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The Irony of Service: Charity, Project and Social Change in Service-Learning

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This paper explores a common understanding of service as a term encompassing a continuum from charity to social change and describes the implications this understanding has for service-learning in higher education. Based upon a review of alternative theories, a student survey and interviews with practitioners, the author argues that there exists a series of related but distinct community service paradigms—charity, project and social change—each with its own logic, strengths, limitations and vision of a transformed world. Integrity in service-learning, it is suggested, comes not by moving from charity to social change, but from working with increasing depth in a particular paradigm.

> ...an ironic situation occurs when the consequences of an act are diametrically opposed to its intentions, and the fundamental cause of the disparity lies in the actor himself and his original purposes.
>
> Reinhold Niebuhr (in Gene Wise, *American Historical Explanations*)

A significant body of research on the impacts of community service on college student development and academic learning has begun to emerge during the past five years. While it is clearly not conclusive nor complete—longitudinal studies on the relationship between or among service-learning and mastery of content, career choice, voting behavior, charitable giving and activity in civic and voluntary associations are noticeably absent—the evidence suggests that community service linked to academic study is an effective teaching tool. (Boss, 1994; Cohen & Kinsey, 1994; Markus, Howard, & King, 1993)

As valuable and reasonably consistent as the emerging data is, it does not shed much light on the nature and meaning of the community service that is performed. A common language for discussing service is only slowly emerging in service-learning organizations, and it is an abbreviated and blunt language at present. Questions are being raised about how one assesses community impact, beyond the rudiments of volunteer hours and being invited back. In addition, it is increasingly common to come across, at conferences and meetings (e.g. of the Campus Outreach Opportunity League, the National Society for Experiential Education and Campus Compact), language that describes a continuum of activity ranging from service to advocacy.

Dwight Giles and Janet Eyler (1994a) of Vanderbilt University, among others, have launched an ambitious and necessary three-year research project that attempts to isolate the duration and intensity of service as variables in student development and learning. Drawing on a theory of experiential education grounded in the philosophy of John Dewey (1994b), they outline a research agenda of nine fundamental questions. The first two of these questions are the subject of this paper: "Is there a continuum of service-learning experiences?" and "Do different service-learning experiences have different impacts because of individual characteristics?" (pp. 92-93).

Answers to these questions are important because they suggest that service experiences may be optimally structured to enhance learning. In the pages that follow, I describe my reflections on these questions, review a cross-section of related theoretical literature, and report on our approach to creating a new public and community service major at Providence College. Among other considerations in creating the major has been the problem of how to structure service opportunities. As a partial response to this problem I have begun to systematically interview students, faculty, administrators and community partners about the nature and meaning of their work. The preliminary evidence, I will suggest, does not sup-

port the hypothesis of a continuum from charity to justice. Rather, the evidence seems to suggest a series of three related but distinct paradigms of service. Drawing on our experience at Providence College, I will explore the implications of choosing between the continuum and the paradigm models of service.

The questions raised by Giles and Eyler are deceptively simple. Implicit in the first question is a logically powerful idea: that there exists in fact a continuum of typological forms of service that flow into one another. Implicit in the second question is the suggestion that participating in different forms of service will lead to different learning outcomes. It may be, as Marshall McLuhan argued in a different context, that the medium is the message.

Most commonly, a service continuum is presented as running from charity to advocacy, from the personal to the political, from individual acts of caring that transcend time and space to collective action on mutual concerns that are grounded in particular places and histories. Charity emerges on this continuum as giving of the self, expecting nothing in return, and with no expectation that any lasting impact will be made. Generally, from this perspective, it is better to suspend expectations. The risk inherent in charity is the risk of caring for another human being.

Advocacy, at the other extreme, is change oriented, and implies an agenda—speaking to others with a powerful voice. Acts of service are steps in a larger strategy to bring about change, quite often assessed as the redistribution of resources or social capital. The risks of advocacy are political. In this compelling description, one moves from charity to advocacy motivated by a growing care and passion for the people served, and by an increasingly complex analysis of the situation that created the need for service in the first place. Advocacy need not replace charity, but advocacy is seen as a more mature expression of compassion. Charity, if it continues, serves as a "home base," a sort of refueling stop for the tedious work of advocacy. The concept of a continuum, then, compels us to act as if "progress" consists of moving students "farther along," that is, out of charity and toward advocacy.

I know that the idea of a continuum has informed my own work. Attempting to move students along some continuum such as this, I have asked the perpetual question, "Why?", and have expected that a combination of curiosity and compassion would lead some students to make commitments to help change the circumstances that introduced problems into the lives of people they came to care about.

For my theoretical grounding, I have borrowed liberally from Elisabeth Griffith's (1987) biography of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and from Lawrence Goodwyn's (1978) analysis of the Populist movement. Griffith describes Stanton, who is best known for her advocacy of women's suffrage, as moving through a cycle of "anguish, anger, analysis and action" (p.103). Service, I have thought, is a strategy for simultaneously meeting an immediate need and provoking anguish, anger and analysis. This approach is buttressed by Goodwyn's observation that the Populist movement was organized, in large part, by agricultural lecturers whose "very duties...exposed [them] to the grim realities of agricultural poverty with a directness that drove home the manifest need to do something." (p. 45). The overwhelming poverty they encountered prompted them to search for solutions; and at a critical juncture, political organizing seemed the best option. What has seemed important to me in Stanton's biography and the unfolding of the Populist movement is that people were educated into advocacy, prompted by their compassion, their anguish (from the Norse for "public grief"), and their profound need to change the problem they encountered. The educational cycle moved from personal concern, to education and problem identification, to a cycle of action and reflection (Morton, 1989).

