SERVICE LEARNING:
ISSUES AND CHALLENGES, PAST AND PRESENT

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This thesis is dedicated to Mary Anne Raywid, who provided the guidance I needed to get the job done; to Cheryl Oncea, my light and life who kept the fires burning as I worked; and to Emma Reppun, my daughter, who someday may be inspired by my efforts and go on to do her own graduate work.
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Thus, to teach a course in American cultural history that includes community-based experience as an essential part of the primary evidence to be analyzed and interpreted is not simply a matter of redesigning the curriculum. It demands a conceptual shift that goes to the core of the profession, challenging the historian’s views of pedagogy, epistemology, and the profession’s sacred tenets. It fundamentally challenges the cult of objectivity.

John Saltmarsh

I hear and I forget,
I see and I remember,
I do and I understand.

Confucian Proverb

Dissent is the sourdough that starts bread rising, or the reckless protest that ignites reform. But it’s not for breadwinners.

Edward Hoagland
Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Statement of the Problem and Research Questions

In 1994 public education policy reform at the federal level took the form of the Goals 2000, Educate America Act. The goals of the act addressed early childhood education, graduation rates, teacher preparation, adult literacy, the school environment and partnerships with parents; ideally, improvements in each of these areas would promote the social and academic development of children as America approached the new millennium. With Goals 2000 in mind, in 1997, in a volume of monographs on service-learning and teacher education, Terry Pickeral and Carol Meyers stated, "There is growing evidence that integrating youth service with curriculum contributes to the motivation, growth, and achievement (my italics and bold print) of students" (Pickeral and Meyers 1997, p. 13). Pickeral and Meyers went on to argue that service-learning is an effective strategy for addressing the outcomes desired by Goals 2000, and that colleges of education should incorporate service-learning into their pre-service teacher education programs as at
least one type of pedagogy teachers should know. Many of Pickeral and Meyer's colleagues agreed then, and still agree, with their views.

Today, in 2003, America's public educators are attempting to cope with what some call the most sweeping federal education reform initiative ever, the so called No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The goals of this 2001 legislation address many of the same issues identified in the Goals 2000 Educate America Act, in particular teacher professional development and credentialing, equity in educational deliverables, and accountability on the part of educators and students alike.¹ Once again service-learning's advocates argue that their pedagogy and philosophical approach to education can be one of a number of effective strategies for achieving the goals of No Child Left Behind, and of public education reform in general. The publications of well known leaders in the service-learning field such as Terry Pickeral, Janet Eyler, Shelley Billig, Andrew Furco, among others, argue a historically consistent refrain; service-learning should be one of the solutions to educational improvement. According to Pickeral et al., service-learning advocates and practitioners currently do

¹ For the complete text of "No Child" see Online reference under Works Cited.
not have a place at the table of school reform, but they should work hard to find that place.

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the issues and challenges, past and present, for the teaching method and educational philosophy known as service-learning. Service-learning has a number of obstacles to overcome. The field suffers from low status and credibility in the context of general education reform; its advocates lack a consensus in terms of its mission and goals; its future is problematic. I intend to look at these challenges as educators within the field perceive them; I also intend to discuss these problems as I perceive them.

The first problem is that service-learning cannot be considered more than a marginal, or fringe educational movement; as such it must continually redefine, defend and reposition itself, depending on the nature and scope of local, state and national reform initiatives, and depending on the typical winds that continually blow through American schools. Civic engagement and service, concepts that form the bedrock of service-learning, have found their way into discussions of state and federal education reform. Yet

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2 It would be very problematic to engage in a discussion of just what “more than a marginal” means; it is not my intention to do so. What “more than a marginal” means is really an empirical question calling first for a generally accepted definition of “marginal” and then a head count of those who fall on one side the definition or the other. My thesis assumes only that marginal means “outside the center”; in my reading of the literature I have yet to find anyone who claims service-learning is right at the center of education reform.
service-learning, taken as an organic whole, and especially as a pedagogy, has not been a central or key stakeholder positioned in the middle of the debate over public education in America.\(^3\) Struggling to find a spot in the hearts and minds of policymakers, educators and students, service-learning has always been a voice from the edge of the crowd.

Arguably, the marginal status of service-learning, vis-à-vis public school reform, has been its primary though certainly not unique problem. There are other reform strategies that share service-learning's difficulties. Yet, does service-learning really want to be at the center of the debate? Should it be at the center of the debate? Answers depend on the service-learning players one is talking to, and answers change from year to year. Answers also depend on potential responses to the following questions: 1) Are the goals of service-learning compatible with national goals of education reform? and 2) Do advocates of service-learning agree with current diagnoses regarding America's public schools? Pickeral, Eyler, Billig, Furco and those of like mind would answer Yes to the first question and Maybe to the second – some even suggest the goals of service-learning exactly match the

\(^3\) On the other hand, service-learning has been at the center of a few state reform efforts, South Carolina and Maryland in the early 1990s most notably.
original goals of public education in America - and would agree that service-learning should work to be at the center; should work to be a locally and nationally chosen strategy for better education. Others in the movement, those who might answer No to both questions above, disagree - sometimes strongly - and would rather not allow the mission of service-learning, i.e. civic engagement, social justice, activism and citizenship (to them, its heart and soul), to be changed or compromised by being drawn into an endless and constantly changing national debate on school reform, a debate largely about reading, writing, arithmetic, content and performance standards, testing and accountability, and preparing students for careers.

To summarize: service-learning's most important problem is its marginal status. It also suffers from a lack of agreement as to whether its marginal status is good or bad, a lack of consensus as to its mission and goals, and a lack of consensus as to what service-learning needs to accomplish to become a central stakeholder in American education. As will be seen in this thesis' literature review, it is not hyperbolic to suggest that the very survival of service-learning may depend on some clear thinking with regard to these issues.
Contributing to its marginal status, service-learning's second problem is that it has not yet proven its worth as a unique educational strategy for academic success. Over the years advocates of service-learning - much like advocates of single sex schools - have relied on mostly qualitative and/or anecdotal evidence of successful academic outcomes. Only a few studies of service-learning have used generally accepted principles of scientific inquiry as a basis for inquiry into academic outcomes, and even then the results of studies have been mixed. Hence, at state and federal levels, the marginal status of service-learning has been reinforced by the movement's inability to scientifically justify the one claim that really matters to those educators, administrators, public policy-makers and legislators at the center of public school reform: students perform significantly better on generally accepted measures of success when service-learning is the mode of teaching.

If studies do not show academic success, some argue, the movement will remain marginal, support and research dollars will not be forthcoming, and both problems will remain unsolved.

If studies using generally accepted principles of scientific inquiry did exist in the area of service-learning, and if the data in these studies substantiated
the academic value of service-learning, would the movement then be included at the center of the debate over public education in America? Many advocates who view service-learning as marginal see the research problem as the central reason for its marginal status; they want very much to address this challenge because they believe credible data demonstrating academic success will assuredly lead service-learning into the mainstream. These advocates would like to see greater numbers of longitudinal studies documenting academic success with the use of service-learning.

Furthermore, advocates view public education's original goal of citizenship as alarmingly compromised or even lost altogether; they think service-learning must be at the center of reform in order for citizenship to be brought back as education's central goal. Frankly, for some of these advocates service-learning and experiential education will be the only educational philosophy and method capable of achieving this goal. Their expectations are very high and they often express a strong sense of urgency that without demonstration of academic success, citizenship, via service-learning, will become moot.

On the other hand, some service-learning advocates disagree that its fringe status and lack of scientific
research into academic outcomes is in fact a problem; they see discussions of academics and service-learning as counterproductive and much too negative. They see these discussions as mostly political and partisan in nature. Abhorring politics, these advocates see service-learning as dynamic, growing, improving and a sound educational object of choice, but maybe not for everyone. They see no need to involve themselves in general education reform; such involvement may even present unnecessary risks to the integrity of the service-learning movement as originally conceived. These advocates are willing to accept anecdotal and/or qualitative data as evidence of success; they view any push to find quantitative data supporting academic success as misplaced energy, or worse, a potential satanic pact.

To summarize the problems, service-learning as a movement historically lacks consensus as to its aims and goals, other than the fact that the movement would like to expand the number of its practitioners, have more money at its disposal, and enjoy more support from school administrators. Some within the movement claim it is this very lack of consensus as to its aims and goals that prevent it from being a central stakeholder within the context of local and national school reform. Others do not
see a lack of consensus as a problem and would rather stay at the fringe. Obviously the quantity and quality of data plays a central role in this debate. Strong feelings exist on both sides.

Therefore, the following questions will guide the literature review and the discussion in chapters two and three:

- To what extent can service-learning as a fringe movement ever have an impact?
- Should advocates of service-learning continue to pound on the gates of Rome, demand a place at the table and change their movement to emphasize scientifically based research attesting to successful outcomes that are compatible with all the goals of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (and any future changes or reauthorizations of this act)? Would taking these actions risk losing the experiential, dynamic democratic and civic soul of the pedagogy?
- Should service-learning take a "if we cannot beat them, we should join them" approach? Should it attempt to take itself into the mainstream of education reform? Should any energy be spent on this strategy?
Since the original goal of public education was to produce engaged citizens and teach citizenship, and since the ultimate goal of service-learning is, arguably, civic engagement, is it not an imperative that service-learning do whatever it takes to get to the center of the debate over public education reform in order to bring public education back to its roots?

On the other hand, it also seems important to ask these additional questions:

- Should service-learning concentrate on strengthening itself from within, largely ignoring national public education reform agendas as nothing more than passing political waves?

- Is it pointless to worry about such grand issues as the democratic and civic soul of public education when there is so much work to be done by individual service-learning teachers and faculty to improve the practice and method of service learning?

- Should not service-learning bide its time, improve its practices, and wait till Rome (i.e., the factory model of learning) falls?

1.2 Discussion of the Importance of the Problem
The two problems and additional questions posed in 1.1 are the thesis guidelines that will inform my study of the issues and challenges, past and present, for service-learning. It is not safe to assume that service-learning's future is assured, or that it will continue to be accepted as a teaching method in American public education. There is anecdotal evidence that service-learning programs have been swept aside and teachers who use service-learning have been forced to change their methods in the face of standards and accountability reform mandates. Given legislation like The No Child Left Behind Act of 2002, it appears 2004 and 2005 will be important years for the survival of service-learning. The next two years will be a time when the movement swings - by choice - either towards the American educational mainstream, or away; a time when the movement aligns itself with national reform, or not; a time when the field becomes stronger, or sinks into obscurity. The survival of service-learning is an important topic, not to be too melodramatic about it, because it speaks to what should be the central issue in American education.

Moreover, the future of service-learning - as is the case with any educational philosophy or method - depends on decisions made by leaders within the field; it is entirely appropriate to analyze these leaders' philosophies of
education and their individual agendas. It is also appropriate that I offer my own views on these matters. I do not consider myself a leader in this field, by any stretch of the imagination, but I have now been involved for five years. I have watched and observed service-learning on both local and national levels and I think my perspective and grasp of the problems is credible.

1.3 Discussion of Limitations

Regarding the limitations of this thesis, it is not my intent, nor would it be appropriate to write an exhaustive history of service-learning in the context of American education reform; such an effort would be more appropriate for a doctoral dissertation. Community and faith based organizations, are another topic of discussion with regard to service-learning, but will not be covered here. My intent to analyze the future position of service-learning by comparing my perspective with others' supercedes any need to fully describe its past. I do acknowledge the need for the reader to know at least the basic history of service-learning, and that will be provided.

I also recognize that service-learning is relatively young (thirty years) as a teaching strategy and educational philosophy with its own definitions and vocabulary; therefore, the number of voices I have to support consensus
on one side of the debate or the other is limited to those who have chosen to publish their views using this vocabulary. In the past decade an increasing number of researchers, graduate students and scholars have published monographs and presented studies on service-learning, enough to provide a solid foundation of information for the purposes of this thesis. Yet the weight of my work will be thrown in the direction of my discussion, my analysis of service-learning’s problems and potentials.

1.4 Statement of Method

Given the previously stated issues, problems and limitations, this thesis’ method is as follows. It reviews publications by those individuals considered leaders, researchers or experts, in the field of service-learning. It also reviews some of the narratives and monographs provided by those who see themselves not as leaders but as regular practitioners (classroom teachers). In reviewing these publications I have attempted to determine how these teachers, professors and scholars define the problems, and which course of action advocates and leaders would like to see service-learning take. I have also tried to determine into which camp individuals might fall regarding the key questions. No individuals were interviewed for this work; I have found their views clearly stated in their
publications. In the final section my discussion of the problems is influenced by many informal conversations with some of these same people.  

The method of my literature review, **Chapters 2 and 3**, is as follows: the review defines the pedagogy and philosophy, outlines the roots of service-learning, identifies its past and present leaders, states the field's early challenges, its current preoccupations and discussions, and some its seminal publications. Discussions in the continued literature review, **Chapter 3**, analyze philosophically polarized positions within the field. The chapter lays out a number of reasons why service-learning is in its current state and where some of its leaders wish it would go. In short, with regard to the issues and challenges, past and present, for service-learning, this thesis' methodology uses historiographical tools to analyze philosophical problems.

**1.5 Defining Terms**

The term service-learning will be fully defined in **Chapter 2**, the literature review. For the purposes of this thesis, and in order to remain consistent, I choose to use the hyphenated term "service-learning" throughout the text.

