WORKING TOWARDS A MORE CRITICAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PRAXIS

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PARE MODEL

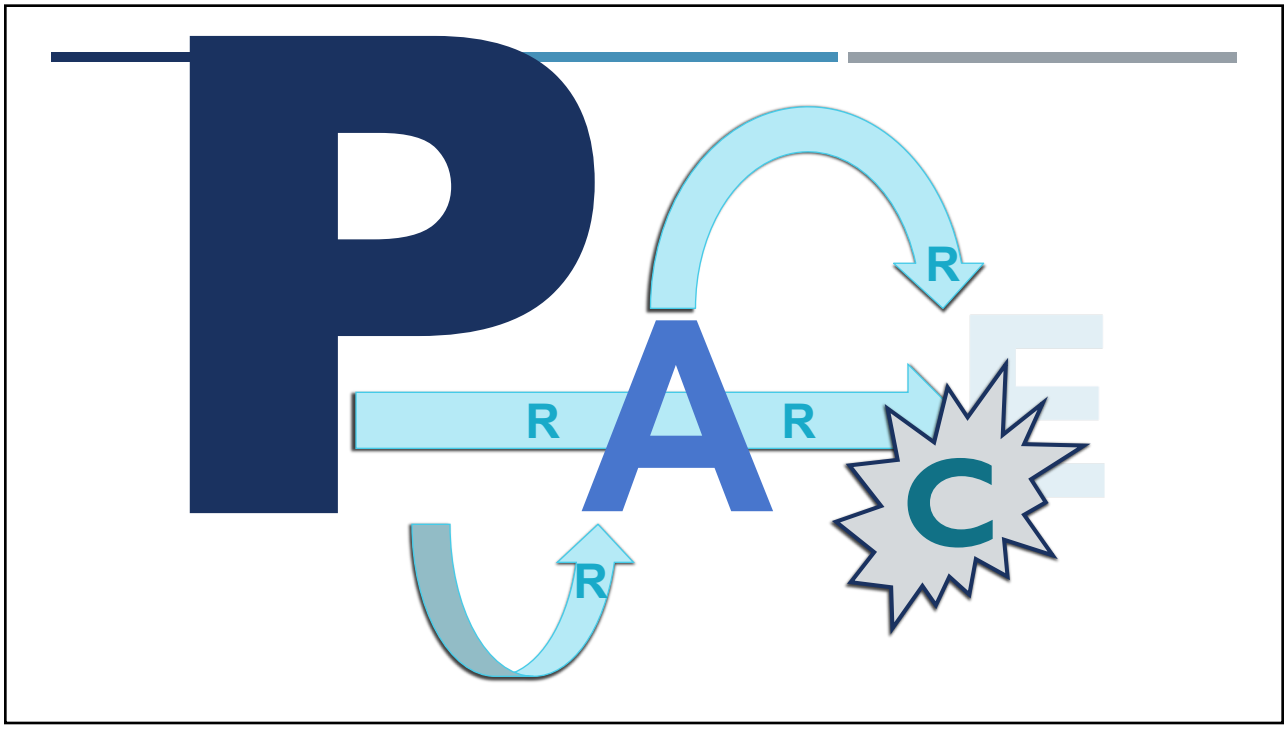
P	Preparation
A	Action
R	Reflection
E	Evaluation

(UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, 1999)

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P ⇨ A ⇨ R ⇨ E

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> [Community engagement] is a pedagogy immersed in the complexities and ambiguities of how we come to make sense of ourselves and the world around us.
>
> (Butin, 2005, p. 98)

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> Service learning has grown out of a long history of community service in which volunteer service to individual people or to the community is perceived as meeting individual needs but not usually as political action intended to transform structural inequalities.
>
> (Rosenberger, 2000, p. 29)

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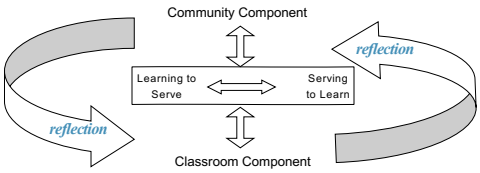
- What is your definition of social justice?
- How does that definition inform your community engagement practice?