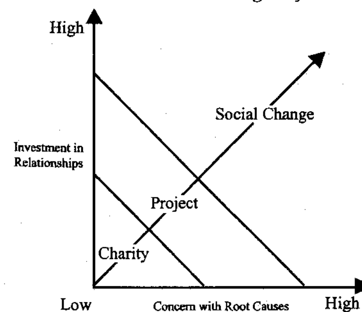
I have seen this process in action, for example, with a group of students I joined on an Alternative Spring Break trip to Brownsville, Texas in 1988. Home repairs, visits to Casa Oscar Romero, a Central American refugee center, and other limited, arguably charitable experiences led two of the eight students into longer term political action on U.S./Central American issues, led one to return to Brownsville as an elementary school teacher, prompted a fourth to go to Nicaragua for one year, and reinforced the commitment of a fifth to work in an inner-city school in her hometown.

I do not wish to suggest that Eyler and Giles are arguing that a continuum of service exists, or that where you enter on that continuum shapes and limits learning. Their point is to advocate for inquiry into these questions. I am arguing, however, that assumptions about progress are a powerful element in how many practitioners view, structure and assess their service-learning courses and programs. I want to argue, as well, that the ideas of a continuum and progress from charity to advocacy do not square with how people do service or why they do it. Rather than a continuum, I want to suggest that three relatively distinct paradigms of service exist, what I will call charity, project development and social change (a term I prefer to advocacy for reasons I will outline below). Each paradigm is based upon distinctive worldviews, ways of identifying and addressing problems, and long-term visions of individual and community transformation. Further, it seems to me that each paradigm contains a range from "thin" to "thick", that is from expressions which lack integrity or depth to those which have integrity and depth. Educationally, this means that, rather than moving students along a continuum, we are doing two things simultaneously: challenging and supporting students to enter more deeply into the paradigm in which they work; and intentionally exposing students to creative dissonance among the three forms.

Continuum

The case for a continuum of service generally focuses on the limitations inherent in "less-mature" forms of service, and suggests that progress or growth is achieved by responding to those limitations. Several bodies of literature exist to support the concept of a continuum, ranging from the professional literature of participatory action research (Elden, 1993), to the work of Ivan Illitch (1968) and John McKnight (1989), to the social science literatures on community development, social change and community organizing (Jones, 1991; Lackey, 1987). The arguments put forward in this collective literature can be summarized as a typology that places charity, project and social change models of service as the beginning, middle and end points on a continuum of service, with a side debate over whether or not social change is, in fact, a form of service. I have imagined the continuum not as a flat line, but as a series of ranges bounded by investment in relationship building and commitment to understanding and addressing the root causes of problems (see figure 1).

FIGURE 1
Critical Elements in Three Paradigms of Service



Charity

When considered as part of a continuum, charity is often viewed as the provision of direct service where control of the service (resources and decisions affecting their distribution) remain with the provider. The service is generally limited in time and makes limited claims about impact on the people involved. It is described in the *Guidelines for Development* of the Christian Conference of Asia (1980) as temporary, confined to particular, affected people and auxiliary to the ongoing life of the people. Planning and delivery of services are limited and fragmentary, the decision making process is closed, and little, if any, attempt is made to understand or effect the structural causes of the problem. The only appropriate time for charity, argue the authors of the Guidelines, is intervention in a natural or human-created catastrophe such as an earthquake, famine or war. John McKnight in "Why Servanthood is Bad"(1989) and Ivan Illich in "To Hell With Good Intentions"(1968) provide two oft-cited critiques, arguing that charity focuses on naming the deficits of those served, rather than their strengths, and creates a long-term dependency of those served on those with the resources. "Never," I was instructed by a community organizer in Bangladesh, "do something for someone that they could possibly do for themselves. This is our iron rule." (Shaha, 1990) From this perspective, charity seems weak, destructive and—despite the best of intentions—as likely to make a situation worse as to remedy it.

Project

Project models, in their turn, focus on defining problems and their solutions and implementing well-conceived plans for achieving those solutions. Houses are built for those who might not otherwise own a home; tutoring is made available to those who need it; sports leagues are designed to occupy and train youth. The organizing prin-

ciple of program approaches to service lies in the development of partnerships of organizations that collectively have access to the resources necessary to "make something happen." A community center, a mayor's office, a high school, a department at a college and a corporation might cooperate, for example, to create a job readiness program for high school seniors. The impacts can be positive, relatively long term and, to some extent, systemic. The criticisms of this approach center on three things: unintended consequences, the role of experts, and the relationship between planning and action.

"Unintended consequences" is a phrase used to suggest that an otherwise successful program may generate outcomes that exacerbate the original problem or lead to new problems. In criticizing a service-learning mentoring program her son belonged to, for example, a mother pointed out to a staff member whom I supervised that having one of her three children served created an inequality between this child and her two siblings, leading to regular conflict. "We're a family," she concluded, "and we need a program that works with us as a family." (Johnstad, 1991).

