that "such service-learning exchange avoids the traditionally

paternalistic, one-way approach to service in which one person or group has resources which they share 'charitably' or 'voluntarily' with a person or group that lacks resources".

However, it is much more complex than this. For example, the word 'service' itself is loaded with assumptions, which inherently insinuates and perpetuates a certain (dominant) discourse and way of 'doing' that ultimately creates divisions of power and inequality. Consider other phrases such as giver-receiver, provider-recipient, server-served widely used to describe the community-campus relationship. These are all suggestive of relationships dominated by hierarchy and superiority where one has the resources and capacity while the other does not (Baker-Boosamra et al, 2006; King, 2004). Yapa (1996, p.712-713) for example, uses the development industry to illustrate the subject/object binary – where "authors of poverty studies are subjects and poor people in poverty are objects". If the poor (the object) are constantly viewed as the problem, then the non poor (the subject) are repeatedly put in the category of the non problem. Those placed within this latter category then "become the source of intellect, analysis, policy, resources, and solution". In the context of service-learning, it is the university who is positioned within the realm of the non-problem, while the community (or the poor) is then positioned as objects in *need* of care, help and development.

The word 'need' itself is often understood as a deficiency or short-coming in the object (Eby, 1998). According to McKnight (1996, p.46) the concept of need is based on the assumption that:

...I, the professional servicer, *am the answer*. You are not the answer. Your peers are not the answer. *The political, social, and economic environment* is not the answer. Nor is it possible that there is no answer. I, the professional, *am the answer*....I the professional produce. You the client, consume.

The idea of 'solutions' or 'help' as coming from external sources reifies the notion that communities are deficient and undermines their existing knowledges, skills and expertise (Eby, 1998). This model does not challenge, but rather reinforces the idea of academics as experts and continues to place them within a position of power to transform communities and their experiences within the service-learning context (Plitt & Daughtery, 2011). This raises questions regarding the extent to which community partner organizations are involved in service-learning programs and whether short term isolated engagements further perpetuate an illusion that external 'others' (in this case those involved with Western academic institutions) represent the 'solution' to community development issues. This is not to suggest (although perhaps traditionally the case) that all higher education institutions adopt the role of 'expert' or 'charity' model that sees them *doing for* communities, as opposed to a *doing with* perspective based on solidarity and mutuality. However, the use of such language suggests the community is more of a beneficiary of knowledge and resources, than in a partnership of exchange.

Such a critique raises an essential question: "what right do we have to enter this community" (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011, p.20). Fundamental to this is the notion that people can do, and already do, a lot to help themselves. We must remember that partner communities have agency to enact and reap benefit from these encounters as well. For example, Leiderman, Furco, Zapf & Goss (2003, p.8) found that partner organizations "carefully weigh the ratio of benefits to risks and costs in deciding to enter into, or continue in, a community/campus partnership". Perhaps, then we should also ask: What are the existing experiences, practices, knowledges and skills of partner communities and how can they structure and restructure service-learning programs? For example, Crabtree (2008, p.23) highlights the crucial role

partner NGOs play in “connecting more meaningfully to organized communities”, “facilitating cross-cultural relationships”, and “providing needed perspectives on development and politics in the countries” with which students work. Framing the community as also offering students a service helps to repaint the negative image of communities as deficient or lacking (Grusky, 2000; Plater, 2011).

MYTH OF MUTUAL-BENEFIT

The term engagement made a prominent appearance in the 1990s with the renewed vision of ‘service’ as more collaborative and equitable. The term was used to symbolize the two-way exchange process between campus and community (Weerts & Sandmann, 2008). Although much confusion remains centered around how to conceptualize CBSL, most definitions incorporate what Butin (2003) refers to as the four Rs – respect, reciprocity, relevance, and reflection. The role of reciprocity in the service-learning relationship, in particular, has received much scholarly attention with many (Kendall, 1990; Porter & Monard, 2001; Robinson & Green, 2011; Simons & Clearly, 2006) highlighting mutual benefit as a defining feature of service-learning theory and practice.