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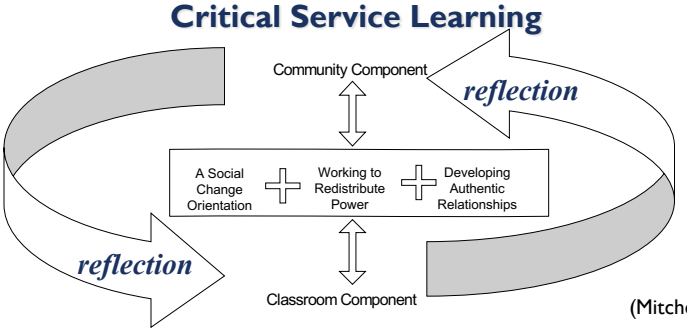
> “Critical service-learning may be viewed as an orientation toward service-learning that emphasizes social justice outcomes over more traditional citizenship goals.”
>
> (Mitchell, 2007, p. 102)

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Traditional Service Learning



Critical Service Learning



(Mitchell, 2008)

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"Depoliticized, service learning is in danger of becoming a downscaled, direct-service welfare state operation."

(Robinson, 2000, p. 611)

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A SOCIAL CHANGE ORIENTATION

Critical service learning pedagogy fosters a critical consciousness, allowing students to combine action and reflection in classroom and community to examine both the historical precedents of social problems

- Explores "needs" not as individual or community deficiencies, but as "critical concerns, issues, and resources that can be addressed
- Community Engagement activities address root causes (e.g., political action, policy work, advocacy, prevention strategies)
- Students articulate visions for a more just society and investigate and contemplate actions that propel society toward those visions

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IN THE CLASSROOM

- Explore (past and present) policies and their impacts
- Utilize current events to underscore present manifestations of inequality
- Visioning exercises that ask people to articulate their conceptions of a more just society and their commitments to work towards it

IN THE COMMUNITY

- Community mapping (e.g., foreclosures, speed traps, grocery stores, green space, cultural space, murals)
- Power mapping (who has the ability to make change happen)
- Work and action that makes an impact

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"[The undeniable power differentials in service-learning relationships] must be exposed, scrutinized, even reconfigured."

(Varlotta, 1997, p. 119)

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WORKING TO REDISTRIBUTE POWER

Simply by choosing which agencies will be "served" and how and when students will enter the service experience to complete certain tasks or meet certain objectives allows power to be retained firmly in the grasp of the instructor and students. From this place, we determine "who or what needs to be 'fixed', to what standard, and who should be in charge of fixing the problem" (Cooks et al., 2004, p. 45).

- Campus resources are allocated to address community needs
- Knowledge is drawn from diverse constituents and shared in multiple ways
- Course content identifies and challenges unequal distributions of power that create the need for service

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IN THE CLASSROOM

- Community instructors
- Community students
- Students co-leading discussions
- Alternative assignments or "grading structures" (e.g., knowledge celebrations)
- Course materials drawn from multiple diverse sources

IN THE COMMUNITY

- Naming unintended hierarchies in service relationships
- Doing paired work with constituent community members
- Community organized/led reflection
- Work that directly benefits constituent community (particularly that supports their efforts to advocate on their own behalf)

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"[Service learning] rarely does much to facilitate the cultivation of capacities for citizenship and public work amongst community members that would in turn enable people to politically address their own issues. Students engaged in service learning…go forth to help, but the service frame insufficiently cultivates receptive deliberation and co-creative agency in ways that might facilitate deep learning on the part of the student in relation to community partners, other knowledge and practices, political artistry, and so forth."

(Coles, 2011, p. 2)

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DEVELOPING AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS

Common goals and shared understanding create mutuality, respect, and trust leading to authenticity. Reciprocity in the service learning experience seeks to create an environment where all learn from and teach one another. This emphasizes a collaborative relationship and seeks to involve all parties equally in the creation of service learning experiences.

- Faculty, students and community partners personal histories and experiences of privilege and oppression are incorporated
- Solidarity is valued as an outcome
- Prolonged engagement and an ongoing partnership are necessary to build trust and identify shared agendas
- All shift roles from teacher, student, person in need

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IN THE CLASSROOM

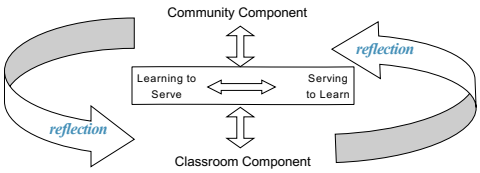
- Reflection on identities and positionality
- Naming our (dis)connections to the addressed social concerns
- Peer debriefing and feedback
- Community mentors
- Use names