From a critical perspective, the experts necessary to design and manage a program magnify inequalities of power, and make the served dependent on the expert. This is a particularly dangerous trap for colleges and universities which are generally regarded as repositories of expertise, and employ research tools that non-experts cannot master. How can you teach someone to fish (to modify the common proverb) if you and they don't believe they can master the technology? A related concern, which spills over into the realm of planning and action, is problem definition: experts define problems differently than the people living them, primarily by applying analytical tools—theories—to the latter's situation. As helpful as these tools may be, they illuminate only a part of a given reality, and the danger lies in mistaking this part for the whole.

Finally, project approaches to service generally adopt some form of management by objectives, usually at the request of funders: define the problem, outline a solution, name the activities you will carry out and an ideal timeline, and state the measurement criteria you will use to evaluate your performance. Given this construction, completed before funds are made available to begin work (not to mention the pressures of one-to-three year limits of funding), most programs then focus on working to their measurement criteria.

Putting aside questions regarding quality of outcome, this scenario makes it extremely difficult to create a reflective environment that may lead to redefining the problem, the activities or the measurement objectives. In short, there is no inherent process requiring that the organization learn from its practice until after its work is concluded. *Face of the Twin Cities*, a planning document of the United Way of Minneapolis (1991), describes the frustration of agencies locked into this way of providing community services: "More service agencies are responding to social, economic and health problems as character deficits in the individuals experiencing the problems, as opposed to consequences of social system issues. By blaming the victim, the root causes of problems are ignored" (p. 27). As startling an admission as this may seem for an organization such as the United Way, it has had little noticeable effect on how they raise or distribute funds. Agencies are responding in this way, it goes almost without saying, because this is what funders—including the United Way—most often reward.

Social Change

I prefer the term social change to advocacy because "advocacy" is a term with professional connotations, and an "advocate" is often a person with greater strength and expertise protecting the rights of weaker or less knowledgeable people; that is, the term, as important as it is, does little to clarify the meaning of service. Social change or "transformation" models typically focus on process: building relationships among or within stakeholder groups, and creating a learning environment that continually peels away the layers of the onion called "root causes." Practice—education or action—emerges over time out of the relationships or most current understanding of root causes. Hedley Dimock, for example, in his booklet on Intervention and Collaborative Change (1987), discusses two assumptions he has come to about changing social systems: "1. The social system (group, community or organization) is the focus of change...2. Those people affected by the change should be involved in making that change" (pp. 10-11). These assumptions are based on Dimock's understanding of and extrapolation from small group process, and on the weaknesses of other, non-collaborative "interventions." Gerald Taylor (1989), an organizer with the Industrial Areas Foundation (the inheritor of Saul Alinsky's legacy of community organizing) states the point even

more forcefully: "participation without power is a fraud... that creates cynics." In fact, most social change or social transformation models of service focus directly and indirectly on politically empowering the powerless. To quote the *Guidelines for Development* again, a person working from a perspective of transformation "sees the problems of the poor and oppressed, not as basically functional, but as rooted in and perpetuated by the structural organization of society—as a process whereby they are excluded from economic gain and political power by strategies which preserve the concentration of privilege in society...[transformation] demands analysis at both the micro and macro levels. It sees power as the real issue, works for the people's power and joins them in their struggle" (p. 26). In short, social change or transformation models are theoretically about empowerment of the systematically disenfranchised. This emphasis answers the limitations of charity and project approaches to service by helping people to do for themselves in "the world as it is, not as we wish it to be."

Social change is a difficult model to critique because, in its idealized form, it is an end-point on the "good" side of a continuum. That is, social change is the gold standard for evaluating service, and any critique runs the danger of being self-referential or tautological. Nevertheless, social change models may be evaluated by the depth and integrity of relationships among the people who come together for the purpose of bringing about positive change, and by their commitment to an educational cycle that brings them ever closer to a clear understanding of the root causes of problems and effective strategies for addressing them.

Alternatives to a Continuum of Service

Some theorists, notably Harry Boyte, dispute the existence of a continuum, positing instead distinct modes of public interaction. In building the case for a renewed "citizen politics," for example, Boyte and his colleagues at the University of Minnesota (Breuer, 1992; Project Public Life, 1991) identify four common modes of political problem solving: institutional politics, advocacy politics, community politics and helping politics (1992, p. 13). While Boyte's focus is primarily on how people define and act in "public," his approach is helpful for thinking about the nature of service. Citizen politics, based upon a "realistic belief in change, and balancing power and achievement" is good, as it builds the capacity of people to do for themselves; the other forms, in Boyte's view, are significantly flawed. Helping politics are flawed because power remains solely in the hands of the servants; advocacy because it is reactionary and places the tools for solving community problems everywhere but with the protesters; institutional politics because they depend on experts and lack citizen involvement; and community politics because it is limited in scale and is time intensive. Furthermore, helping politics are personal and private, apolitical and ultimately have little "public" meaning (for a parallel perspective see McKnight, 1995). Boyte's approach effectively focuses attention on the power relationships between servant and served and on whether or not the work has public or civic meaning.