However, far from a linear progression from traditional models of service to existing modes of engagement, it is inevitable that multiple understandings will continue to inform and underscore diverse ways of thinking and doing service-learning and other community-based engagement activities. These thoughts are shared by Head (2007, p. 452) who believes it “premature to suggest that a new era of community engagement, understood as partnership and collaboration, is about to replace the old era of hierarchical control and regulation”. Similarly, critics of service-learning, question claims of mutual benefit (Butin, 2003; Cruz & Giles, 2000; Kendall, 1990; Oldfield, 2008; Stoecker & Tryon, 2009) and the transformative learning potential of service-learning for both students and community partners (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Recently Oldfield (2008, p.270) restated that much “research proceeds with the assumption that projects can be mutually beneficial, but without an empirical or conceptual analysis of how this mutuality is constituted.” Others, such as Camacho (2004) and Weerts & Sandmann, (2008, pp.99-100) challenge the notion of mutuality by suggesting it acts as a way of disguising relations of power, or question whether the concept of engagement is a marketing strategy more “symbolic than substantive”. Commentators also conclude that service-learning programs have the potential, if left unexamined, to exploit communities for free education (Eby, 1998); perpetuate dependency and objectify others as poor (Baker-Boosamra et al, 2006); represent dominant charity models which are paternalistic in approach and reinforce the stereotype of communities as helpless (Brown, 2001; Marullo & Edwards, 2000; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000); and are beset by partnerships with communication issues (Birdshall, 2005; Jones, 2003) and cultural differences (Bacon, 2002; Jones, 2003). Indeed, service-learning may not result in mutually beneficial exchanges, and in some cases might result in adverse affects for community partners.

Simpson (2004) attributes the lack of research regarding potential impacts to the dominant ideology “that doing something is better than doing nothing, and therefore, that doing anything, is reasonable” (p. 685). Although Simpson’s (2004) argument is based on gap year organizations, her critique remains applicable to understandings of service-learning; for if learning through participation is to lead to mutually beneficial transformations, it must be widely acknowledged that good intentions are often embedded in processes that lead to uneven distributions of power. The problem/no problem dualism in this way enable students

to separate themselves from the problems they encounter and learn about (Eby, 1998). Such divisions perpetuate an understanding of social issues as simplistic, where inequality and power remain associated with an idea of luck, and diversity which extends little beyond dichotomies of 'us and them' (Simpson, 2004). Socially constructed divisions contain enduring ideological connotations that continue to shape and inform ways of understanding and practicing (Yapa, 1996). As a result, service-learning should continue to be critiqued for its politically contentious nature, especially considering it attempts to challenge power inequality or positions of privilege with little acknowledgment of its deep historical entrenchment.

Against this backdrop, there have been renewed calls to revisit the concept of reciprocity as it is dominantly understood within service-learning (Henry & Breyfogle, 2006). For example, Porter and Monard (2001, p.1) suggest, rather than viewing reciprocity as a "hand-up" (as opposed to a hand-out), view it as a "hand to" in an attempt to "nurture mutuality by fostering respect and collaboration". Fox (2002, p.7) even suggests focusing on "learning as a form of service rather than on learning by way of service" to emphasize the importance of reciprocal learning as a key objective, outcome and mode of service exchange. Furthermore, Crabtree (2013) and Oldfield (2008, p.282) argue that the tangible aspects of 'service' act as the vessel through which relationships are built "that underpin the research process and the learning on both sides". This is a counter response to a service model which sets up undeliverable project outcomes, and in support of the notion that the sharing and exchange of ideas can lead to a level of cultural understanding that bridges current cultural divides (Porter & Monard, 2001). Emphasizing learning over service, or as a form of service, helps overcome paternalistic attitudes embedded in the "mission tendency" (Woolf, 2005, p.31). However, if learning is seen as a reciprocal exchange, it is also important to understand what community partners learn, how they learn, and whether there are any transformative impacts for them.

PROMOTING COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY

The lack of research to support claims that programs result in mutually beneficial learning and engagement, and actively contribute to 'positive' social change can be attributed to the under-representation of community partner perspectives within academic research. Little critical inquiry has examined the objectives, motivations, and impacts of service-learning on host counterparts (Baker-Boosamra et al, 2006; Birdshall, 2005; Blouin & Perry, 2009; Kiely & Hartman, 2011; Sandy & Holland, 2006; Tonkin, 2011) or the "after-lives" of tangible projects produced (Oldfield, 2008). While a relatively significant portion of the literature focuses on principles for developing collaborative community/campus partnerships, research on partnerships from a community partner perspective is also severely lacking (Leiderman et al, 2003). In 2000, Cruz and Giles (2000, p.28) warned that service-learning literature was "almost devoid of research that looks at the community either as a dependant or independent variable", and over a decade later the field reflects a similar picture. This trend has been attributed to a number of factors including, the ongoing and contentious debate around what constitutes 'community' (Sandy & Holland, 2006); a lack of institutional and financial support (d'Arlach, Sánchez & Feuer, 2009); theoretical and methodological challenges (Cruz & Giles, 2000); and practical and logistical constraints (Crabtree, 2013).