IN THE COMMUNITY

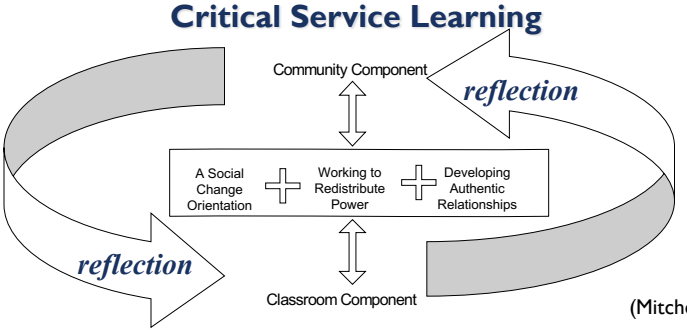
- Use names
- Articulate connections between service work and social justice aim
- Identify opportunities to stay connected to the issue and/or organization
- Offer appreciation "to the community in the community"

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Critical Service Learning

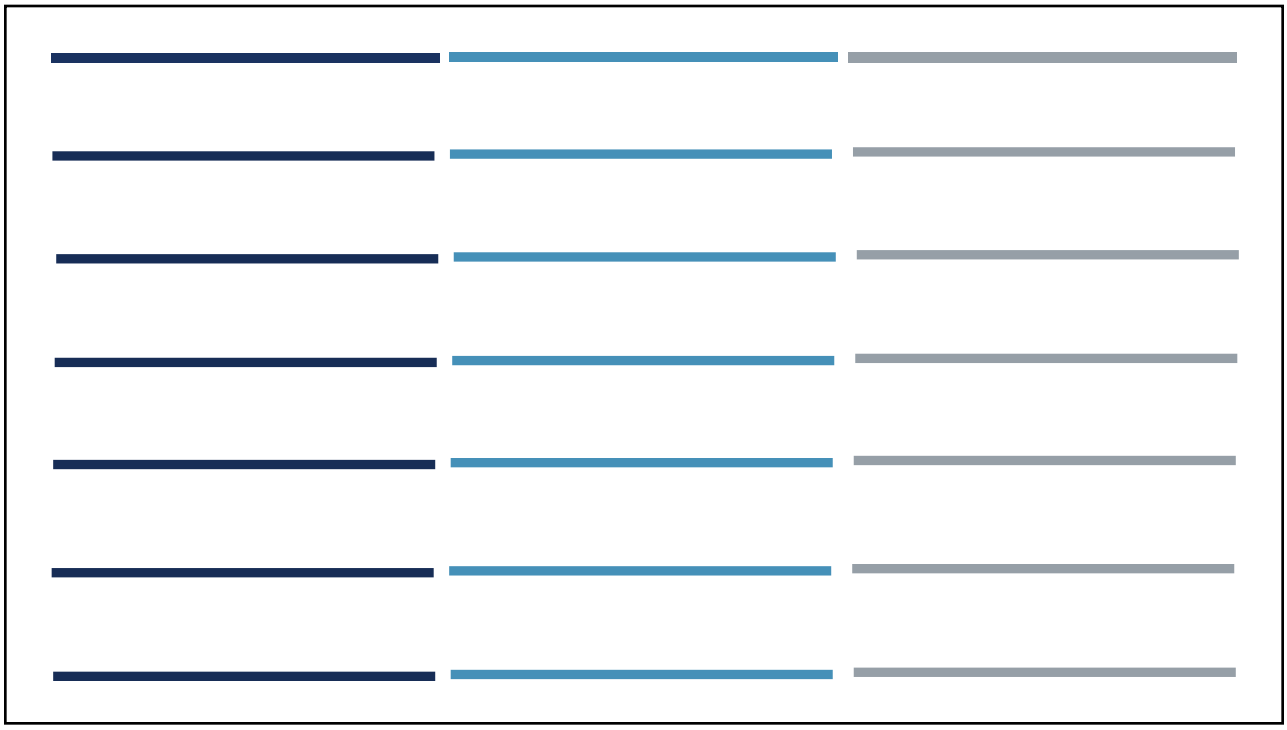


(Mitchell, 2008)

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- What is your definition of social justice?
- How does that definition inform your community engagement practice?
- What kinds of community work and what kinds of classroom teaching/learning feel responsive to your definition of justice?