As useful as it is, Boyte's perspective has limited ability to describe service, because its greatest strength—an application of a strongly democratic conception of political organization—does not have a way of recognizing service as anything other than a weak form of charity. Rather than functioning as a heuristic device for understanding what people do as service in terms of what it means to them, grids such as this are tools developed for critical assessment and, like the continuum, are based upon a clear hierarchy of value.

Given the similarities in language and values between continuum and grid models of service, it would be easy to view the grid as a parallel alternative to a continuum. Unlike a continuum, a grid suggests the possibility of describing "domains" of action in two dimensions with a limited set of characteristics. That is, a grid begins to move away from the idea of linear progression and suggest the theoretical possibility that people adopt distinctive ways of doing service.

Paradigms of Service

While the continuum and the grid serve as powerful analytical tools, and touch on issues at the heart of service, they do not seem to reflect accurately what it is that people actually do in their community service work. I assume that people engage in service-learning because it makes sense to them: that they have a roughly coherent (if sometimes unarticulated) intellectual, emotional and psychological motivation for choosing to engage in service linked to learning. I am persuaded, as well, as Steve Schultz (1993) has

argued, that our program models express our assumptions.

My observations suggest that there exist a series of related but distinct community service paradigms that I will refer to as charity, project and transformation. Each paradigm, I will argue, contains a world view, a problem statement and an agenda for change. Each paradigm has "thin" versions that are disempowering and hollow, and "thick" versions that are sustaining and potentially revolutionary. These paradigms do not "flow" into one another, and the rare move from one to another is experienced initially as dissonance and then as epiphany: the new paradigm makes meaning of the self in the world more persuasively than did the previous paradigm.

The descriptive language for these paradigms does not differ radically from the language employed in the discussion of the continuum or the grid perspectives on service. But, it adds to that language the positive dimensions of charity and project as well as social change approaches to service, and attempts to work empirically from practice toward a theoretical framework for describing what it is that people do as service.

I began to question my own assumptions about a "continuum" of service as I listened to college students and community partners describe their motivations for and experiences of service. Teaching a course titled "Introduction to Service in Democratic Society" in the Fall of 1994, I was struck by the students' ability to simultaneously understand the criticisms of charity, take seriously the concept of institutionalized injustice and still insist that the proper measures for evaluating their service performance were affective and personal. One person in this class of mostly first-year students said, for example, that the real measure of her impact at a local community center was that the "children remember my name and hug me when I get there." I was also challenged by conversations with religiously based colleagues—Catholic, Protestant and Jewish, on and off campus—to explore more carefully the meaning of charity. I was reminded that "tsedakah," the Hebrew word for charity, is based on the idea of anger at injustice provoking one to remedy that injustice (Neusner, 1988; Tunick, 1994). I was reminded, too, that responding to injustice is not optional, but an obligation, a part of what it means to keep the faith. A review of the Catholic Catechism (1994)—prompted by my joining the faculty of a Catholic college—found this language: "Without the help of grace, men would not know how 'to discern the often narrow path between the cowardice which gives in to evil, and the violence which under the illusion of fighting evil only makes it worse.' This is the path of charity, that is, of the love of God and neighbor...it respects others and their rights. It requires the practice of justice...[and] inspires a life of self-giving" (p. 462). A Quaker and a Congregationalist reminded me separately of the revolutionary implications of their belief "that there is that of God in every person." Charity, in their terms, began with the radical act of recognizing the worth of every person.

I also found it important to acknowledge and reflect on the fact that I came to teaching via seven years of work with the Minneapolis YMCA. Conversations with colleagues there reminded me of the life-long commitments made by some of them to simply run things "the right way, for the right reasons, the way they should be done." These people were committed not to what they see as "abstractions" of charity or social justice, but to creating organizations that "make it happen," that educate youth, build homes, strengthen families and otherwise challenge us to live up to the "ideals of our society." Prompted by these conversations and ideas, I began to wonder what I would find out if I elected to take charity and project types of service as seriously as I did social change types of service.

In order to more systematically approach what these people had to say, I conducted in-depth interviews with four community informants and Providence College's Vice President for Academic Administration. The community informants were selected because they were active with the Feinstein Institute, represented significantly different types of service (community organizer, director of a homeless shelter, director of a youth corps and executive director of a community center), and seemed to me to do their work effectively. The vice president was interviewed because he is a Dominican priest and directs the academic and faculty side of the campus. He is also a Church historian by training and has given significant thought to the relationship between "liberal education" and the "Catholic mission" of Providence College. In addition, I supervised three undergraduate students who conducted patterned exit interviews with 14 students who had participated as teaching assistants in the pilot year of the Feinstein Institute. Finally, as part of our course evaluations in six service-learning courses offered in the Spring of 1995, we asked students to respond to a crude survey that attempted to describe the relationship between motives for and acts of service (see Table 1).