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4 I have attended some 100 workshops, forums and discussions on service-learning at the 1st and 2nd Annual Service-Learning Research Conferences, held at Berkeley and Nashville, respectively, and the 1999, 2000 and 2001 national conferences on service-learning at San Jose, Providence and Denver, respectively.
As will be explained in the literature review, the hyphenation of service and learning demonstrates the intent by advocates to connect - with some semblance of balance - service to the community with curriculums constructed in schools or community based organizations: hence the term service-learning.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

1.1 Introduction - Social Capital, Functional Communities, American Education and Service-Learning

Yogi Berra, in his infinite, yet humorous wisdom, seems to hit it right on the head by stating, "If you don’t go to somebody’s funeral, they won’t come to yours" (Putnam 2000, p. 20). Robert Putnam, in citing Berra, illustrates what he calls the concept of "social capital," i.e., the kinds of face-to-face relationships that foster positive civic societies. Putnam’s argument, carefully developed in his book Bowling Alone (2000), is that Americans are bowling alone, so to speak, more than ever before. Most indices of social capital - face to face relationships - are in decline. Whether the index has to do with politics, religion, general civics, societal honesty, trust and or integrity, just to name a few, Putnam believes they are
markedly less positive since the early 1970s. For example, Putnam argues, "In 1996 only 8 percent of all Americans said that 'the honesty and integrity of the average American' were improving, as compared with 50 percent of us who thought we were becoming less trustworthy" (p. 25). As a result of these declining indices, Americans - especially those who are currently of school age - are spending markedly more time alone in front of computer screens and televisions and markedly less time building face to face relationships with fellow humans, or so Putnam believes.

When it comes to child development and education, Putnam does not mince words about the exact correlation between social capital indices and positive educational outcomes. Putnam states, "Statistically, the correlation between high social capital and positive child development is as close to perfect as social scientists ever find in data analysis of this sort" (p. 297). If social capital is important to a child's development, it is logical to conclude that schools, and school systems that rank high in terms of social capital are places we, as a nation, should be investing our monies. Concluding his chapter on child development and education, Putnam announces "One of the areas in which America's diminished stock of social capital is likely to have the most damaging consequences is the
quality of education (both in school and outside) that our children receive" (p. 306).

One example of how Putnam’s approach shows up in other, more specific examinations of educational systems, comes in a paper by David Campbell presented at the 2000 annual meeting of the American Political Science Association. Reflecting on how to make democratic education work in schools, Campbell links studies of Catholic schools by James Coleman and others to notions of “value based” or “functional communities,” defined thusly: “In his [Coleman’s] framework, a value community consists of people who share a common belief system on at least one dimension, and thus develop norms stemming from these beliefs” (Campbell 2000, p. 10) If the community is highly functional, rich in social capital, Campbell then makes the following conclusion: “: social capital produces good schools, and good schools provide a good education, of which civic skills and political knowledge are only two of the many consequences” (p. 39). In other words, social capital reinforces positive community growth, citizenship and civic engagement; schools are one vehicle for social capital development; therefore, if we are to reverse what Putnam worries are the declining indices of social capital, we need to invest in good schools that work as functional
communities. There is a certain circular logic here, a cause and effect process that is powerful to contemplate.\textsuperscript{5} So how does one put the cause into effect?

\textbf{Service-learning} is a teaching method that combines traditional notions of community service with intentional curriculums found in schools and other learning environments. \textit{Some advocates of service-learning believe it is an important method for achieving Coleman’s functional, values laden, communities and Putnam’s call for increased social capital. They believe if Americans adopt service-learning as our national teaching method, it will produce functional communities, which will produce greater social capital, which will produce good schools, which will promote democracy and citizenship, more of which will improve everyone’s quality of life.}

Unfortunately for service-learning, America’s goals for education are not that clear cut, nor are they necessarily focused on development of functional communities or social capital reclamation. Moreover, Americans’ notions of what makes a good school or a good education do not necessarily match up with the visions of Coleman and Putnam, or those of teachers who support

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{5} James Coleman’s (with his co-author Thomas Hoffer) \textit{Public and Private High Schools, The Impact of Communities} will be discussed later in this literature review.}
service-learning. As a result, where service-learning is established as a teaching method in order to achieve reforms, it is often on the defensive. Service-learning programs or courses are often the first to be reduced or cut in times of budget cutbacks or changes in administration; individual practitioners often do not know where to turn for support when threats emerge. After a time some just give up.

Do service-learning advocates find it regrettable that the field’s desired outcomes often do not match America’s educational goals? Yes, many do. But are service-learning advocates in agreement about the state of their own house? No, most are not. When service-learning advocates and practitioners meet, there are frequent and often heated arguments about mission, goals, outcomes and strategies, and whether the cup of service-learning is half empty or half full. For many in the field, service-learning has come no further in 30 years than an ineffective fringe voice on the outside of a debate that centers mostly on whether students can successfully read, write and do math at regularly measured levels. On the other hand, others believe service-learning is literally sweeping the country.

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6 An example might be a school or district that previously supported the teaching method called service-learning, but withdrew that support in the face of a need to teach to a particular state or district-wide test.
Putnam and Coleman are by no means the founders of service-learning. Functional communities linked to social capital development are but two complex ideas that share links to many other concepts that form the core beliefs of service-learning advocates and leaders. This introductory section in the literature review was intended to expose service-learning for what it is, a dynamic method and philosophy of education with seemingly limitless abilities to find kinship with other ideas boiling and bubbling in the pot that is education and (or) social reform. Prior to describing the genesis and development of service-learning, I first want to further flesh out the concept and its definition.

1.2 What is Service-Learning?

The dry, insightful wit of Professor Janet Eyler, perhaps the most visible personage and most respected researcher in the service-learning movement to date, comes through loud and clear when she states, “A lot of energy has been devoted to defining service-learning” (Eyler and Giles 1999, p. 3) Indeed, one can only guess at the number of hours service-learning advocates spend trying to decide if the term should be hyphenated, or not! Nevertheless, Eyler and Giles state that by 1990, 147 definitions existed in the literature. Even though nearly everyone has their
own take on service-learning, Eyler and Giles provide what appears to be a comprehensive definition capable of appeasing and including even those least sure that a consensus definition can be reached at all (notably, Robert Seidel and Edward Zlotkowski, who in 1993 argued - unsuccessfully I might add - "service" is a negatively loaded term and service-learning should be changed to "community learning"). Eyler and Giles see four approaches to the term: service-Learning (learning goals primary, service outcomes secondary): Service-learning (service outcomes primary, learning goals secondary): service learning (service and learning goals separate): and SERVICE-LEARNING (service and learning goals are of equal weight and reciprocity is implied). Although Eyler and Giles imply a need for balance between learning and service when they describe SERVICE-LEARNING, they generously conclude; "Thus we accept that any program that attempts to link academic study with service can be characterized as service-learning:" (p. 5).

Most advocates and scholars writing about service-learning seem to generally agree with Eyler and Giles, that there is a great deal of volunteerism, community service, service, work-study and internship work going on in America's schools, businesses and community organizations,
yet these activities cannot be called service-learning (Eyler and Giles 1999). These kinds of activities usually lack the educational intent combined with a high degree of reciprocity that characterizes service-learning.

According to Alan Waterman volunteerism is specifically not service-learning because “In volunteer service there is no explicit focus on the educational value to be gained through involvement in the particular projects” (Waterman 1997, p. 3). Waterman may be generalizing, yet for the most part it is true that when one does volunteer work one does it because the work needs to be done, and not because there is something to be learned.

Therefore, to be called service-learning, volunteering must take place in educational settings where there is a clear, intentional and thematic curricular link between service performed - inside schools or out in communities, either by groups or individuals - and academic coursework. 7

Kathleen Maas Weigert provides one example of someone in the field - in the context of higher education - who probably feels comfortable with Eyler and Giles's definitions. For Professor Maas Weigert, “...the service

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7 By thematic I mean the different academic disciplines: water quality testing with basic science, feeding the homeless with 19th Century European history, designing and building handicap ramps with fifth grade geometry, for example.
provided by students flows from and into course objectives, is integrated into the course by means of assignments that require some form of reflection on the service in light of course objectives:" (p. 5).

If the concept of service-learning seems simple enough, when advocates, researchers and practitioners attempt to further narrow its definition they ironically make it only that much more muddled and complex. For example, some proponents believe students and communities must play a role in the design of service-learning programs in order for it to be called true service-learning. Thinking like this leads to consideration and reconsideration, ad nauseam, of terms like “curriculum,” “academics,” “reflection,” “service,” “work,” “community,” “meaningful.” It is not hard to see why so many hours are spent – many say wasted – trying to pin the field down to something simple, something all educators and the public can grasp. Like the “Wack-a-Mole” game at a carnival, scholars in the field spend a great deal of time, money and paper reacting to oblique questions like the following posed by Kathleen Maas Weigert: “Are all placements legitimate for academic service learning?” (p. 9). The answer? It depends.
Although the field appears somewhat obsessed with defining itself - and asking questions about itself that sometimes appear redundant - reviewing the various criteria advocates use to define service-learning reveals just how polarized scholars can become. Regarding methodology, Harkavy and Benson believe "Academic service learning is a pedagogy derived from a theory of democratic education and schooling developed by John Dewey to replace Plato’s aristocratic theory of education and society" (1998, p. 11). The assumption here is that everyone is a learner, everyone is responsible for the common good, and any program calling itself service-learning must keep this notion in mind. Similarly, Kenneth Reardon feels "action research," as a method for executing a program, is integral to the definition of service-learning (1998, p. 59).  

Arguing against service-learning as values model, Jeffrey Howard sees it rather as a "counternormative" pedagogy that seeks to resocialize first teachers, then students, until traditional notions of teaching and learning, and traditional relationships between teachers and learners are completely turned on their heads. Howard further states, "service-learning is a synergistic model

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8 Action research is research done with a specific problem-solution set in mind. The researcher must not be just preparing to write a paper, but rather preparing to solve a "community" problem.
[of teaching] where student’s community service experiences are compatible and integrated with academic learning objectives..." (1998, pp. 24-5). Continuing in this method over values mode, David Cooper (1998) sees written reflections as integral to service-learning. In service-learning activities without critical reflection, whether learning is taking place or not cannot be known, according to Cooper. In terms of the method and mechanics of service-learning there are numerous additional nuances to the definition, yet most scholars writing in this vein believe service-learning cannot be so-called without them.

To summarize, those who favor method over values suggest service-learning must teach everyone, consider everyone a learner, engage in action research and reflection, honor the voices of youth, and build relationships, among other ideas. If it appears service-learning’s definition may only be stable until the next researcher with an agenda comes along, this may not be far from the truth.

Conversely, using a values approach, Meta Mendel-Reyes suggests service-learning must be a pedagogy for citizenship in which the democratic process must be philosophically at the core of the curriculum and service activities (1998, p. 37). Similarly, Robert Rhoads believes
multiculturalism is the heart of service-learning, its true purpose and outcome rolled into one (1998, pp. 39-46). Shelly Billig believes the service in service-learning must meet "authentic community needs" (Furco and Billig 2002, p. 246), another values based notion.

Given the number of ways service-learning can be viewed and defined using method and values, one wonders if Eyler and Giles' count of 147 definitions is grossly short of the mark! Nevertheless, at the core of these sometimes confusing definitions, parameters and restrictions is one basic idea - back to Eyler and Giles - that good service-learning programs are a balance of service activities coupled intentionally with specific educational processes.

The definitions for service-learning offered by the two leading organizations that support the field are also important to note. These two organizations are Campus Compact (higher education), and the National Youth Leadership Council (NYLC). NYLC has for the past 12 years conducted the annual National Service Learning Conference, and its area of focus is public and private K-12 schools. The following two definitions were gained from their websites: <nylc.org>, and <compact.org>.

The NYLC, in 1994, defined service-learning in the following manner:
Former U.S. Senator and astronaut, John Glenn recently described service-learning as "academics in action." Cleaning up a river is service. Sitting in a science classroom, looking at water samples under a microscope is learning. Students taking samples from local water sources, analyzing the samples, documenting the results and presenting scientific findings to a local pollution control agency is service-learning. Service-learning is a method of teaching that enriches learning by engaging students in meaningful service to their schools and their communities. Through careful integration with established curricula, lessons gained from hands-on service heighten interest and enhance academic achievement, citizenship, and character development. Service-learning is a proven key to educational reform that also makes significant contributions to community development.

Campus Compact, an alliance of colleges and universities seeking to promote the civic purposes of higher education created its definition as a summary of others’ definitions:

From these definitions, we may derive three general characteristics of service-learning: 1) It is based on the experience of meeting needs in the community. 2) It incorporates reflection and academic learning. 3) It contributes to students’ interests in and understanding of community life. Robert Bringle and Julie Hatcher. “A Service Learning Curriculum for Faculty,” in: Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, 2, pp. 112-122.

It is appropriate here to provide two concrete examples of service-learning programs, in order that the reader might move from abstraction to reality. Both examples are drawn from Service at the Heart of Learning, a compilation of teacher’s stories of their service-learning programs. In the first example a middle school language arts teacher and her students developed a relationship with a local retirement home. Students initiated a program whereby they took oral histories of senior residents of the home, transcribed them into published biographies, and
gifted these biographies back to the resident and his or her family. In this example who was served, and what was learned - both content and skills - is fairly obvious. In the second example, a high school language arts and history teacher at a school for at risk students in the Midwest developed a living history program in which students researched the story of the Tuskegee Airmen, a celebrated Black flying unit during World War II. The students eventually wrote a book on the airmen. Proceeds from the sale of the book went to fund the restoration of a unit airplane for a local museum, and a reunion of pilots, many of whom had not seen each other since the war. In both program examples it should be clear to the reader that curriculum was directly connected to service activities, and that reciprocity, a hallmark of service-learning, was present.