The empirical research that does examine community partner impacts and perceptions refer, in most cases, to the directors, supervisors, and other related staff of partner organizations, but

does not include wider 'community' members who may also be influenced by service-learning programs. Furthermore, the majority of such studies use survey tools and follow-up interviews on partner (i.e. supervisor) satisfaction with students, community-campus partnerships and overall service performance, and conclude that community partners are relatively satisfied with service-learning programs and the students that participate in them (Edwards, Mooney & Heald, 2001; Ferarri & Worrall, 2000; Ward & Vernon, 1999). Of particular significance, however, is the absence of community participation in formulating study measures and survey instruments, or sufficient justification for the research methodology adopted (Kiely & Hartman, 2011; Miron & Moely, 2006). It remains unclear whether criteria used to measure responses are appropriate to assess CBSL if partners have not been involved in their formulation (Birdshall, 2005; Reardon, 1998; Stoecker & Tryon, 2009).

Partner communities are increasingly seen as co-educators, but are yet to be recognized as collaborators of inquiry. If the practice of service-learning is to be built upon the foundations of reciprocity and collaborative partnerships, it follows that research practice should adopt similar underlying principles. In response, some commentators (Crabtree, 2008; Mountz et al., 2008; Reardon, 1998; Sandy & Holland, 2006; Stoecker, 2009a, 2009b; Stoecker et al, 2010; Tryon and Stoecker, 2008) have sought wider influence from postcolonial, feminist and participatory action based (PAR) approaches to inform alternative community-based research (CBR) methodologies that engage community partners as partners in the research and CBSL process.

CBR is an umbrella term for a diverse range of methodologies that centre around three concepts as outlined by Minkler (2005): 1) participation; 2) research; and 3) action. At the core of such a framework are issues of power, knowledge, ethics, reflexivity, and representation (Kiely & Hartman, 2011; Pain, 2004). Regardless of the participatory method or action research framework, there are a number of principles transferable to the CBSL context. These include, to: recognize and engage with complex power relations; build on strengths and existing skills of the communities/partners; listen and learn from local knowledge; promote co-learning and joint decision making; facilitate not dictate; critically reflect on individual and organizational practice; integrate learning and action; recognize the contribution of all and their ownership over knowledge; and represent diversity and diverse perspectives (Israel, Schultz, Parker & Becker, 1998; Mikkelsen, 2005). CBR, PAR, feminist community research, and postcolonial research, all attempt to bring to the forefront the voices of those often excluded in knowledge production and decision making. Crabtree (2008, p.26) believes that these "alternative paradigms can inform ISL with a set of values, a language of critique, principles, and guidelines for appropriate collaboration and participation, and the shared goals of reciprocity, mutual empowerment, and social change". Drawing on such approaches may guide community partners to direct the service-learning process in ways that benefit them.

The overall agenda of CBR is molded methodologically around an ethics of reciprocity. Exploring these alternative paradigms can help us to think about how we can define and practice reciprocity in new ways. For example, we learn that "collaborative relationships are not always reciprocal relationships" and that service-learning research and practice "can be collaborative without being mutually beneficial" (Powell & Takayoshi, 2003, p.393). Drawing on feminist approaches to research, the notion of reciprocity in the research context involves an open acknowledgement of the dynamic set of power relationships which influence its definition (Cushman, Powell, & Takayoshi, 2004). For Lather (1991, p.57), reciprocity thus

“implies give and take, a mutual negotiation of meaning and power” which requires an ongoing process of exchange that cannot always be predetermined prior to research activities taking place (Maiter, Simich, Jacobson & Wise, 2008).