TABLE 1
Motives Informing Community Service

	N	%
1. Why do you volunteer?		
It makes me feel good about myself	6	7.3
It provides an opportunity for me to be exposed to and learn from other cultures	17	20.7
I want to give back to the community	16	19.5
I want to help someone less fortunate than myself	20	24.4
I want to change society	9	11.0
I want to gain experience in my chosen career field (or, explore possible careers)	7	8.5
It is central to my spiritual commitments	3	3.7
Other	4	4.9
TOTAL	82	100%
2. Right now I feel I make the biggest impact on the world (choose only one):		
Providing direct service to another person	40	49.4
Helping to set up and support community service organizations that are addressing immediate community needs	18	22.2
Advocating for social change	17	21.0
Other	6	7.4
TOTAL	81	100%
3. Over the course of my life, I feel I will make the biggest impact by (choose only one):		
Providing direct service to another person	24	30.8
Helping to set up and support community service organizations that are addressing immediate community needs	31	39.7
Advocating for social change	20	25.6
Other	3	3.9
TOTAL	78	100%
4. I feel that current community needs would be eliminated if everyone (choose only one):		
Provided direct service to another person	27	32.5
Helped to set up and support community service organizations that are addressing immediate community needs	31	37.4
Advocated for social change	20	24.1
Other	5	6.0
TOTAL	83	100%

Note: For question 1, response options consisted of an 8-point scale ranging from "being most important" (1) to "being least important" (8). For this question, "N" represents the number of respondents who indicated "most important."

Charity as a Paradigm

Charity, as the descriptions above suggest, has many potential and some inherent weaknesses. Certainly, in common usage, it is a term that has come to mean the well-off doing service to the poor if and when they feel like it, and then only on their terms. History suggests that this is not an accidental corruption of the original meaning of "charity." In our survey, however, of eight possible responses to the question, "Why do you volunteer," nearly 25 percent of the students—20 of 82 respondents—chose as their main reason, "I want to help someone less fortunate than myself." In addition, nearly 50 percent of the respondents felt that, "Right now I make the biggest impact on the world" by "providing direct service to another person." Charity is a positive term for these students: a recognition of their obligation to help, and an expression of their recognition that our society affords them very few opportunities to make a contribution.

The director of the homeless shelter—in the process of transitioning out of his role after 12 years of work—described the tension he felt between the dual needs of caring for the individual persons he encountered, and working systemically to eliminate the structural causes of poverty. He began "25 years ago [feeling] that giving food and shelter was a concrete and unequivocal act of meaning and community building." This direct service, he said, "still acts as an

anchor, personally and spiritually." He noted that the shelter he has worked at "comes out of the Catholic Worker movement, with its philosophy of connecting direct service with the long-term: giving the poor what they have a right to have—it's theirs. It's based on unconditional giving: don't change [the poor]; change the powers that marginalize them. This is the meaning of the 'Sermon on the Mount.'" The problem, he pointed out, is that "it is easy to help someone one time, but how often can you do this? How often can you witness someone's deterioration and still stay with it?" He summarized how he was trying to resolve the tension between his "spiritual anchor" and his desire to make change: "Now, I'm trying to wean myself in practice from results. I'm sick of results. You can't be attached to the fruits of your work. Until now, I have been very attached. It's my attachment to results that is wearing me out. I'm working to let go of this—broadening my cosmology, context, perception. I'm learning what Dan Berrigan means when he says, 'hope is not in time.'"

From a different perspective, Thomas McGonigle, a Dominican priest and vice president at Providence College, began by noting that the Dominicans are an order of "preachers, undergirded by study, reflection and prayer." Central to Dominican study is the idea of "witness," linked to the Greek for "martyr." Based on the Acts of the Apostles, the Dominicans understand witness as an invitation to come and participate in community. At this moment of invitation, one faces a choice that "has the potential to be transformative of the individual and the community...What is heard, seen, handled—is that to which we bear witness." After establishing the communal nature of witness and transformation, he goes on to suggest that, "the essential nature of service is witness...involving oneself in activities benefiting others and, if necessary, laying down one's life; challenging structures that are not life-giving. Service always means an encounter with powers out there: confronting conditions that make service necessary in the first place. We are responding to the word of God, and have no choice but to do what we are called to do. The prophetic stance teaches that 'if it is of God, it will succeed.'" And finally, restating the centrality of community, he concludes that, "in the religious life, individuals are called within community. It is the commuity which has a mission. The spirit comes to individuals in the context of a whole community. As the modern world emerges and individuals are divorced from community, you get individuals trying to do good things." While not directly stated, the suggestion is that charity has devolved, in many instances, to "individuals trying to do good things." Charity, in these terms, has been stripped of much of its initial meaning, become privatized, and so has lost much of its power to transform individual or community. Scattered as we are, the sustaining community is not large or powerful enough to bring about change.

Clearly, in experiences of the students, the shelter director and the vice president, charity means something more than what John Dewey (1908) defined as "a superior class achieving merit by doing things gratuitously for an inferior class" (p. 334). What is suggested here is an understanding of charity that offers a coherent world view, and begins with an individual grounded in community. Both the director of the homeless shelter and the vice president for academic administration, via significantly different routes, have come to the understanding of Berrigan's assertion that "hope is out of time." From this perspective, charity is spiritually based service, outside of time and space, that bears witness to the worth of other persons. For persons operating primarily out of this understanding of service, charity may be an act of faith or, more radically and more simply, an ideal way of being in the world. Responding to the statement on the survey, "I feel that current community needs would be eliminated if everyone...," nearly 33 percent of students chose "provided direct service to another person." In the long term, sustaining this spiritual commitment is seen as the only way to create a just world.