1.3 What is the History of Service-Learning?

There is consensus that service-learning as a method of teaching and a philosophy of education has a long history, yet there is some dispute as to when the term "service-learning" was first coined. Kenny and Gallagher claim the term was first used in 1967 to describe a project of the Southern Regional Education Board (2002, p. 15). On
the other hand, Stanton, Giles and Cruz describe a 1966-1967 Tennessee Valley Authority-funded project connecting an Oak Ridge college with organizations protecting tributary areas within the TVA as the first use of the term service-learning (p. 252). In terms of higher education it appears 1967 might be the key year, yet the location of the burning bush will remain, no doubt, elusive.\textsuperscript{9}

The literature generally shows that first use - and development of related terms - of "service-learning" happened in the realms of higher education; subsequently, in the early 1970s, practitioners in the K-12 schools adopted "service-learning" as their terminology. No matter when or where the term was first coined, the full vocabulary of service-learning did not just show up in the 1960s; it evolved slowly, a pot percolating a number of educational terms and vocabularies including, for example, "experiential," and "activity based learning."\textsuperscript{10}

Generally, how old is the \textit{concept} of service-learning? In 1998 Goodwin Liu, speaking on behalf of the federal Department of Education, stated, "...it is a mistake to believe that the [service-learning] movement and its core commitments are new in any historical or conceptual sense"

\textsuperscript{9} University of Iowa professor Rahima Wade seems to think the term was coined much later in the 1970s, but she may have been referring to strictly K-12 contexts; she provides no specific event within which the term was used, nor does she provide a source (Wade 1997).

\textsuperscript{10} These two terms date back to the early 1900s' era of John Dewey.
According to Alan Waterman, “We have been doing ‘service-learning’ in our society for far longer than we have applied the label to this approach to experiential education” (1997, p. 1). Robert Shumer echoes Waterman by stating: “...it [service-learning] has been around for a long time. Service-learning is built on a rich history of study, primarily found in the fields of experiential learning, career education and school-to-work programs (Shumer 1997, p. 25).

Service-learning is the confluence of two traditions: service to the community and an experiential approach to teaching and learning. Some see Thomas Jefferson’s writing on the virtue of good works, and even Alexis de Toqueville’s observations on Americans’ penchant for social commitment as part of service-learning’s intellectual roots (Kenny and Gallagher 2002, Lisman 1998, Waterman 1997). In 1910 the writer philosopher William James called for youth to take part in national service, calling it the “moral equivalent for war” (Waterman, p. 2). The Great Depression in the 1930s and 1940s gave rise to the Civilian Conservation Corps, a paid version of the current stipend-based AmeriCorps program - meanwhile John Dewey was calling for more active student learning - and recent presidents such as Kennedy, Carter, Clinton and even George H.W. Bush
and G.W. Bush (Antonelli and Thompson 1997, p. 163) have all made public service cornerstones of their approaches to public education (Waterman 1997, p. 2-4).

Service-learning also evolved from David Kolb’s Experiential Learning Cycle in the 1980s, a theory of learning that describes students grasping and then transforming information by applying concepts to the real world through experimental activities (Waterman 1997, Kenny and Gallagher 2002, Sheckley and Keeton 1997). Since the 1980s criticisms of Kolb’s theories have given rise to new theories seeking to explain what happens when educators link service and learning (Sheckly and Keeton 1997, p. 35-6). In short, the history of education in the 19th and 20th Centuries is partially the story of the American tradition of service coming together with notions of education reform related to experiential learning.

No history of service-learning would be credible if it did not place it in the context of general education reform, and in the context of calls for a renewed civic mission for public schools. Given that service-learning’s roots are so deeply embedded in notions of citizenship, public service and civic engagement, it seems appropriate to delve a bit deeper into the works of a few scholars who have been calling for a return to the civic mission of
public education (assuming they are correct that it has
been lost). Service-learning advocates and leaders
increasingly cite these scholars while asking the following
questions: Is the primary goal of service-learning to
engage students in civic life? Do the goals of service-
learning match the goals of public education in America
today? Has the civic mission of public education been
compromised? Can service-learning be the vehicle to bring
back the civic mission of public schools?

Indeed, many scholars agree that the civic mission of
schools has been lost. David Tyack (1981) is one and he
provides a reason. For Tyack the system of public schools
in the 1800s could be characterized as loosely structured,
perhaps not a system at all, but a wonderful mixture of
every conceivable type of school and form of instruction,
rural and urban, only tied together by the common goal of
literacy and moral and civic learning. Almost anyone could
be involved in the life and governance of the school in 19th
Century America. Most communities were characterized by the
enthusiastic participation of people in the life and
administration of their schools. As a result schools and
public education may have been seen as haphazard,
unsystematic, hit-or-miss, even chaotic, but they were
truly public schools because the general public was highly
involved in their development. According to Tyack it was
the bureaucratization of public education, starting in the
late 1800s and early 1900s, the development of educational
"systems,“ as well as the imposition of the federal
government on education, that changed public schooling.
This process, characterized by fewer and fewer people -
managerial types - making more and more of the decisions
about instruction and the way schools would operate, pushed
the civic mission off the table and instituted instead the
idea that schools merely provided the starting point -
granted, equally and democratically - in a race to succeed,
in a race to seize opportunities in an expanding economy
that needed increasingly skilled labor. Education,
according to Tyack, became a matter for experts to direct;
schools became bigger, smaller schools were consolidated,
tracking was instituted, the civic mission set aside,
replaced by one or two courses in the mechanics of American
government. Increasingly the public, previously
enthusiastic, began to feel alienated by school systems and
mostly unwanted or unneeded by school administrators and
teachers. Since one of the central canons of service-
learning is civics, this process of alienation described by
Tyack must have been historically harmful to any efforts by
advocates to stay in the game.
David Seely and Robert Schwartz (1981), and Don Davies (1981) support Tyack's argument, noting public education in 20th Century America is the story of bureaucratization, a time in which government - state and federal - became synonymous with schools. Seely and Schwartz argue that education became disrespectful of the public, unresponsive and even anti-educational. Davies suggests the relationship between communities and their schools had become unsatisfying - a divorce of sorts - and that America needed to rethink that relationship. No wonder some service-learning advocates seek kinship with reformers calling for small schools, schools within schools, restructuring, decentralization and debureaucratization, as well as a renewed civic mission. It is not hard to imagine that there must have been a great deal of service-learning - without the title - in 19th and 20th Century American public education. It is also not hard to imagine why it has been so difficult for service-learning to gain a toe-hold in the 1900s and early in the new millennium.

David Mathews (1996) puts the loss of the "public" component in public schools in a different light. For Mathews, school reform, including reforms like service-learning that seek to reestablish a mission of civic engagement, fails - for the most part - because there is no
public waiting to be engaged. Parents are more ambivalent about where to educate their children than ever before, and increasingly their choices do not involve public education (case in point: Hawaii’s independent schools currently educate over twenty percent of Hawaii’s students). Mathews further argues that schools cannot engage students and communities in a civic life if communities do not have the predisposition to engage themselves in the messy business of democracy, of being a commonwealth. If individuals within communities are preoccupied with getting ahead - no time for building social capital not directly related to career advancement - no wonder schools that still have a public mission find it hard to engage “communities.” In other words, putting the horse in front of the cart, according to Mathews the public needs to reform itself into civic communities once again; schools should merely be a reflection of that process.

Mathews' argument must resonate with those in the service-learning field who see the object of the pedagogy as a reformation - the act of creating once again, and not just changing - of communities, and not just schools. For Mathews the terms are slightly different. He sees a return to the public mission of schools as a “retracing” of our steps, a process that involves walking back to notions of
creating community first, rather than building communities around schools. He notes correlations drawn by Robert Putnam between healthy communities and higher levels of social capital, to support his point. According to Mathews, as we walk back we will learn that at some point in the late 1800s we decided to delegate the mission and practice of our public schools to someone else, a mistake of incredible proportions, but possible to correct.

James Coleman is often cited in bibliographies of publications examining civic engagement, civic missions of schools, and the history of experiential education. In many ways Coleman and his coauthor Thomas Hoffer (1987) support the contention of Mathews that increasingly there is no public (or community) waiting to be engaged by the public school. For Coleman and Hoffer, the public school was a natural outgrowth of the functional nature of communities. In a functional community there are clear sets of norms that express a set of dominant values. Whatever those values were, or continue to be, early in the history of public schooling the school served to pass those values on from generation to generation. The canvas where civic engagement took place was fairly small and contained. Hence, what was public about public schooling was the functional community that surrounded the school. However,
with changes in the structure of American society - smaller family units, much higher mobility rates, mass communication, separation of work from residence, and foreign sources of values - functional communities could no longer function in the same way, or they stopped functioning as communities altogether. It became hard to stay civically engaged with people and values one was not at all familiar with, or willing to accept. According to Coleman and Hoffer as long as schools continue to organize themselves residually in the context of a changing paradigm where values come from just about anywhere on the planet (values that compete with the values of the old functional communities) the mission of public education is going to become increasingly about individual survival and management of problematic behavior. The value of community and civic engagement will increasingly be left behind. It seems the culprits in the loss of civic engagement - and the decline in social capital - are both families and government. Each has made choices and created policy that put them at odds with each other. This explains why so many more parents today, parents who do still desire schools that are both functional communities and have a clear set 11 I find it ironic, given Coleman's thinking, that our kids are increasingly being told they will need to learn how to exist in a global community, without any skills for dealing within their own local communities.
of values, seek out private schools. They must view public schools as far too dangerous and chaotic. In some ways advocates for the philosophy and pedagogy of service-learning seek a return to what is public, what is community and what is value laden (as long as tolerance and diversity are two of the values!).

One scholar calling for a return to a civic mission in education is R. Freeman Butts. In three of his works, *The Civic Mission in Educational Reform* (1989), an article titled “The Time is Now to Frame the Civic Foundations of Teacher Education,” (1993), and an article titled “Attending to the Civic Mission of American Education” (1984), Butts notes the more than thirty reports generated in the 1980s, all raising alarm at the general decline of public schooling. He observes that all these reports called for “excellence” in schooling – citing *A Nation at Risk*: “Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation is being overtaken...” (p. 2) – but nothing much was said about the intellectual, moral, and spiritual strengths of Americans. Few of these reports even mentioned civic purposes in education, according to Butts. Exceptions include reports by scholars and thinkers usually cited in publications by
service-learning advocates, including Goodlad, Sizer and Finn.

Butts asks, Why has civics taken a back seat in education reform? According to Butts, increasingly school reform is the place where lobbyists go to push their religious, technological, consumerist, and vocational agendas, pushing citizenship and civics out. Echoing Tyack, Mathews, Davies, Schwartz and Seeley, Butts argues that American education is about the change from civism — defined as "good citizenship," a notion at the heart of early concepts of public education — to pluralism and privatization, defined as the elevation of individual interests over a common belief system. Butts, in what surely must be music to the ears of service-learning advocates, calls for a renaissance of the civic mission in American education. And he is pretty blunt about just what that means. He wants Americans to teach the concepts that form our constitutional foundation in a common core curriculum: concepts like justice, freedom, equality, pluralism, privacy, truth, due process, property and human rights. Furthermore, how to infuse these concepts into a national curriculum of civism should be a mandate for all colleges of education charged with the education of America’s teachers (1989, pp. 186-97). Butts states, "The
educational profession should reaffirm the priority of its historic mandate to educate for citizenship first..." (1993, p. 326). Furthermore, "If, in fact conservatives could join liberals in reaffirming the civic mission of public education, the whole educational-reform movement could take on a new and vibrant life" (p. 326).

Obviously the educational philosophy inherent in service-learning comes from a deeply felt need for a more civil society.12 Harry Boyte (1991) argues the case for a renewal of the commonwealth approach to education - democracy is the common work of all. Boyte cites Jane Addams as particularly inspiring in this regard. Addams saw education as flowing from a commonwealth13 of public works, where democratic skills would be applied to content. C. David Lisman (1998), a Professor of Philosophy at the Community College of Aurora in Colorado, notes such writers and philosophers as Jeremy Rifkin (1996) - the end of work as we know it - T. K. Stanton (in Kendall, NSEE 1990) - the need for a socially responsible undergraduate education - Benjamin Barber (1992) - the uncoupling of rights and responsibilities - Charles Taylor (1994) - American’s

12 "Civil" meaning engagement, in other words not explicitly meaning behaving more civilly towards each other, but being more active in society.
13 By commonwealth I gather she meant private work done with the common wealth in mind. The term is used by historians to describe early American efforts by state’s rights advocates who farmed out public work’s projects to private companies.

Along the same lines, Robert Rhoads (p. 4, 1997), a Professor of Education at Michigan State University believes the current service-learning movement is the historical result of calls for a more "caring vision of higher learning," which he finds implicit in the writings of John Dewey (1938), Henry Giroux (1993), Paulo Freire (1970), Peter McClaren (1995) and William Tierney (1993). Similarly, Edward Zlotkowsky (1998) cites Ernest Boyer's famous 1994 opinion piece in The Chronicle for Higher Education,14 in which he called for American colleges and universities to return to their commitment to service.