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IN WHAT WAYS DOES YOUR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EXPERIENCE BRING ATTENTION TO SOCIAL CHANGE?

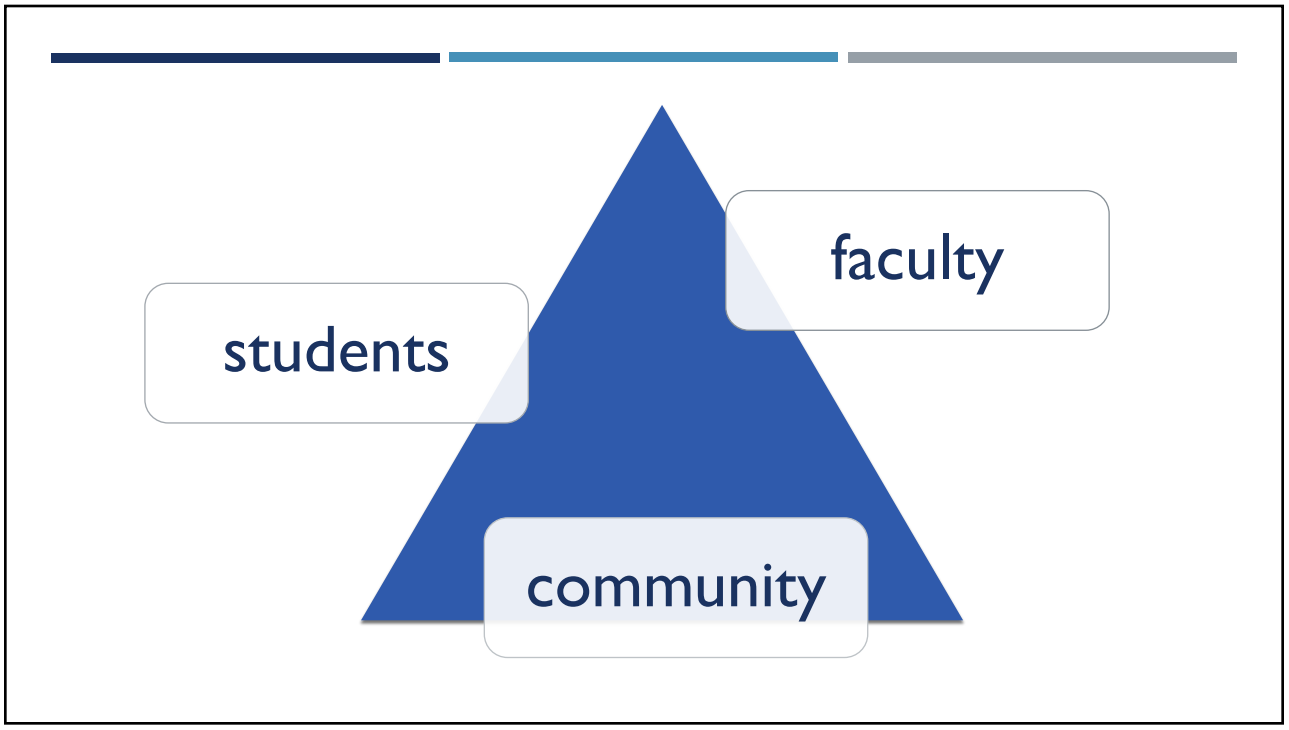
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- How am I linking our community work to systemic injustice (like prior policies)? To structural violence (like current practices/events)?
- How do we communicate with students the intentions of the community work?