Furthermore, the process of navigating the ethical complexities of reciprocity requires constant self-critical reflexivity and renegotiation. This re-definition and re-negotiation has “important implications for the quality of relationships, outcomes, knowledge, significance, and consequences of community-based participatory action research” (Maiter et al, 2008, p. 306). If reciprocity translates into a process of give-and-take in diverse and multiple ways over time, we must challenge ourselves to think beyond the project-by-project basis to longer “cycles of exchanges” (Maiter, et el., 2008, p .321). These exchanges may operate outside of, and beyond the pre-defined boundaries of particular projects, but are necessary to build sustainable relationships of trust and mutuality (Powell & Takayoshi, 2003). Krishnaswamy (2004) for example, outlines a series of steps (below) and complimentary tools for setting out research goals and activities based on a shared understanding with participants and partners:

- Stage 1:** Clarify purpose of the research through consultation and negotiation
- Stage 2:** Identifying and involving diverse stakeholders in the research
- Stage 3:** Building Trust based on respect, recognition, and involvement
- Stage 4:** Building Common Understanding
- Stage 5:** Identify the Research Question or Questions
- Stage 6:** Research methods & collection of data
- Stage 7:** Analysis of research results
- Stage 8:** Dissemination of research results

PAR (as both philosophy and practice) has long been part of the field of development and has not only expanded into areas of feminist inquiry, health, and social geography for example, but is also widely adopted by international development NGO's and development practitioners (Pain, 2004). As a result, a plethora of innovative participatory methods, tools and applications have recently emerged as government agencies, NGO'S and even higher education institutions increasingly adopt (and adapt) various approaches (Burns, Harvey & Aragon, 2012). Popplewell and Hayman (2012, p.5) suggest the reason why many NGOs find action research and learning so appealing is because it “allows practitioners to learn from existing practices and interventions, and links organizational and individual learning with the improvement of these practices and interventions”. Central to action research therefore is ongoing critical reflexivity of the self and of organizational practice. We must remember that it is not just about strengthening the host institution, but about simultaneously strengthening the source institution in ways that challenge them to work with community partners ethically and responsibly. While ethical concerns underpinning CBR and PAR make them relevant guides to service-learning research, the process of participation and collaboration is fraught with complexity and messiness. As researchers attempting collaborative relationships, the challenge is to go beyond tokenism and to avoid replicating the same critiques associated with service-learning practice identified above.

In an effort to begin to decolonize and critically analyze service-learning theory and practice, learning to amalgamate diverse processes of knowledge creation in ways that involve and acknowledge community partner perspectives is a good place to start. Rather than provide best practice typological approaches, the service-learning field would benefit from further examination of various methodologies informed by community development, and their potential benefits. There is no one recipe book and by drawing on a diverse set of approaches

outside of service-learning, we avoid investing in a prescribed and inflexible model. Such frameworks as CBR, PAR, and other decolonizing methods as described by Tuhiwai Smith (1999), provide service-learning with alternative epistemological frameworks, theories and methods that can inform stronger partnerships and improve program practice. They force us to critically reflect on the way we teach and learn, and provide the underlying framework to challenge not only the dominant culture of higher education, but also our own positionality when engaging with diverse communities. We cannot simply reply on students to reflect on social structures and others' circumstances as part of the service-learning curriculum. Universities through research and practice also need to be active in facilitating a more egalitarian society.

CONCLUSION

Colonial histories continue to shape research practice, relationships of power, the production, control and ownership of knowledge, ideas of truth, and the representation of others (Frisby & Creese, 2011). This is especially the case when students and universities enter into partnerships with diverse communities, especially in developing contexts. To decolonize service-learning, academics and practitioners need to recognize the modernist ideologies underpinning the conceptualization of service-learning. This involves re-imagining service-learning in a way that incorporates the historically unheard voices of community partners whose engagement with students allow the enterprise to function (Camacho, 2004; Stoecker & Tryon, 2009).

Existing studies that examine service-learning from a uni-dimensional perspective, fail to address the potential lack of community impact, knowledge transfer and empowerment. Current research needs to move beyond assumptions that community participants are involved in an equally beneficial and reciprocal exchange process with students and higher educational institutions and start reflecting this within research and practice. Without the voices of community partners, research cannot sufficiently address 'how' the practice of service-learning results in mutually beneficial exchange.

Despite service-learning being defined as collaboratively oriented, as a method of enquiry, CBR methodologies are only beginning to be adopted by service-learning as a way of strengthening community/campus relationships. This is particularly perplexing considering the increased call for universities and communities to share and create knowledge that contributes not only towards developing socially and environmentally conscious students, but the overall well-being of people and the planet. Viewing CBSL through a development lens offers a way of reframing some of the issues identified within service-learning theory, bringing to the forefront new ways of thinking, understanding, and researching service-learning practice. Building on, and critiquing, the way CBSL is conceptualized has important implications for influencing ethical and responsible practice.

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The Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education publishes peer-reviewed original research, topical issues, and best practice articles from throughout the world dealing with Cooperative Education (Co-op) and Work Integrated Learning/Education (WIL).

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