If one created a data base of persons cited as contributing service-learning's philosophers or methodologists, one name would show up more than any other:

John Dewey. Any publication that begins with a discussion of service-learning’s historical roots will note Dewey in tones at times reverential enough to give him “Founding Father” status. Dewey’s belief that experience forms the basis of acquired knowledge provides the bedrock upon which service-learning advocates have built their programs. The theory that experience forms the basis of learning certainly informs most studies of service-learning.

Similarly, if one were to create a data base of studies deemed influential in the creation of service-learning, one study in particular shows up more than others. In 1991 Dan Conrad and Diane Hedin - building on the work done earlier by Hedin in 1983 - published the results of their study of 4000 high school students and the impact of community service on academic success, personal development and civic development. As many as 75 percent of students included reported that engaging in community service as part of their school experience had significant impact in all three areas; enough for Conrad and Hedin to call for further research - meaning nothing proved, nothing disproved until further research is conducted and data assessed - and to provide provisional support for the theory that service could be an important component in
In doing so Conrad and Hedin noted the works of Goodlad, Wigginton, Boyer and Harrison as influential in connecting service to overall public education reform and new notions of multiple intelligences.

Generally everyone publishing works on service-learning cite Dewey, and Conrad and Hedin as critical to the development of a service-learning culture; we can take this as a testament to their influence. Dewey provided a founding philosophy (although the term service-learning certainly did not exist in his time) and a working theory for why students appear to do better in service-learning programs. Conrad and Hedin provided the first large-scale study on which future advocates and researchers could hang their hats. Nine years after Conrad and Hedin’s Phi Delta Kappan article Shelly Billig, an emerging researcher and leader in the field of service-learning, noted the seminal nature of Conrad and Hedin’s work; her calls for new and better research start with the importance of Conrad and Hedin’s granting of provisional support for the connection between service and learning (Billig 2000, p. 658-9).

In 1999 Tim Stanton, Dwight Giles and Nadine Cruz in a book called Service Learning, A Movement’s Pioneers Reflect

15 Conrad and Hedin state: “Only time will tell whether the current interest among politicians and educators in strengthening the service ethic of our nation’s youth will be sustained or whether new priorities or the same old pressure for higher test scores and improved basic skills will keep youth service on the fringes of the political agenda” (quoted in Billig, p. 663).
on Its Origins, Practice and Future, sat down and chronicled the history of the field, calling it a “movement.” Their use of the term is purposeful and significant (and almost reverential) because it describes something larger and more organic than just the sum of the biographies of its founders. The seeds of service-learning — then known as experiential education — were planted early in the realm of higher education, starting with the university-based extension programs of the 1860s’ land grant colleges, and with John Dewey’s early 1900s child-centered, activity-based philosophies of education. Later these seeds grew in earnest during the passionate upheavals of the Civil Rights Movement and the emotional protest marches, student movements and demonstrations against America’s war in Vietnam. Stanton, Giles and Cruz argue that many educators in those times really believed they were pioneers in a movement, forging ahead into a brave new world of experiential learning, and away from the factory model of education. And it is from the work of these pioneers that the 1970s and 1980s K-12 service-learning field was born as well.

In the 1970s service-learning in higher education faced a number of intellectual crises. As the movement began to take shape and form, Stanton, Giles and Cruz
divulge that, “Like other pioneers, it is possible that those exploring service-learning may have been as blinded by their idealism as nineteenth-century pioneers were by the doctrine of manifest destiny” (p. 10). These blinders may have been a reason why early service-learners broke into two camps. One camp felt that the so-called movement’s intent should be to transform schools and academia, especially higher education (sort of an anti elitist, anti Ivory Tower movement aimed at faculty, administrators and students). An opposing camp believed service-learning’s primary goal should be to transform communities - not schools or campuses or even students - to recreate them and make them better, safer places in which to live a quality life. According to Stanton, et al. (1999), at times serious tensions arose as these camps competed for attention, support and money; these tensions provide an important clue as to why service-learning has never reached consensus on its mission and goals, why as a field it is still on the outside looking in.

The camp that wanted to transform schools and campuses took their cues from evidence that public secondary and postsecondary education was becoming too attentive to the needs of the individual - college preparation and career tracking - and not enough attention to the development of
the American collective, to the democratic traditions upon which American public education was founded. Pioneers in this latter camp saw schools becoming isolated from communities, so distant as to render themselves - and their student bodies - unimportant, even irrelevant, sometimes even objects of scorn.

The camp of service-learning pioneers who wanted to transform communities took their cues from evidence of poverty, racism and discrimination in America, and their desire to address these problems by prompting academia (students and faculty) to take action, rather than using education to further their own ends.

Stanton, Giles and Cruz argue that early practitioners of service-learning at the postsecondary level saw themselves as outliers (p. 144), small groups of faculty, or even single individuals moving against the grain, charting uncharted and sometimes dangerous waters. Eventually two directions emerged for service-learning on college campuses. On one path, outlier faculty members simply went about building their service-learning courses from the ground up, seeking to improve them from year to year, paying little or no attention to campus politics or national movements. On another path walked faculty who wanted service-learning institutionalized, or mainstreamed
into academia, and were willing to spend the time and energy to get a movement going. Some of these advocates wanted the institutionalization of service-learning methods to happen from within their own campuses. Others thought a national movement was long overdue and the best strategy for change. No matter what path these advocates wanted to take, some, like Dick Couto at Vanderbilt, who had existed at the center of his university’s culture, found themselves quickly on the outside looking in. Why? Because they believed that generating new knowledge could and should happen in communities external to academia; a new and dangerous assumption totally counter to the way most large universities viewed themselves (p. 151).

According to Stanton, Giles and Cruz, the national movement in higher education began in the 1970s with the formation of the Society for Field Experience Education (SFEE), which merged with the National Society for Internships and Experiential Education (NSIEE), to become, in 1971 the National Society for Experiential Education (NSEE).¹⁶ Starting as informal and competing networks, they eventually evolved into one strong voice and a place for advocates to find support and professional development at

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¹⁶ Stanton, et al, provide an exact timeline of service-learning milestones, including the dating of seminal works and formations of important supportive organizations, in Appendix B of this work.
Mission statements, terms, principles and best practices were defined and discussed at meetings of these networks; a theory and assessment base for service-learning was also developed (p. 159).

In 1985 Campus Compact, an organization and network of college presidents and chancellors devoted to furthering the development of service-learning on college and university campuses, started as a link between Brown University and Georgetown University. Campus Compact has since grown to more than 575 member colleges and universities and is a constant presence at national high school and higher education conferences on service-learning. Its campuses provide a home for service-learning practitioners, research and funding (www.campus.org). In 1999 service-learning in higher education obtained its first - and only - scholarly journal, the Michigan Journal for Service Learning. Being published in this journal has become a strong source of motivation for researchers in the field.

To summarize, the historical roots of what would later be called service-learning can be found in the hotbeds of activism, progressivism, social change and “outreach scholarship” (Kenny, Simon, Brabeck and Lerner 2002,
Stanton, Giles and Cruz 1999) that characterized many American colleges and universities of the late 1800s and early to mid 1900s. The field’s early pioneers were motivated to make higher education more relevant and communities better places to live. In the past two decades service-learning has become an alternative pedagogy, and accepted as a way to change the culture of higher education (Saltmarsh 2000). At no time was this process easy, nor did service-learning become broadly institutionalized. The literature is clear on this point. As a movement in higher education, service-learning cannot be considered cohesive. Its advocates and participants cannot claim see the field in exactly the same way. Nevertheless, the philosophy and practice of service-learning has become familiar to a greater number of faculty and students on American campuses and it appears to be growing steadily.17

The history of the development of service-learning at the K-12 level is harder to pin down, if only because no published work has ever addressed the subject. K-12 service-learning does not have the equivalent complete history provided to higher education by Stanton, Giles and Cruz. Moreover, it is difficult to determine when the long

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17 Stanton, Giles and Cruz note the irony of the fact that support for service-learning leads to some strange bedfellows; programs aimed at improving the lot of the working class and breaking down class barriers were (and still are) funded by the Andrew Carnegie and William Kellogg Foundations.
tradition of community service in K-12 public schools began to change under the influence of the more refined concept of service-learning. Nevertheless, almost all publications on K-12 service learning start with sections or chapters on its history, theoretical underpinnings and milestones. In terms of philosophical constructs, those who are concentrating their efforts on K-12 - Billig (2000), Billig and Furco (2001, 2002), Boyte (1991), Campbell (2002), Ericson and Anderson (1997), Kahne and Westheimer (1996), Kenny, Maureen and Simon (2002), Wade (1997), (and other authors included in compendiums on service-learning but not cited in this paper) - all cite the same pioneers and thinkers noted in the sections above, especially Dewey, and Conrad and Hedin.

Unlike higher education, where the master narrative of service-learning took place in individual colleges and universities, events in K-12 public education at the state level tend to stand out in advocates’ minds. Perhaps this is because states have so much influence and control over K-12 public education, unlike post-secondary institutions. For example, in 1969 North Carolina was one of the first to establish a state-wide service-learning effort (Antonelli and Thompson 1997). From the late 1960s to the 1980s North Carolina moved from internships initiatives for youth to a
full scale effort to promote service-learning within the Department of Public Instruction and the State Board of Education. According to Antonelli and Thompson, North Carolina in the early 1980s, was one of the first states to grant *academic* credit for service-learning courses in public high schools.

The literature also frequently mentions that in 1997 Maryland instituted a strict four year service-learning, 75 hour, graduation requirement; programs which qualified for service-learning credit had to incorporate student preparation, action and reflection, all hallmarks of service-learning. In other words, student service had to be tied to some academic subject. Maryland’s actions generated a storm of controversy, for two reasons. One, many felt the requirement smacked of indentured servitude. Students needed to complete 75 of hours of service-learning to graduate, and many felt the agencies where students served were the only beneficiaries of their free labor. Two, social service agencies were not prepared for the onslaught of kids desperately needing service-learning credits near the end of their senior year. To this day, Maryland is the only state to attempt a state-wide graduation requirement for service-learning.
The National and Community Service Trust Act of 1990 is the most important milestone in the history of K-12 service-learning. The Act established the Corporation for National Service, from which evolved the Learn and Serve Program. For the first time money began to flow to the states in the form of block grants for service-learning programs in public education. As a result, by 1997, 47 states had applied for funding and established state-wide service-learning coordinators (Antonelli and Thompson 1997, p. 165). The impact this had on public schools across the country was considerable. Prior to this new flow of money the number of practitioners was very small; with this new flow of federal Learn and Serve money the numbers rose dramatically (Billig 2000; Neal 2002).

Throughout the development of service-learning, from the 1960s through the 1990s, advocates consistently debated whether the field should remain at the margins, or enter the mainstream of education reform. Stanton, Giles and Cruz devote an entire chapter to the subject, demonstrating just how important this debate was to early pioneers. My thesis argues that this debate is still alive and well, and very important to the future of the field. In fact one of the major panel discussions at the 1999 National Service Learning Conference, held in San Jose, California, was
devoted to the question of whether to mainstream or not. I was at the session and clearly remember an official from the Department of Education in Washington passionately urging the service-learning movement "not to do it." He argued that standardization would dilute service-learning's mission and tear out its soul. Judging from the applause the speaker was not alone in his surprising feelings on the matter.

In the late 1990s a second issue emerged from the debate over whether to mainstream service-learning or not. This issue, now the hot topic, focuses on research and academics, and asks, Can service-learning ever be impactful, whether at the margins or in the mainstream, if it cannot prove that as a teaching strategy it improves academic performance?

Are the strategies of those who want to mainstream service-learning linked to research attempting to prove academic success? Some advocates want to mainstream service-learning and they know it can only happen if the research shows advancement of academic success. Those who see service-learning as a set of values for teaching, and not just a method, do not necessarily believe being in the mainstream (with its factory values) is a good thing, at
least for now. The next section will deal with this topic in greater depth.

A timeline provided by Stanton, Giles and Cruz lists too many events in the history of K-12 service-learning to describe here. Nevertheless, there are a few worth noting. The Morrill and Homestead Acts of the 1860s provided a direct link between higher education and rural development. Near the turn of the 19th Century organizations like the YWCA and YMCA began to prosper and provide service-learning programs during non school hours. Around the same time John Dewey began his philosophizing on education. Also, the impact of agencies like the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Works Progress Administration during the Great Depression cannot be discounted in terms of raising awareness of the power of public service. This is also the case with the development in the 60s of the Peace Corps and the Urban Corps, as well as the appearance of community colleges. Stanton, Giles and Cruz note the 1970s formation of a number of experiential education societies and the 1971 White House Conference on Youth, at which a strong call was made to connect service and learning. The 1980s were marked by the formation of the National Youth Leadership Council, which took up the task of creating a national service-learning conference — with a K-12 emphasis
now in its 14th year. The 1980s also saw a veritable explosion of youth councils and organizations, notably Youth Service America, now one of the leading advocates for service-learning. The 1990s saw the passage of the National and Community Service Trust Act (1990), followed by the 1994 National Service Bill, which established the Americorps and Vista programs. The 1990s also saw a marked increase in local and state conferences with service-learning as their themes (Stanton, Giles and Cruz 1999, Appendix A).