Project as a Paradigm

In that same survey, nearly 50 percent of students responded that they felt they made the biggest impact through direct service. When given the same choices about where they would make the greatest impact over the course of their lives, 40 percent of the students—including many who for now chose direct service—answered, "helping to set up and support community organizations that are addressing immediate community needs." In short, 40 percent of the students expected that their futures included involvement in organizations meeting direct needs.

The directors of the youth service corps and the community center whom I interviewed had functional definitions of community and service. Community, said the youth service director, "is geographic, a neighborhood. The neighborhood is the smallest meaningful unit in much of our society...I have a very physical, geographic picture in my head...a neighborhood is the smallest geographic unit that provides people with the basics needed to function: learn, work, play, create." Similarly, service is "getting something done, beginning with asking, what is the most essential part of the community to work with." After describing a personal history of growing up in a politically active family and doing "advocacy" types of service all through high school and into early college, he notes that, "I came to realize that [advocacy] was all about getting rid of some bad thing—the driving emotion was anger...[I started wondering] what happens after we get rid of these, and are looking for constructive alternatives...What is satisfying is creating something. This is slower, not an adrenaline rush, but it's more effective." He concludes, "We need to stop reinventing the wheel, stop creating new organizations, and consolidate our existing resources, have them work to their greatest capacity."

The director of the community center follows a similar line of thought, adding to it concerns about understanding the boundaries between staff and volunteer roles, and about external forces that he believes will lead to the failure of a significant number of small community organizations in the next five years. The bottom line in his organization is "learning to plan and deliver to our mission as an organization." This involves careful planning, and ongoing training for staff and volunteer leaders. He is concerned with program development, especially programs that will help make youth and recent immigrants employable, and programs that will help create more jobs in the community. Echoing the youth corps director, he observes that "this means working smarter with what we have, and working harder to link together the institutions in the neighborhood that are willing to support these efforts."

From the perspectives of the youth corps and community center directors, the essential problems are how to create greater opportunity for participation with limited resources, and how to efficiently focus existing resources so that they have maximum impact. There is little sense that the institutions of society are inherently flawed. Rather, the problem is that not everyone can participate equally. They approach problem solving as a management issue, but do not necessarily work in a linear fashion. They expect that programs developed to resolve particular issues will create or lead to new issues: a community garden built as part of a job skills program, for example, may be vandalized and focus attention on how to respond to vandalism. Tutoring children may lead to English as a Second Language instruction and then into a support system for families that have recently immigrated. The logic of the project approach assumes that no solutions are ultimate, and that thoughtful, reasoned approaches leading to measurable action—doing something—is the appropriate response to community needs. Organization and expertise are highly valued. Ethical leadership, surviving over time, and listening to and encouraging the participation of those served, are as important to both directors as setting and meeting objectives, competing for resources and "building the organization."

Social Change as a Paradigm

In the survey, 11 percent of the students gave as their reason for volunteering, "I want to change society." Nearly 21 percent answered that "right now I feel that I make the biggest impact on the world by...advocating for social change." Twenty-six percent responded that, over the long haul, they would make their biggest impact "by advocating for social change."

The community organizer, whose personal history includes a long stint as a Protestant minister, begins by describing the religious and spiritual grounding of his work. He describes growing up in a close-knit family, with "a strong sense of gratitude, that I owed back—not to my family so much, but to the larger world somehow." He describes a sometimes painful process of learning over his life where and how to make a difference in people's lives. Returning several times to his spiritually based understanding of service, and noting that "Politics in the larger [electoral] sense is not so relevant to the community's needs," he says that "in the 1970s I decided to make my sphere of influence a geographic neighborhood...Now I'm an organizer. Neighborhoods are important. They particularize the general. Democracy has to work some *place*. (His emphasis) Caring has to work in the particular." Reflecting on his own work, he notes the visible and invisible boundaries of the largely immigrant neighborhood in which he works, and concludes that the "organizing core should be streets and

blocks, rather than service groups [neighborhood agencies and institutions]." Sighing that this type of organizing is too slow to be do-able, he observes, "We need to learn how we need each other." He describes his respect for one of the South East Asian groups "that is a model for us: we need to strengthen our own [as they are doing] before we reach out; and we need to reach out in strength, not weakness."

While his motivation is spiritual, he is uncomfortable with the word "service." "Doing service, you have to protect against paternalism, which is the root of a lot of problems...giving requires a certain amount of ego, and can be self-serving, lessening those served. They become objects fulfilling your need to serve."

This organizer's work is a compromise between his sense of how he believes the world should be and the world as it is; a compromise between the impossibly high standards he set for himself as a young man and his ability to make an impact where he is able. He is profoundly aware of the world as it is, joking, "Never be so heavenly minded that you're no earthly good." In closing, he describes how he has learned to always return to "my own sense of integrity and learning to live with that...even though it's ultimately impossible...you're always caught between your responsibilities and your limits."

While personal integrity may seem a surprising emphasis for a community organizer, it is in my experience an issue that comes up regularly. It is the perspective of a veteran union organizer I recently met who has gone back to seminary after a 15-year hiatus, and it is captured in the words of Ernesto Cortes (Rogers, 1994), an organizer for the Industrial Areas Foundation. "Organizing," says Cortes, "is a fancy word for relationship building. No organizer ever organizes a community...If I want to organize you, I don't sell you an idea. What I do, if I'm smart, is try to find out what's in your interest. What are your dreams?" And again, "That's why we organize people around their values—not just the issues. The issues fade and they lose interest. But what they really care about remains—family, dignity, justice, and hope. And we need power to protect what we value" (pp. 17, 31). Change, from this perspective, comes about when otherwise ordinary people find ways to bring their values, their actions and their world into closer alignment with each other.