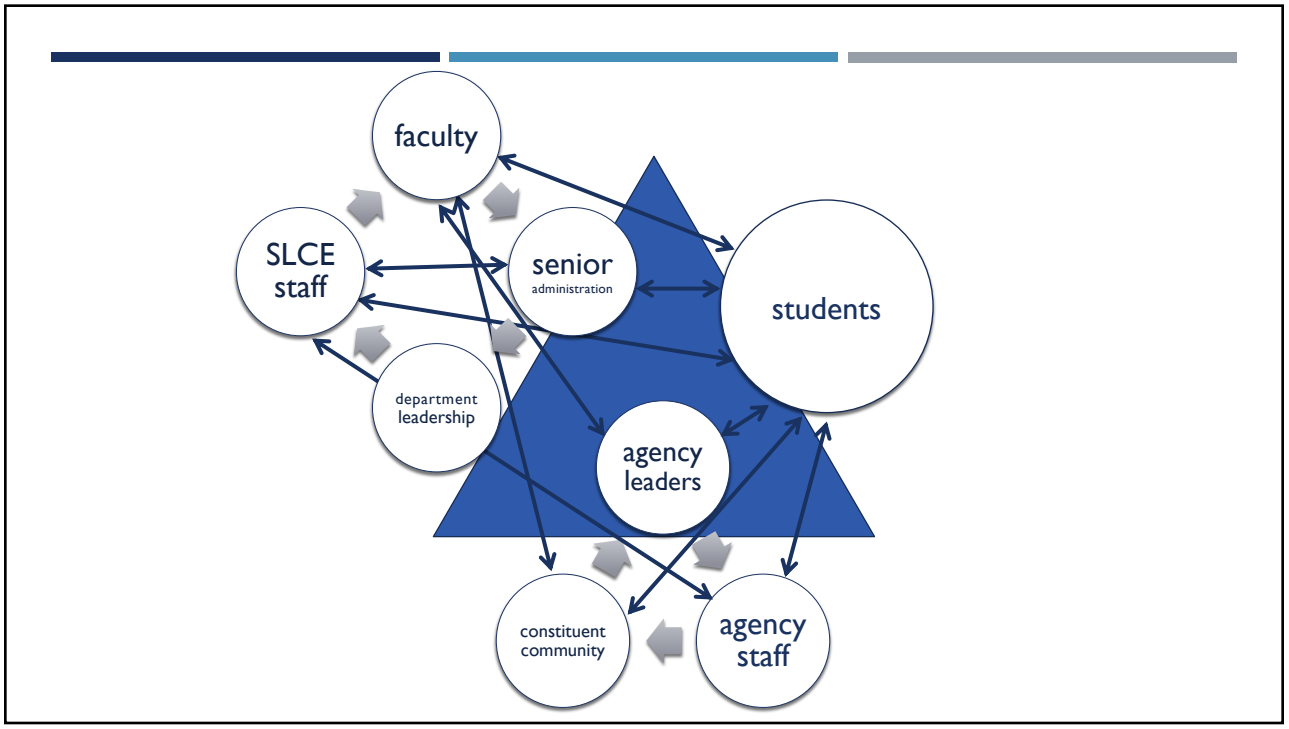
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HOW DO I ATTEND TO THE VARIOUS POWER DYNAMICS INHERENT IN THIS WORK?

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faculty
students
community

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faculty
SLCE staff
senior administration
students
department leadership
agency leaders
constituent community
agency staff

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- What opportunities do (could) I take to name the hierarchies present in my community engagement relationships?
- How do I integrate community stakeholders into these experiences to acknowledge and honor their educational contributions to this learning experience?
- Where am I able to leverage expertise and knowledge historically marginalized in higher education institutions?

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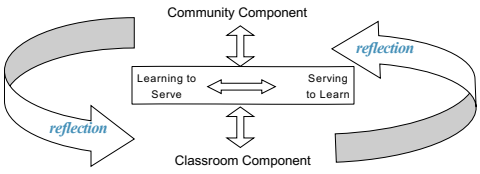
WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO DEVELOP AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS IN MY COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PRACTICE?

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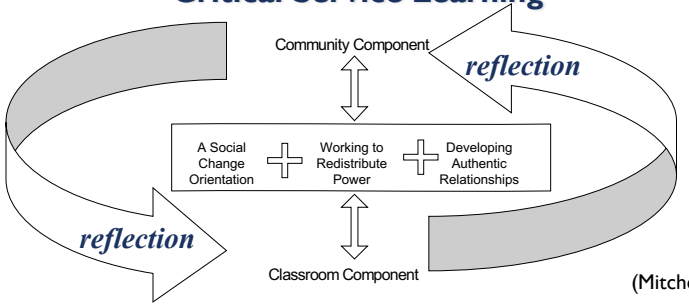
- What do I know about this community (or this issue)? What do I need to know? What steps have I taken (will I take) to learn what I need in order to be an effective facilitator of this experience?
- Who am I partnering with in this experience and what steps have I taken to be in community with them?
- How am I creating space and opportunity for people to learn about each other and with each other?
- What steps have I taken to develop goals alongside various stakeholders and ensure a shared understanding of the expectations for this community engagement project?

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Traditional Service Learning



Critical Service Learning



(Mitchell, 2008)

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THANK YOU



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