Chapter 3. Discussion

1.1 Criteria for a Philosophic Discussion of Service-Learning

Sections 1.2 through 2.2 are a general analytical discussion of the state of service-learning from my perspective. I conclude that service-learning's status is still marginal, and I lay out my conclusions as to why this is the case. I also lay out my position regarding my main thesis question, i.e., whether or not service-learning should remain at the margins.

However, before doing this I need to lay out my criteria. Criteria are the rules, or standards by which something can be judged or valued. As a social studies
teacher teaching the art of persuasion I continually stress
the need to establish a thesis and lay out a set of rules
for its discussion. Applying the same standard to my work
here, my criteria are "democracy" and "activism."

In a recent discussion with my United States history
students we brainstormed all the connotations of the word
"democracy." From a very long list students sorted,
categorized and gave special status to words and phrases
like "liberty," "freedom," "natural rights,"
"representation," "voting," "tolerance and diversity,"
"individualism," "pluralism" and "justice." We posted these
words and decided we will use them as our standards as we
move forward together into the first half of the history of
America, studying the birth of a nation that claims it is
the world's best example of democracy. In doing this work,
we, as a class, were both setting criteria and engaging in
the Socratic method, perhaps a tribute to the world's
oldest democracy. In the following sections I offer my
opinion of the state of service-learning and some aspects
of education reform. Throughout I will have on a particular
set of glasses with lenses colored by the denotation and
connotations of "democracy." (I often use this metaphor
with my students.) My criterion for the process of
education is that it uses a democratic means as its method;
my criterion for the outcomes of education are that education must help students at all levels make ethical decisions about their roles and responsibilities in a democracy.

Related to "democracy," my second criterion is "activism." I, along with my United States history students, can talk about democracy ad nauseam, but if we do not live our lives using its principles our talk is for naught. However, "active participation" and "activism" are words and terms that can mean many things to many people. Confusing discussions about these two concepts can leave some people thinking "activism" is a club and they are not allowed to join unless they get themselves arrested at a march on the World Trade Organization. I do not want to establish an unreasonable standard in my criteria setting. What I mean by "activism" and "participation" is the democratic process of applying democratic principles to reach democratic ends, and doing it with a sense of awareness, a sense of consciousness. I think this should be true of individuals, of collections of individuals in any setting, and most especially of schools. Such a criterion is both tough and inclusive. It suggests the business of everyone in America should an active democracy; it also suggests, in the best spirit of pluralism, that there are a
multiplicity of ways to actively participate. In short, democracy and activism are both the content and performance standards for education, a statement which I find very ironic given what I am about to say about content and performance standards in the next section.

1.2 Marginal or Mainstream? Service-learning's Status Considered

This section attempts to determine whether scholars in the field find evidence service-learning occupies a place in the American educational mainstream. Most of these scholars seem to agree that service-learning's status is still marginal, with qualifications and exceptions. In the introduction to their 1999 book Where is the Learning in Service-Learning?, - in the context of higher education - Eyler and Giles argue, "...outside the community of true believers there is considerable doubt as to the value of service-learning as an approach to academic learning" (p. xiv) Speaking of their experiences examining programs across the country these authors state: "...we were aware through our work with colleagues around the country that service-learning programs tend to be somewhat marginal in most academic institutions" (p. xiv). They mean institutions of higher learning, yet based on what has been published in the field so far it is possible to extend
their conclusions to K-12 schools, both public and private. Eyler and Giles further generalize that support is usually not forthcoming, programs are rarely sustained, and some faculty have lost jobs because of disputes over implementation of service-learning programs. Moreover, Eyler and Giles, citing the work of Edward Zlotkowski, a vocal advocate of the pedagogy and editor of an eighteen part series on service-learning and the disciplines, argue that the field’s marginal status “is partly due to the fact that service-learning has not been embraced by academic departments as a legitimate instructional method” (p. xv). It seems clear, then, that at least two of service-learning’s leading lights believe the field’s status to lie short of the mainstream.

Shelley Billig, another leading researcher and advocate for service learning appears to agree with Eyler and Giles when she states - in the context of K-12 schools -; “Despite its growth over the past decade, service-learning continues to remain a fragile reform that is highly dependent on individuals to be sustained” (Furco and Billig 2002, p. 245). Furthermore, Billig worries that, “Like other K-12 innovations, service-learning runs the risk of becoming the fad of the day unless certain factors
are in place to sustain and institutionalize practice over time" (pp. 245-6).

Joseph Erickson and Jeffrey Anderson, writing in a 1997 volume about service-learning and teacher education, seem to concur, if somewhat obliquely, with Billig, Eyler and Giles: "Service-learning is now poised to move from the margins into the mainstream of K-12 and teacher education" (p. 4). Being "poised to move" and actually being there, are two different things, as I am sure Erickson and Anderson know.

Andrew Furco, Shelly Billig’s partner in organizing the first two national service-learning research conferences, uses terms similar to those used by Erickson and Anderson; "In the last few years a growing amount of attention has been given to service-learning" (Furco and Billig 2002, p. 46). It is clear from what these scholars are saying that service-learning is not in the mainstream, but it is "...making its mark on American culture" (Neal, p. 7).

If service-learning is not yet in the mainstream, just where does it stand? Again, the voices of the field’s main proponents are important. Eyler and Giles characterize the growth of service-learning - at the end of the 20th Century - as "rapid," stating; "There are now 575 member
campuses participating in Campus Compact, with estimates that about 10,800 faculty members were involved in teaching 11,800 service-learning courses...” (1999, p. 6). Eyler and Giles also note the rising number of publications and professional associations in the field of service-learning. Stanton, Giles and Cruz note “Service-learning pedagogy is now advocated by students, faculty, presidents of colleges and universities, and even by Congress and the President of the United States” (p. xv).

At the K-12 level Shelly Billig writes, “Service-learning is rapidly gaining popularity in the United States public education system” (Furco and Billig 2002, p. 245). Billig notes that the pedagogy is being implemented in about a third of all public schools and half of all high schools nation-wide (p. 245). Billig and Furco argue the statistics are even better - 80% - for private schools (2002, p. 217). The journal Techniques notes the number of high school students who participated in service-learning programs increased more than 3600 percent from 1984 to 1997 (Techniques, 2000). However, “being implemented” could mean many things, from “school-wide” to just one program, and therein lies the rub.

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18 It should always be noted that researchers and scholars using these data may be confusing service-learning with volunteerism or community service.
Although it is clear service-learning has made substantial gains in the past decade and can now be found just about anywhere one cares to look, it is equally clear the field is not mainstream; it exists somewhere between marginal and rapidly expanding. Of course, this determination could vary from state to state, district to district, even school to school. For example, in 2002 Punahou School, in Honolulu, Hawaii, opened its center for public service, with implementation of service-learning as one of its goals. However, this does not necessarily mean the pedagogy is in widespread use at that school. In fact, it is not.

As previously noted, in 1993 the state of Maryland made service-learning a requirement for graduation (a requirement still in place). One could say this constitutes mainstreaming of service-learning in the state of Maryland. Yet no other state has done what Maryland did; generalizing to other states could lead to the wrong conclusions about the status of the field.

1.3 Four Reasons Why Service-Learning is Somewhere Between Marginal and Mainstream.

There are four reasons for the marginal status of service-learning, two of which I plan to simply list, and two which I plan to explore in depth.
The first reason is the problem of research: its goals and the data it is generating. The second reason, related to the first, is that service-learning appears to be growing rapidly. As a result, proponents of a number of teaching methods and community service programs are piggy-backing the movement, using the language of service-learning to gain support and funds. The efforts of these pretenders are making the definitional waters even muddier, and confusing graduate students and researchers looking for qualified service-learning programs to study.

The third reason is the level of cooperative community relationship building and cooperative teaching required within the field to develop quality service-learning programs. Some programs work well within the context of one teacher, her students and the community they plan to serve or are serving. Not all programs are so narrow in scope; some are multidisciplinary, involving more than one teacher, more than one classroom, more then one subject area and more than one community agency (if the program is external to the school). As these more complicated programs gain popularity service-learning is going to need to further adjust and change, a process that might continue to hold the field at the margins of education reform.
The fourth, and perhaps most important reason for service-learning’s marginal status, has to do with the nature of service-learning as a historical concept, with its occasional radical activism and its roots in the “justice advocacy” approach to education. Setting aside reasons two and three, which are less important, the following paragraphs will focus on two of the reasons for service-learning’s marginal status: the state of research in the field and its occasional radical activism.

In October 2001, the 1st Annual Service Learning Research Conference was held in Berkeley, California. In October of 2002 a second annual conference was held in Nashville, Tennessee. Shelley Billig, a researcher at the RMC Research Corporation, and Andrew Furco, Director of the University of California at Berkeley Service Learning Research Center acted as hosts for both events. I attended both conferences and have read the two books – compilations of selected papers – produced as a part of each event. Samples of papers presented at each conference reveal a growing number of researchers and service-learning leaders who desire more and better data – for both k-12 schools and higher education – on whether students achieve academic success when service-learning is the method. According to Ivor Pritchard, "The existing data do not provide a clear,
rational justification for preferring one kind of community service or service-learning objective to another" (Furco and Billig 2002, p. 13). Given renewed national efforts to bring standards and accountability to public education, Pritchard argues that the question should not distinguish between community service or service-learning: "In these circumstances, the issue then becomes whether the use of time and energy in community service-learning is more or less successful than the regular curricular approach used to enable students to meet the relevant standards" (p. 15). Pritchard suggests that new research look at national evaluation data and concentrate on how service-learning demonstrates effective growth in specific areas, writing skills being one example (pp. 18-19). Pritchard is just one of many service-learning advocates desiring a cleaner, more focused approach to what works and what does not work academically when the method is applied.

Billing and Furco take an even harder look at the state of service-learning research. They write:

Recent reviews of the literature...reveal there is a relative paucity of research on service-learning in K-12 settings...Studies rarely use randomized assignment and control groups...Measurement tools are frequently unvalidated or remain untested for reliability...Qualitative research often lacks triangulation of data (2002, p. 271).
Billig and Furco argue that few studies in the past decade even posed academic success as their hypotheses and there are still ambiguities when it comes to terms like "civic engagement," and "personal and social development" (p. 275). In 2002 Billig, sounding far more concerned about sustainability than gaining a place in the mainstream, worried that the field had reached that critical stage when advocates might drop away if certain proofs are not reached (2002, p. 218).

Finally, Janet Eyler notes that gains have been made in service-learning research (for example, credible data showing success in student's personal development, engagement, avoidance of risky behaviors, commitment to making a difference), but there are areas of critical need - research design, specifying the independent variable, choosing and measuring outcome variables, creating and testing good theories, focus on academic outcomes - (2002, pp. 5-12). Eyler and Giles further argue researchers need to move beyond simple surveys and delve deeply into observation of problem solving and critical thinking. They write, "Assessing growth in reflective judgment capacity requires being able to observe the reasoning process students use in coming to their conclusions about controversial issues" (1999, p. 149). Translation:
researchers need to move away from asking students, Do you think you learned something in your service-learning program?, to If you were governor for a month, what specific solutions would you offer to solve the problem of homelessness in your city? Students then might demonstrate their answers in focus groups, journals, presentations, papers, portfolios, etc., based on their experiences serving in the field. Whatever the technique used to assess student learning, using open-ended approaches, according to Eyler and Giles, is one area that needs further study and refinement (pp. 150-1).

Critiques by Pritchard, Billig, Furco, Eyler and Giles suggest clear reasons why service-learning is not yet a mainstream pedagogy, and may even be in trouble with some proponents and exasperated true believers. They all seem to agree that research design and data collection needs to be better, and based in generally accepted scientific principles. On the other hand, others, Edward Zlotkowski for example, believe that even good research is not being used well. Zlotkowski agrees strong efforts need to be made to understand exactly what makes a quality service-learning experience, yet if higher education administrations and faculty do not act on this research, little will be gained (Zlotkowsky 1998, p. 88).
Putting a slightly different spin on the problem of actually using good data, and pessimistically noting that teacher colleges are notorious for being unwilling to change, a study done by Don Hill and Denise Clark Pope, titled “Are School-Community Partnerships Worth the Struggle?” argues, “without support from teacher training institutions to incorporate service learning into their credential programs, we see little hope for sustaining the reform” (2000, p. 5).

To summarize, what research is needed and who needs to conduct the studies? Eyler and Giles offer a “Top Ten” list of questions researchers need to address. The number one question is, “How can service-learning enhance subject matter teaching?” The tenth ranked question is, “How does

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19 It is also important to note service-learning research is shifting towards teacher education and professional development, but with a twist. Susan Root, Jane Callahan and Jungsuywan Sepanski maintain that early research regarding service-learning has focused on whether teacher candidates intend to use the pedagogy, or not, and that more work needs to be done to understand how a service-learning approach boosts teacher morale and desire to stay in the profession. One conclusion Root et al. draw from their study is that if service-learning does in fact lead to better teacher morale and longevity, and community satisfaction with education in general, there must be renewed efforts within colleges of education to provide pre-service teachers with service-learning experiences. For these researchers mainstreaming of service-learning would be a positive development on the lives of teachers, if research determined they were happier and stayed in the profession longer if service-learning is their method of choice (Root, et al., 2002).