Discussion

In describing charity, project and social change as paradigms of service, I have tried to present them in ways that suggest what I see as their internal logic, using terms inherent to the form. I have tried to suggest, briefly, what each paradigm of service might look or "feel" like when it is done with integrity, that is, with consistency between its ideals and its practice. Each of the paradigms can be done with or without integrity, in what I think of as, adapting the language of anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973), thin or thick versions. The thin versions may take the forms of paternalistic or self-serving charity that imposes services on unreceptive "others;" projects that magnify or institutionalize inequalities of power, produce outcomes that are worse than the original problem, or lead to unrealistic and unsustainable dependencies; social change work that is only rhetorical, narrowly selfish, and against a wide range of offenses without offering alternatives. And any of the paradigms can raise false expectations, inflame social divisions and leave people tired and cynical.

The thick versions of each paradigm are grounded in deeply held, internally coherent values; match means and ends; describe a primary way of interpreting and relating to the world; offer a way of defining problems and solutions; and suggest a vision of what a transformed world might look like. At their thickest, the paradigms seem to intersect, or at least to complement one another. Insisting on the humanity of another person in the face of sometimes overwhelming pressure to deny that humanity can be a motive for charity, for project and for social change. The differences begin to emerge at the level of action and efficacy: what changes do I wish to bring about, what effort is most meaningful to me, what outcomes do I expect? While it is not the point of this paper, it is worth noting that at this level the paradigms have profoundly different senses of time and space: charity is out of time and space; projects divide time and space into rational and manageable units; and social change places one squarely in the stream of history leading up to and through the world as it is.

My point in these descriptions has been to raise the possibility that we do not necessarily experience service as growth along a continuum, but that we come into service with a primary orientation, and work out of this orientation. Only occasionally, I would hypothesize, is a primary orientation given up for an alternative. Certainly an organizer (as I have suggested) can have a strong faith basis for her or his work; certainly a project manager can be committed to long-term economic development; certainly an individual act of caring can be done in such a way as to have long-term community impact or historic resonance. My sense is that while we can do work across these paradigms, we are most at home in one or another, and interpret what we do according to the standards of the one in which we are most at home. Growth, or development, I suspect, occurs mostly within a given paradigm. Studies such as *Some Do Care* (Colby, 1992) and *The Altruistic Personality* (Oliner, 1988) suggest, for example, that deep versions of charity can be personally sustaining and lead to significant public acts. And, done well, I would argue that all three paradigms lead ultimately toward the transformation of an individual within a community, and toward the transformation of the communities themselves.

Ernesto Cortes describes the transformation of the Industrial Areas Foundation as it changed from issues-based organizing to values-based organizing. Noting that the power base for the IAF in San Antonio is the Catholic church, he describes "role playing" the letters of the apostle Paul with community members. "The point was to help people...to find integrity in their own lives." This integrity, grounded in the traditional, church-based values of the Hispanic community Cortes was organizing, helped, in the words of author Mary Beth Rogers, "to end their [parish members'] isolation from each other, and they began to develop a vision of community in which they initiated action instead of waiting passively for something—good or bad—to happen to them" (1990, p. 134).

While charity, project and social change paradigms may lead ultimately to the transformation of the individual and the community, they suggest different ways of defining issues and understanding change over time. The irony of service, in service-learning, is enacted when we do not recognize these differences and teach accordingly. The irony of service-learning in higher education is that we assume that the learning consequences of service may differ significantly from the nature and immediate purpose of the service itself. In my own courses, for example, my assumptions about a continuum of service have led me to incorporate "movement" politics and address knotty issues such as racism while having students engage in tutoring or care for infants at an AIDS center. The students, who grasp the content intellectually, ask over and over again what their service has to do with the course content. While I can justify some of their "confusion" as simply a step in learning, they seem to me to be raising an appropriate question, and one which gets at the heart of experiential education: if experience is a way of knowing, then why do you have us doing service that is at best only partially consistent with what you are teaching? Why do you teach change and have us help manage programs or do direct service? A second, related, problem arises as they resist the logic of the continuum, saying, in essence, "That is not me. I'm not moving." How do I respond to what they are saying?

Part of the answer is, no doubt, to expand their—and my—notion of what service is. Students in an introductory service-learning course at the Feinstein Institute, for example, had as their service assignment conducting oral histories that were to be used by a parish planning committee as a step in organizing their community. In classroom discussion sessions, they compared their experiences with those of students who were tutoring children, and said, "What we are doing isn't service." In fact, the oral histories needed and requested by the parish, initiated dialogues that crossed over "town-gown" boundaries, and identified a core organizing group for the parish planning committee. Similarly, students from a marketing course developed and implemented a research project for a children's museum. Useful, carefully done and delivered on time, the students resisted the idea that this "professional" experience could be a form of service.