Jeffery Anderson, at Seattle University, echoes this sentiment, but issues the following warning: “There are, however, serious challenges to the successful use of service-learning in teacher education. These challenges include an already overcrowded curriculum, lack of alignment of service-learning with teacher education institution expectations and rewards for faculty, and lack of faculty time to implement a complex teaching method such as service-learning. If not resolved, these challenges will limit service-learning initiatives to superficial efforts isolated from the mainstream of teacher education” (Anderson ECS Issue Paper 2001). In Anderson’s survey of American colleges of education 40.8% of respondents agreed that service-learning is not a part of their teacher education programs, which makes the above quote all the more understandable.
service-learning contribute to the development of social capital and a social ethic of caring and commitment?"

Between number one and number ten is a vast call to action that argues service-learning needs to develop a national agenda capable of alignment with systemic standards-based education reform, while keeping its foundations in civics intact. Eyler and Giles believe these tasks can be accomplished by performing longitudinal, experimental, and observational studies, as well as participatory action research (1998, pp. 65-70).

Billig and Furco explain future research must look to the concept of "civic engagement," and must concentrate on the following questions:

1. What is the impact of service-learning on student achievement?
2. What are the impacts of service-learning on students' acquisition of specific context knowledge and skills?
3. What are the impacts of service-learning on the development of critical thinking skills?
4. Are the cognitive processes involved in service-learning different for acquisition of critical thinking skills and content knowledge?
5. To what extent does service-learning impact life-long learning (intellectual curiosity)? (pp. 271-78).
Billig and Furco sum up the problem by stating the following:

Research in K-12 service-learning is badly needed to advance the field. The group that formulated this agenda will vet it in multiple forums and intends to translate it into meaningful propositions and hypotheses for study. Funders are actively being sought. The reader is encouraged to formulate research consistent with this agenda so that a body of evidence about the effects of service-learning can be built and service-learning approaches can be improved. Parallel research to the more robust studies in higher education is also encouraged (p. 278).

It seems clear that service-learning researchers understand the paradox laid out in the paragraphs above; the state of service-learning research represents both the reasons for the field’s marginal status and its potential pathway to the mainstream of education reform. In publications on service-learning, as well as listening to discussions between advocates, I hear a strong desire for consensus. However, I cannot help but think it unlikely that all these competing agendas—qualitative vs. quantitative research, or student driven evaluations vs. externally directed research, for example—will ever yield ground to each other.

I stated earlier my analysis is not going to look much deeper at the third reason for the marginal status of service-learning, the issue of cooperative teaching and learning, and community relationship building. However, I do want to say that both are part of a number of reforms
competing for the hearts and minds of educators locally and nationally. My reading of the literature suggests the issue is not yet a big one to service-learning advocates. Like decentralization, small schools, smaller class sizes, equity in schools, and other reforms, cooperative multidisciplinary education within the field of service-learning is going to be just one of many educational issues competing for policymakers’ time and consideration. It is in this ongoing competition that these advocates’ voices and agendas are diffused and marginalized. 20

The fourth reason service-learning is still between the margins and the mainstream brings us back to the story of service-learning’s pioneers and what they considered to be quality service-learning programs. As previously stated, the movement has its intellectual roots in the educational philosophy of John Dewey (early 1900s) and in the 1960’s and 1970’s social protest movements; these deep roots often

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20 Joel Westheimer (1998), taking up the issue of communities in teachers’ professional life, and research, and referring to his own study of two schools at opposite ends of the spectrum (one, a school whose mission is teacher communities, the other, a school that values the individual teacher in his or her own classroom), argues that reformers must know the difference between teacher communities that are an unintended consequence, and communities that are an intentional goal of a school. For service-learning advocates, understanding the value of the pedagogy will entail studies that link the value of intentional teacher communities with intentional service-learning outcomes and student satisfaction. Furthermore, studies looking at specific outcomes like “social responsibility” and “ability to work with peers” will need to look at how teacher communities model, or don’t model such outcomes. These are variables that must be considered.
cause problems for proponents within the field of service-learning. Debates often play out along traditional conservative and liberal lines.

When students engage in controversial issues in communities as part of their service-learning programs, feathers are often ruffled. Conservatives usually withdraw their support when they find out the service-learning program is more than charitable community service. Joseph Kahne and Joel Westheimer capture the problem perfectly when they ask, "In service of what?" (1996, p. 593). Indeed, many teachers and service-learning advocates shy away from overtly political issues, fearful of their school boards and administrators. Kahne and Westheimer argue that it is precisely these kinds of issues that students need and want to engage. Many conservative national politicians support service-learning because they see it as a form of patriotic charity-giving (not of money, but time). They are happy to support programs where students assemble "kits" for homeless people. As soon as they realize it involves high levels of critical thinking, i.e., students asking hard questions about why homelessness exists in the first place, and worse, engaging homeless people in deeper dialogues on poverty and discrimination, funding mysteriously disappears. Westheimer postulates that if we
truly want education to be a transformative experience we must be ready to accept the consequences of students’ political activism (pp. 593-99). Perhaps this is true, yet one would be hard pressed to find consensus at a gathering of service-learning advocates on this point.

For example, Tony Robinson, reviewing Edward Zlotkowski’s concern that ideologues and mainstreamers are spending too much time arguing what sort of model service-learning should follow (charity/activism/citizenship/social justice, for example), states, “I share Zlotkowski’s conclusion that a politically-charged service-learning movement is unlikely to attract the support of a wide range of faculty” (2000, p. 142). Initially it appears Robinson is on side of the conservatives and mainstreamers. Yet he goes on to agree in principle with Kahne and Westheimer that the “extant” service-learning movement (interesting choice of words) must push on “into ever more activist political engagement” (pp. 142-3). Now Robinson sounds like an ideologue, a progressive who sees service-learning as an agent of change. He sees service-learning as a powerful tool in the hands of students who desire a more just and democratic world.

Clearly, if a student’s service-learning program involves feeding the hungry (with its appropriate
curricular connection), that is a far cry from serving at Planned Parenthood (with its appropriate curricular connection). One is often seen as politically riskier than the other. Yet the message coming through from people like Robinson, Kahne and Westheimer is, service-learning advocates need to get used to service-learning as a change-force, and even embrace it. Robinson takes it a step further by suggesting such change-force goals be united with research goals looking at academic outcomes. Therein lies a very difficult problem. I am not sure Billig, Furco, Eyler and Giles, people who certainly embrace notions of service-learning as a means to citizenship and critical thinking, would agree the best mission statement for service-learning should be to "Dare the school to build the new social order?" (words taken from the title of Robinson's 2000 article). With Billig et al., the path seems to indicate, We cannot beat them, so let's join them. For Robinson and company, the refrain seems to be, Whether we join them or not, we need to beat them.²¹ My reading of the literature: As long as this is the debate - charitable volunteerism or political advocacy - as long as service-learning picks as some of its subjects controversial issues

²¹ In this case "them" refers to the general state of education in America, the amassing of knowledge in the pursuit of individual happiness. Beating "them" is would mean reinstating the progressive and civic vision of the 20s, 30s and 40s as the main goal of education.
like abortion, AIDS, poverty or same-sex marriage, it will continue to be dynamic, but remain at the margins, embraced by some, rejected by others. Whether this is a good thing or not, is the subject of my discussion section.

The literature review and discussion sections 1.1 and 1.2 so far have provided a description of service-learning, including a discussion of vocabulary used in the field. They have also provided a short history of the movement, from its intellectual roots in the philosophy of John Dewey, through its development in the social upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s, to its current state as an apparently rapidly expanding but still marginal reform movement. I have discussed whether or not service-learning is marginal or mainstream, and the various reasons behind its status, including the current state of research into the field and how the quality of current research impacts its status. My conclusions are that service-learning, as a movement, is still grappling with its identity, definitions and strategies for the future. There are an increasing number of voices calling for new and better research in order that service-learning can become mainstream, and less reactive to events like the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Whether or not this will render service-learning
ineffective in the long run is the subject of sections 1.4 through 2.2

1.4 My Position on General Education Reform

Who could oppose improving teaching and learning? As a high school social studies teacher I worry about whether my students can read and write well. Many of the students coming to me from middle schools are not proficient in either of these two skills, and lack some basic content.\textsuperscript{22} To the constant reports of losses in academic skills, especially in the areas of writing and basic research, my gut reaction is much the same as that of the rest of the American public. I worry, and I find myself relentlessly bemoaning what students can or cannot do in this new millennium, versus what I think students could do in centuries past. I too get those E-mails from educator friends showing incredible social studies tests from the 1800s, tests that most of today’s high school graduates could never pass (neither could I for that matter). I worry, like many others, about the so-called dumbing down of American education, and I feel the same impulse other educators feel to bear down and make the kids work harder and longer. At the very least, students need to know the

\textsuperscript{22} If Jay Leno had stopped me in the street while I was in high school and asked me in what century the Civil War took place, would I have known?
Revolutionary War came before the Civil War, for God’s sake! Even before knowing any content, students lack the basic skills they need to critically evaluate that content.

Yet I am not in agreement with state and federal policymakers who are proposing to standardize content and performance in education, even when these policies are embedded in seemingly well intentioned legislation like the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.23 Content and performance standards represent a complete misunderstanding of teaching and learning.

I believe governance in education should take place at the most local level possible, even if this means no state or federal “system” at all. I believe in as wide a variety of teaching and learning methods as possible. No policymaker should assume one method of teaching - or learning - is better than another. What some consider a marginal method could be another’s best means. Examples of great success exist for all types of teaching and learning; attempts to make teaching and learning standard, although often couched in the language of efficiency and equal

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23 Who can be against the idea that all students, regardless of ethnicity or SES, or any other classification, deserve the best teaching and the best resources available? Who can be against the idea that education should never leave any child behind? Who can be against the idea that all educators should assume the inherent worth of their students, and the assumption all children can learn? Who can be against the idea that all teachers should be qualified to teach in their subject areas, or even just qualified to teach? Who can be against the idea that a democratic education means all students have an equal right to the same resources and good teaching? Who can be against the idea that some children have been left behind in the past, and need special resources and training to bring them back to the same starting line in the same condition as others who were not left behind?
opportunity, are the result of ego and the desire for power.

I agree with those educators and lay commentators who feel anything that sounds like standardization in teaching and learning is the wrong path to take at any time. Standardization produces units of production for corporate America, not citizens capable of great outrage when injustice is perceived. I reject claims that some efficiency has to be built into educational systems. I believe that efficiency should never be used as a guide in education, because I do not believe in the concept of "educational deliverables." (I am not naive; I came by this belief as a result of my classroom experiences and efforts to stay abreast and understand the nature of national education reform.) Furthermore, if business needs qualified workers - read units of production - workers who know certain things and can execute certain tasks, let them do the training. The business of schools should be "civism," not delivering workers into the workforce. The fact that American public schools became in large part factories pumping out units of production for business has been and continues to be a terrible tragedy.

24 Civism, as noted in the literature review section about R. Freeman Butts, is a mindset that sees citizenship as an active process for change. In education this translates into a schema that allows for the organizing of information into prompts for critical thinking and analysis. Civism will be explained further in the following sections of this discussion.
The longer I teach the less comfortable I am with accepted wisdom that wants me play the role of "sage on the stage," as those who deliver the educational deliverables are called. I love to deliver a good lecture from time to time. My students seem to be stimulated by my talks, but I find myself shifting more and more into the camp that sees the purpose of teaching in the development of critical thinking and research skills, and not in delivering already known content which will quickly be forgotten.

Beyond content and performance issues, I believe small learning environments, almost without exception, are where the best teaching and learning take place. It is in small learning environments where the highest quality social capital accounts are built and funded and where the meaning of democracy is most often up for discussion. It is in small learning environments where school faculty and staff truly get to know their students and their students' families and communities. It is in these small environments that teachers can get to know the many learning styles of their students. Small learning environments allow education to reflect the strengths of teachers.

It is in these small learning environments that Americans will begin to seriously address literacy issues in all academic disciplines. It is also in these small
learning environments where democracy is being fostered; by
democracy I mean a process that involves social justice
awareness and advocacy, as well as activism. This is
“upsetting the apple cart” kind of democracy that is hard,
gritty and oftentimes very painful. A common
misinterpretation of democracy means that it refers
primarily to voting rituals or volunteer community service
programs.

With exceptions, it is in small school and community
environments where I see the best learning taking place,
where teachers and students value the creation of knowledge
and not just the passing on of information. With
exceptions, those small educational environments choosing
not to prioritize standardized content or performance are
the places where my hope for a better America, a more just
American, lies.

1.5 My Position Vis-à-vis Service-Learning

Comparing my position regarding the issues and
challenges for service-learning with the views and
positions expressed in the literature review is not easy,
but it is the whole point of this thesis. To say I am
ambivalent about the past, present and future of service-
learning is an understatement. My ambivalence makes it hard
to take a stand on these complex questions. It is hard to
be critical of something one has had a relationship with and believed in for the last five years. It is hard to be critical of something that is responsible for making me a much better teacher. It is hard to be critical of people in the field who have become friends.

I am also aware that events of the past half year - questionable use of information by the current administration leading up to the war in Iraq, breaches in the wall separating church and state, and unprecedented attacks on American civil liberties since 9/11 - may be influencing my feelings about the role of service-learning and civism in the mission of American public education. Prior to 9/11 and President Bush’s response, I was fairly confident injustice in America would always have its day in the courts and the court of public opinion, with or without service-learning and civism as the chosen teaching method and philosophy of education. Today I no longer have this confidence and I am afraid that this country is sliding down a dangerously slippery slope of tyranny. Nevertheless, despite these influences and my involvement in the field of service-learning since 1999, I think my research into the issues does help me retain at least some small measure of objectivity.
I feel service-learning absolutely should not attempt to enter the mainstream of current American education reform, and any strategies that point the field in this direction are wrongheaded and dangerous. The service-learning movement should keep as much distance as possible between itself and the efforts of individuals and groups currently working to reform education at state and national levels. Specifically, service-learning should not align itself, or attempt to integrate itself, with efforts to create state and national content and performance standards, which is currently the reform du jour (and also a tradition in 19th and 20th Century American education). Service-learning should try to stay on the fringe of education reform, offering an alternative way to teach, but not a formula for reforming education in general. If service-learning kept clear of general education reform, could the field still have an impact on American education? Yes, I think it can have an impact, but only if it dares to return to its roots in social justice.

Over the past five years I have watched the service-learning movement erode into a mixed bag of volunteerism, community service, experiential education and participatory service-learning projects. By participatory I mean projects that are short term (or “drive-by,” as those in the field
like to call them), fail to challenge any prevailing social norms or injustices, and whose aim is mostly to offer temporary relief for problems identified solely by students and not by their communities. Service-learning has become all things to all people, a one-way street that mostly benefits student participants, with some spectacular and moving exceptions. It has failed to distinguish itself from other forms of teaching and learning and again, with some spectacular exceptions, is still as much about nobless oblige as anything else. Fearful of consignment to obscurity and increasingly aligning itself with calls for improved academic outcomes, service-learning is becoming less and less of a challenge to the status quo and more and more just a teaching method with no edge to it, no lofty vision for a more just society.

I realize my position puts me at odds with those in service-learning's leadership who want to mainstream the field, institutionalize it and make it the teaching method of choice, and use the pedagogy as a means to obtain successful results in educational settings where standard outcomes are desired.  

25 In order to reinforce the point that I am at odds with those in service-learning's leadership, I reprint here Billig and Furco's summation of the state of research in the field (see page 74), which follows their five-point call for research showing academic success: "Research in K-12 service-learning is badly needed to
with those who are calling for service-learning to help return education to its roots in civic engagement and civism, but who want to show successful academic outcomes as well. I agree that civism should be the mission of the movement, its heart and soul, but the movement’s leaders cannot have it both ways; they cannot align service-learning with standards reform and remain true to the need for social justice. Unfortunately this position puts me in with a small and increasingly downtrodden group of advocates who are alarmed, and even bitter, that the social justice train has been derailed - by temptations of money, status and ego - in the name of increased capacity, i.e., a larger movement.

However, it appears I am in alignment with a considerable number of rank and file service-learning practitioners, especially those who have already tried to institutionalize service-learning at their particular schools and campuses and have either been rebuffed in their

advance the field. The group that formulated this agenda will vet it in multiple forums and intends to translate it into meaningful propositions and hypotheses for study. Funders are actively being sought. The reader is encouraged to formulate research consistent with this agenda so that a body of evidence about the effects of service-learning can be built and service-learning approaches can be improved. Parallel research to the more robust studies in higher education is also encouraged (p. 278).

26 In both “Every Student a Citizen,” and “A Declaration of Principals,” both documents affirming the relationship between citizenship and service-learning, no call is made for a new conversation on democracy, or an upsetting of the apple-cart that is the status quo. These documents provide examples of strong passions for student participation, but little regard for radical activism or social justice.
efforts or have realized the damage that can be done by institutionalization and alignment with standard outcomes and performance reform. Many of these educators still want to see students be agents of profound change, but they have come to the painful conclusion that a greater quantity of service-learning programs usually means decreased quality (quality meaning social justice and education for democracy). Many, like I, are leaving the movement, unhappy not that it is on the fringe, but that the field has compromised itself in its efforts to be mainstream.

If, hypothetically, studies did show successful academic outcomes when service-learning is the method of instruction, should advocates proceed ahead and pound on the gates of Rome, demand a place at the table and continue to emphasize scientifically based research, the kind that supporters of legislation like the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, would like to see? Would taking these actions risk losing the democratic and civic soul of the pedagogy?

I doubt studies will ever show conclusively that service-learning significantly improves standard learning outcomes,27 but even if they do I have already stated that the field should turn away from Rome, and even publicly

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27 Perhaps the hardest variable to account for in studies of service-learners is the fact that so many participants are already high-achieving and highly motivated individuals (Techniques, p. 17).
repudiate standards based education reform, including the research that supports it. The kinds of scientific studies being proposed by some leaders in the field will corrupt the soul of service-learning; efforts to align the field with calls for content standards have already corrupted the original civic mission of this pedagogy. Studies may be conducted to achieve objective conclusions, but the use of studies is never objective and is usually agenda driven. The more advocates attempt to prove service-learning can improve students' reading, writing and math scores, the further away the field will move from addressing the critical issues of our day - for example, whether governments lie or whether America is becoming an oligarchy of the consumer rich.

If the unintended consequence of service-learning happens to be academic success it would be hard to object. In some cases service-learning is helping students learn “the facts,” as well as how things ought to be. However, arguing the pedagogy can be the exclusive means to help retain already known information about how many justices make up the United States Supreme Court, for example, or what year President Jackson removed Native Americans to concentration camps in the West, rather than using it to examine ways to change unjust laws, is a betrayal of the
field’s original intentions. Moreover, trumpeting service-learning where it supposedly is found to improve content and performance standards, will only grease the wheels for that kind of service-learning which seeks to improve content and performance standards. This is an even greater betrayal. Again, I believe service-learning should remain focused on issues related to economic and social justice and refrain from alignment with the mundane (even if some kids are not doing well at the mundane).

Taking an “if we can’t beat them...” approach to education reform – or even suggesting that standards are here to stay and service-learning needs to accept this fact – is also a perversion of service-learning, and should not be the strategy chosen by the field’s leaders. Education reform is a political game; any assumption one model of reform is better than another, and therefore should be adopted uniformly at local and national levels, is nothing more than political thinking, a function of ego and power. That service-learning should join any national movement, especially one that has staked its claim in the viability of standardized teaching of standardized content, is a profound act of self-denigration. The movement should be much too proud of its accomplishments – those spectacular exceptions – to stoop so low. I agree with those advocates
who believe service-learning should continue to build its own movement by seriously discussing what Joel Westheimer calls "education for democracy," and avoid shifting political tides in statehouses across the country and in Washington, DC.

Using data to show an increased probability of retaining content, when service-learning is the teaching method, is a distortion of the pedagogy, a risk to its civism heart and soul. Service-learning is not the answer to America's education woes and it should not think itself responsible for finding solutions to low performance, especially on SAT-type tests. Its advocates should not take the side of educators who believe learning is the presentation - and later regurgitation - of presorted information at grades three, eight and twelve. This is a kind of learning that denies our essential humanity, our innate curiosity, our inquisitiveness, our democratic development and even our freedom.

Take the example of a fifth grade teacher and her students who develop a program to build handicap access ramps at their school while learning and using geometry and math - a real life service-learning program I observed in California. This teacher's curriculum was about social justice and only tangentially about already known geometry
and math. For her, geometry and math were just tools to be used by students towards a much greater good; they were a means and not an end. When service-learning aligns itself with content and performance standards this will frequently invert and pervert the relationship of means to ends. Frequently the social justice end will be lost, or worse, never considered in the first place. Using social justice as a theme to improve knowledge of geometry subverts a sacred process, not unlike when students use volunteer hours to bolster their college resumes. The slope is slippery, so service-learning should avoid the slope altogether.

What kind of data should the field seek? The field should seek data regarding connections between the pedagogy and academic success only to the extent that such data can guide practitioners in their efforts to obtain a balance between the curricular and service elements of their courses or programs; but even this concession makes me uneasy. It is hard to argue against balance, yet worrying about whether SERVICE-LEARNING programs show balance between the curricular side and the service side, as Dr.'s Eyler and Giles do, can easily turn into a distraction, leading the field away from discussions of justice and
democracy and into an unproductive morass of defining terms.

I believe the original goal of public education in America was civism - defined by R. Freeman Butts as "good citizenship" - and I believe this goal has been set aside for a more careerist, consumerist, and economic-opportunity agenda. Despite the fact that students and young people across the country volunteer millions of hours each year (I encourage my students to do so), civism, what Paul Gagnon calls a "bone deep" understanding of the civic process and the manifestation of power, justice and democracy, is definitely not a priority in mainstream American education. Furthermore, Robert Putnam's charge that democratic politics has been subverted by professionals who design the elective and electoral process like a conductor writes a symphony - thereby excluding the American public who can only stand by and validate prearranged outcomes - is true, and terribly frightening.

In the face of all these wounds to American civic life, service-learning has little to gain and much to lose by aligning itself with those responsible. Education reform is a deeply political place occupied by people with a lot more than education of children on their minds. Therefore service-learning should not assume any grand notions of
being the reform movement that brings America back to its civic roots.\textsuperscript{28} Where those exceptional service-learning programs are taking place, the ones that do have social justice and educating for democracy at their core, the ones that are helping America retrace paths back to civism, we should celebrate. Some of these special programs can be replicated as well, and where possible replication will only have positive results. Otherwise, the movement needs to stay away from the mainstream and simultaneously take a hard look at itself.

In short, should service-learning continue in its efforts to be the method of choice for a return to civism? No, I would rather it stayed away because the risk of corruption is too great. Rather, service-learning should concentrate on keeping devilish temptations like content and performance standards from stealing its soul, as appears to be happening all too frequently.

Put another way, should service-learning concentrate on strengthening itself from within, largely ignoring national public education reform agendas as nothing more than passing political waves? Yes, absolutely, and again, it appears from the literature this position would not be

\textsuperscript{28} Joan Shine puts it nicely when she states that service-learning is “Not the wonder drug...” for education (189).
popular with the leadership of the movement. At a time when leadership wants to increase the number of kids participating in service-learning programs, as well as wanting to prove academic success, it is heresy to suggest a contraction is in order, or even a return to the movement's social justice roots. But it takes discipline to ignore the politics of "should" - We should be in the mainstream, or We should be the pedagogy of choice - and the imposition of values from external and often competing forces in national education reform. It takes discipline to concentrate on building a movement that intrinsically values a discussion of democracy and social justice.

It also takes courage to build a movement that feels comfortable with qualitative assessments - democracy is anti-quantitative anyway - generated by the very people who are constructing and executing service-learning programs. It is only natural that research organizations which are paid to generate studies about service-learning will gravitate towards that which can be proven quantitatively. Again, this is a slippery slope that will lead service-learning towards so called objective assessments that have little to do with something so messy as democracy, or social justice.
Should service-learning bide its time, improve its practice and method, have that discussion about the meaning of democracy and justice, and wait till Rome (i.e., the standards based factory model of learning) falls? Yes, because one of two things will happen in America in the next twenty years. Rome, the factory, consumerist model of education, will fall, at which point American education will be restructured into a more localized and diverse vision for education (where service-learning can easily thrive), or, the factory model will prevail (but only be accepted as the norm up to a certain point) in which case there will be room for a diverse array of fringe (or alternative) educational methods, as is the case in 2003. Service-learning can exist, even thrive, in either scenario if it stays rooted in the issues of democracy and justice, even if this means being on the margins. If it chooses to align itself with standards based learning it will disappear into the political vacuum where so many good educational philosophies and methods have vanished.

1.6 The Unproductive Argument Over Rigor vs. Civism

One of the arguments that crops up in discussions of service-learning is the debate between rigor and civism. It

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29 Sections 1.6 - 1.11 are critical questions pertaining to service-learning, but somewhat tangential to the central thesis question about mainstreaming.
is an unproductive argument and continually diverts service-learners away from issues of democracy and justice. The debate goes like this: If American education is to overcome warnings given in the 1983 report *A Nation at Risk* (and all the many reports since then that worry about the state of American education), it must embrace rigor. This means American policy makers and educators must sort already known information, develop that information into a set of content standards, create assessment tools - tests - that can accurately and fairly measure whether those standards have been met at regular intervals in a student's life, and execute this process rigorously (meaning a clear set of expectations and consequences in case of failure).

As a history teacher, this definition of rigor means I agree to hold my students to certain "facts," for example, that the Civil War started in 1861; if they do not know this standard information using fairly administered assessment tools - multiple choice tests, short answer problems, even essay questions - they fail and suffer the consequences. Whether the student fails, or not, or even if the class or school fails, or not, if the process is executed in the fashion outlined above, it can make a claim to be rigorous.
Advocates of rigor believe in the following simple formula: high expectations applied with rigor to standard content and performance assessments, with consequences for failure, will equal greater academic success for students. It is assumed rigor will cause both success and failure (hopefully more of the former than the latter), but in either case the teacher who is rigorous will receive neither much credit nor much blame. In other words, I can call myself rigorous if I do not back down from the agreed upon content standards (expected knowledge gained) and if I fix my frame of reference for what constitutes success or failure. Rigor is not just working hard to get where you want to go, or conversely, not just an anti-slacking concept, but a system of judging success and failure. The trick, of course, is to agree on the expectations.

For those state and national policymakers and administrators who are calling for more rigor, there is little room for anything other than the process of reaching agreed upon content standards using fairly administered standard assessment tools. Time for a discussion on the meaning of democracy? Hardly! In a rigorous education there is a tremendous amount of information that needs to be known and very little time in which to know it. Citizenship is nothing more than a subset of information students must
know; information about how our constitutional system works, for example, or how bills are passed and the exact relationship between the branches of government - our system of checks and balances - is a content debate: what and how much at what age. Math, geometry, physics, chemistry, as well as other disciplines, exist outside the content area of citizenship and have no connection to it other than to compete for space in the total content policymakers want covered from K-12. The critical assumption being made here is that students, hopefully armed with a certain amount of civic content, will actually go out and behave as good citizens.