Certainly, students need to understand that several forms of service exist; that they can all be meaningful; and that they have choices about what they will do and how they will do it. And they need to be challenged to make those choices consciously, based on experience and reflection. The irony is that unless we can adequately describe the range of service that exists, students will continue to work with a narrow and artificial definition of service that polarizes into a limited domain of service and an expansive domain of not-service.

Practical Implications

At the Feinstein Institute for Public Service we have created a new major and minor in Public and Community Service Studies. As we develop the service sites and placements that are integrated into the courses comprising the program, we have to articulate the relationship between service and learning, and establish opportunities that will undergird the program: is our objective to challenge and move students along a continuum or to the upper right-hand quadrant of a grid where they are engaged in the work of social change? Or is it to help them articulate more fully what they believe and think about the practice and meaning of service, and to challenge them to work with ever-increasing integrity and insight? While both options assume that educators are fit to change people, the latter approach seems to me more appropriate.

The questions are not rhetorical, and have immediate practical implications: do we develop service placements for introductory courses that begin with service placements that are structured, focused on direct service to other individuals, and introduce in a very personal way what our community partner Jim Tull has called "the meanest problems of our society"? Do our 200 and 300 level courses increase the stakes, offering placements that require more leadership, somewhat greater responsibility, and an introduction to the institutions that structure our communities and channel the bulk of community service? Do our capstone courses invite students to work with people and organizations committed to some sort of systemic change?

Or, do we privilege what I am calling "paradigms" of service, fitting all three into each level in appropriate ways, and employ a comparative approach that sets up a creative tension leading students (and faculty) into deeper understanding of those paradigms? At this point in time, I lean toward the latter approach. While I know (or think I know) what sort of service I personally find most engaging and meaningful, I believe a comparative approach opens up dialogue and creates an opportunity for learning that would be stifled if we began with an endpoint in mind.

How we answer the question also has implications for the community partnerships we develop. At the Feinstein Institute we have made two strategic decisions regarding community partners. First, we differentiate between "core" and "placement" partners. Second, we engage our core partners in reviewing and delivering our curriculum. Placement partners, as the name implies, simply serve as placement sites for students in our courses. Their work and needs match the experiences we are seeking to develop for our students. Core partners also serve as placement sites for our students. In addition, however, we make significant staff commitments to learning about, supporting, and working directly with a limited number—four or five—of core partners. Over our first year, these commitments have taken the form of doing strategic planning together, intentionally developing interdependent agendas; supporting the work of the partner by actively developing other campus-based resources; and it may, down the road, take the form of swapping or sharing (formally or informally) staff. Our goal in developing core and placement partnerships is to explore the strengths, weaknesses, commonalities and contradictions inherent in a comprehensive range of service.

Our core partners are selected on three loose guidelines: the partner is involved in work that is in the self-interest of the college to support; the partner affects the communities immediately surrounding the college; and the partner is willing to make itself an ally in the education of our students.

This approach has been recommended to the Feinstein Institute by a community advisory group (Tull, 1995), composed of four individuals drawn from different types of service organizations. Their recommendations to us were based upon their reading and critique of our major proposal and our course syllabi; visits to classes (minimally four visits each); one individual co-teaching a pilot course with a faculty member; and a series of conversations they held with faculty and other community representatives. They recommended establishing formal agreements with core partners, based on the following elements:

- The cooperative development of service site projects by students and agency staff
- Formal human resource exchanges between the Feinstein Institute and community organizations (staff and faculty contribute as board members, on planning committees and other work, while agency staff, board and members participate in teaching and other Institute work)
- Orientation, training and education of students at the agencies as a context for service
- Provision of service by the Institute to the agencies using the expertise and unique resources of the Institute and college
- Guaranteed minimum commitment of students' service hours to agencies
- Agency commitment to a serious student internship program that would allow advanced Institute students to perform longer-term, indepth and more advanced service.

Conclusion

In a discussion of service at the 1994 Conference of the National Society for Experiential Education, Nadinne Cruz (1994) offered what seems to me the best definition of service I have heard. "Service," she said, "is a process of integrating intention with action in the context of a movement toward a just relationship." If we are to educate ourselves and our students in ways that lead us toward just relationships, one of the first steps must be developing our collective capacity to describe and analyze the intentions and actions that inform our work. Irony is, simply, the gulf between intention and action. In this paper I attempt to describe a central irony that can (and does) emerge in service-learning: the gap between the content and outcomes of our teaching, on the one hand, and the type of service in which we engage on the other. Should we approach service as a continuum or as a set of related paradigms? Is authenticity—the reverse of irony—to be found by structuring service-learning so that we grow or move in a particular direction, or so that we are challenged to self-consciously name and work more consistently within a paradigm of service? As educators, do we make explicit (and try to model) the need to change, or the need to become more ourselves? Do we advocate a way of doing service, or do we hold up choices? Is our concern the type of service activity that is done, or the integrity with which it is done? How do we know if we are moving toward justice? Imagining service as a set of related paradigms, each with the potential to move by a different path toward justice, seems to me a step toward overcoming the irony of service-learning, a way of stepping into and embracing the contradictions that often separate our intention from our action. And it seems to me that an understanding of service that is simultaneously more inclusive and deeper can open spaces for all of us to find more allies, deepen the conversations in the service-learning community and find new ways to express and hear the hopes we have for the impacts we might make.

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