Civism, so the debate goes, was at the center of public education, but has been replaced by the need to know a much larger body of information, and for good reason. This is a much faster world than back in the 19th Century; the rate of information being generated is accelerating each hour and students have more and more to learn. The perils of not learning this information, or the means for communicating it, i.e., the Internet, are obvious. Students will not be able to compete in this global paradigm, so the standards advocates say. There is no time now for looking at what is just and what is fair. There is no time now to delve deeply into the meaning of liberty, equality,
fraternity and freedom. Those meanings have been established now and only need to be transmitted via teachers to students. Only a rigorous approach to amassing the information will allow America to keep up with the rest of the modern world. To emphasize civism (the constant discourse on the meaning of democratic citizenship) would be folly, and any pedagogy like service-learning that stands on civism cannot be good for the country or our youth. It can only take students away from what they need to do to reach the standards set for them at both state and federal levels. Civism is gone, perhaps regrettably, but Americans need to move on, and service-learning, if it is to survive, needs to adapt to the times. It needs to prove it can bolster academic success; otherwise it will only get in the way.

It is clear that those who engage in this debate are misinterpreting civism. They believe civism is a movement that selfishly wants to shift American education away from some of the historical, social, mathematical, geometrical, chemical, artistic and physical information students need to know, in favor of more information about how government and the political process works. They see education as a zero-sum game where too much information learned in one discipline will take away from important information
students must know in another (especially information that helps young people become productive workers in our political economy). Civism, in their view, is a lobby that wants more civics and less of everything else.

But civism is not just another subset of information in a zero-sum game. Civism is a way of being, an organizing system that groups information known and not yet known under thematic headings - for example “polarization” or “intolerance” or “justice” or “dissent” - and attempts to help students become agents of change in what everyone knows is a more complex world; in a world where it is harder to tell what is good and bad, what is right and wrong; in a world where, as James Coleman phrased it, conflicting and confusing new values flow into communities from every corner of the globe. Pedagogies like service-learning are rejected as subversions of the zero-sum formula in the unproductive debate over rigor versus civism, when in fact they should be rejected because they dare to posit a new social order! This is ironic, a lose/lose situation and a strong reason why the field should get out of the argument and get away from the mainstream.

I believe this unproductive argument is both ridiculous and dangerous to the future of American
education. The debate should be whether civism can exist side by side in a system that values standardized content and performance achieved through rigor, and for me the answer is no. It cannot, and it should not. It seems apparent that, as one service-learning advocate Terry Pickeral believes, content and performance standards are here to stay, with varying degrees of rigor attached (that is to say, varying thresholds for student success or failure). Zero-sum thinking will always be a hallmark of a rigorous education as defined by those who see civism as just part of the sum. If this is the case, it is both pointless and stupid for those who value civism to stay and engage in a debate in which the terms are so misunderstood, and in which apples are being mixed with oranges. Advocates of civism, specifically advocates of service-learning who have not been corrupted by the desire to mainstream the field, should work locally to establish this organizing principle where it is valued, and leave the zero-sum folks to go their merry way.

1.7 Service-learning Should Get Comfortable With Being "Integral"

A large part of service-learning’s problem is its obsession with definitions. I hate to indulge in the debate any more than needed; however, in this case distinctions
between concepts is important and I want to address them because it goes to my argument about staying away from the center of education reform. Rather than attempting to enter the mainstream of education reform, rather than trying to be the state and national pedagogy of choice, rather than spending a great deal of energy seeking out data that substantiates academic success when the pedagogy is used, the movement should accept the evidence that it is playing an "integral" part in the lives of hundreds of thousands of students at all levels of education. If, as stated in the literature review, service-learning is growing, in some places significantly, there really can be no argument that it is affecting the lives of many teachers and students (and the communities they live in) even if, upon closer examination, the programs amount to nothing more than volunteerism or enhanced community service. If the meaning of democracy is not at the root of most service-learning programs, at least some social capital is being built when students work in their surrounding communities. In other words, service-learners should humbly accept that the field has more growing to do and that "growing," even if its delineation is equated with "marginal," may be the best place "to be." The field should not allow hubris and ego to manifest into a desire to be at the big dance that is
national education reform. Such a desire may come from the questionable assumption that anything good happens at the big dance.

Because of its fractious nature, because so many of its practitioners feel so passionately about the ability of young people to change the world, the field will never find common ground with general education reform. Service-learning has to accept, even celebrate its fringe status, for therein lies a true integrity. Therein lies a path for the pedagogy to return to its social justice roots and the question of the meaning of democracy. Any more energy spent on defining "integral" vs. "mainstream" is counterproductive.

1.8 What To Do If One Simply Must Feel Like the Light And The Way

If service-learning simply must continue to believe it is the light and the way to a "good" education, its leadership should focus on the elementary grades. It is not productive to push for service-learning courses in pre-service secondary teacher education. I would like to see more secondary teachers versed in the philosophy and method of service-learning, but elementary pre-service teachers should be a priority for the field's leaders looking at colleges of education.
Middle and high school students are doing wonderful projects all around the country and they are making a difference in every state. However, getting them involved would be much easier if students arrived in grade seven or eight already versed in the idea that learning comes when knowledge is applied in real world circumstances for the purposes of justice and the development of democracy. This thinking is consistent with my objections to content and performance standards, because it asks students to start seeing the world as theirs to construct, rather than theirs to inherit (which must be a profoundly depressing thought in 2003). One of the known outcomes of service-learning programs is the empowerment of students to shape their world and their futures - there is considerable evidence to support this from studies of social justice type programs - but why do we wait until students are nearly in their teens before we allow them the opportunity to construct new paradigms? Waiting until students are in college is folly, since we know young people are considerably set in their views and habits by the time they graduate from high school. If service-learning leaders concentrated on the elementary grades perhaps that culture of open-mindedness that comes with the territory would stay infused in young people's minds as they move into the secondary and post-
secondary levels. For service-learning, from a marketing point of view, it makes sense to have new middle school students and their parents requesting teachers who value community learning and experiential education.

1.9 A Quick Word on Mandating Service-learning

Whether or not to mandate service-learning is one of the most divisive issues within the field, one that has certainly contributed to its fringe status. The field cannot make up its mind on this matter; its indecision leads to a broad lack of consensus on many other issues. Since I have already argued for localized education, and that service-learning should stay at the fringe of education reform, it would be hypocritical to suggest that anything should be mandatory. In fact, I go back to the distinction I made between civism and content standards as a way of clarifying my position on what should or should not be mandated.

There is no one method of teaching, nor one method of reforming schools. Americans should not have to believe they must choose one way over another, one method over another. Service-learning should be just one of many alternatives. But I do believe civism should be the national agenda once again, although how we teach it should be left to individual educators and/or their teaching
communities. My view of the state of the Union is such that I would argue for a mandatory return to civism, but I say this with considerable discomfort.

Getting civism back on the national agenda necessitates having a totally different discussion than the one Americans are having now. This discussion should not focus on whether service-learning, or charter schools, or Roots and Wings, is the better educational approach. The discussion should not focus on whether service-learning should be mandatory. These are surface issues and very distracting. R. Freeman Butts argues we need to talk about broad concepts that determine how knowledge is constructed, and I agree. Americans should focus on the hundreds of curricular issues which are typically discussed only in the offices of the education establishment - for example, how do we incorporate new information, and when do we discard old information? - and outside the public's view. The fact that these discussions only happen within the establishment is not reflective of civism, nor is the fact that so few American citizens are even allowed input into such matters.

In short, the only mandate I would like to see is the one that requires everyone to participate in a dialogue about what and how students learn. Moreover, in a nod to the work of Joel Westheimer and Joseph Kahne, American
educators, parents and community members should be mandated to engage in discourse about the meaning of democracy—rather than a debate on standards—and how meaning translates into teaching and learning. For service-learning advocates I would mandate participation in this discussion.

2.0 Another Divisive Issue

One of the issues that really polarize advocates within the field is what constitutes a quality program or project. I, like many of my peers in the field, become irritated when I hear educators call their programs service-learning, when they obviously are not. It is understandable that practitioners feel this way; after all, if I work hard to construct and develop a "quality" SERVICE-LEARNING program30—which is a VERY DIFFICULT UNDERTAKING— and then have my program lumped in with volunteer programs claiming to be "service-learning," chances are I may be upset. Nevertheless, if the field spends energy to narrow the definition it will only become a more exclusive club. The field (myself included) should be inclusive because there is a convert to true SERVICE-LEARNING waiting in every classroom.

Another problem with the debate over quality is the possibility that it closes off diversity within the field.

30 I am using Eyler and Giles' definition here.
Service-learning programs are only limited by the number of agencies and programs both inside and outside of schools.\textsuperscript{31} They are also limited only by variance in student interest. In short, service-learning’s one great asset is its diversity of experiences, enough to satisfy almost any curiosity or passion. The push for quality programs can detract from this diversity simply because of the standards implied in the word “quality.” The field enjoys consensus on the idea that service-learning programs should only contain a few foundational elements: reflection, reciprocity,\textsuperscript{32} knowledge applied through experience. Beyond these basic canons, pushing for quality becomes problematic. If advocates believe quality means programs in the area of human services, and not in the area of the environment or human ecology, some passions are embraced to the exclusion of others.

In the end, all these discussions about definitions and terms, the balance between service and learning, and how service-learning is different from volunteerism, amount to surface level distractions; in some ways these discussions may be responsible for derailing the field from the tracks of civism. The most important issue and

\textsuperscript{31} Which is to say there is no limit.

\textsuperscript{32} Reciprocity in service-learning means a two-way relationship between the learner and the community in which service is performed. Reciprocity assumes both entities will learn and both entities will be served.
challenge for service-leaning has to do with its ability to set aside discussions on the balance between learning and service, and reengage itself in a first-class discussion on the meaning of democracy.

2.1 Little Public Left to Engage

I have to agree with David Mathews that the American public has largely abdicated its role in the life and governance of our schools. I also agree with Mathews that there is little public left for schools to engage. There are many, many exceptions to this assertion, but for the most part I do not see communities wanting to engage their schools, nor do I see schools making more than a cursory effort to engage their surrounding communities. Of course, parent night still exists, as well as a myriad of events and programs that attempt to draw the two entities into a relationship, but the effort seems halfhearted at best. Service-learning certainly has the power to more fully engage schools with the communities, and visa versa, but with the loss of civism I see little change from where we stand at this moment. The balance of things will continue to shift towards the notion that participation fulfills one's obligation to society, rather than some deeper effort to correct injustice and inequity. This thinking is consistent with my feelings that service-learning should
stay on the fringe and not pound on the gates of Rome. The field has strayed from its roots and will not be the force that leads America back to democracy. Something far more powerful needs to happen before civism reemerges on the national agenda, and frankly I do not have much hope that it ever will.

2.2 Final Thoughts

In many ways service-learning is a wonderful part of the general education paradigm in America. The field is made up for the most part of top-notch professionals who simply want the best for their students. Students and teachers who create and participate in service-learning projects year in and year out are some of the most caring and compassionate citizens of this country. Many of the programs I have researched or read about over the years have given me a lump in my throat or brought tears to my eyes. When I share program descriptions with friends they often have the same reaction. At the six national conferences I have attended whose theme has been either service-learning, experiential learning or service-learning research, I have met incredibly professional and creative educators, some of whom I can now call friends. Service-learners are particularly good at networking and I have learned a great deal about how to develop contacts and use
resources. At all of the conferences and the many workshops I have attended or conducted, to a person service-learners, including young students, are all passionately trying to make the world a better place. So despite my criticisms of the movement, I also recognize - as did Diane Hedin and Dan Conrad - that the field represents an extremely progressive element of American education reform. Based on my experiences meeting people in the field it would be possible to obtain a cup-half-full view of all education reform, an optimistic outlook that sees our problems as just bumps in the road.

Unfortunately, I don’t have this view of education, and I don’t see service-learning headed in the right direction. Herbert Kliebard, writing about the myth of progressive education in America, notes authors who have debunked the essentially noble story of educational control removed from the wealthy elite and religiously orthodox and distributed democratically to the masses. I subscribe to the notion some historians have posited that progressive education - and in many ways service-learning is included in this mix - has done nothing but solidify the status of the ruling elite who control corporate America. These authors have written that much of what we call radical
education reform has been co-opted by this ruling elite, and turned to the "Dark Side," (to use a phrase from Star Wars), the side that feels quite comfortable with the gap between the haves and the have-nots; the side that feels comfortable that minority rights are still decades away from general acceptance. I subscribe to this revisionist history because it offers an explanation for why something so originally dynamic as service-learning, so capable of creating agents of change, so filled with the joy and passion of the learning process, could be so quickly moved in the direction of supporting standards-based teaching and learning. At the last National Service-Learning Research Conference, in Nashville, I noticed that the bulk of the crowd had come to hear about how the field could help itself by aligning with content and performance standards, and I wondered at how few voices there were objecting to this dominant trend. General education reform is a powerful vortex and service-learning appears headed right into the whirlpool. I can only hope that those who believe in education for democracy and social justice will avoid the vacuum and re-form again at another time.
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