

Beyond the Classroom:
Rhetorical Constructions of "Service Learning"

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the women and girls that inspire me: Caitlin, Crickett, Cynthia, and too many others to name. I hope you all know who you are. As the Cheshire Cat instructed Alice, “be who you would seem to be.” You all make that possible.

Abstract

This study examines definitional controversies over the use of the term “service learning.” Using historical description and argument analysis, I examine formal and informal definitions of service learning from the inception of the term in 1969 to the present, and the arguments that are proposed for or against particular definitions. Studying how interlocutors use argumentation strategies for definitions, by definition, and about definitions can help explicate whose interests are served through service learning. Recognizing that all definitions are political and historically situated, I suggest a return to one of the philosophical roots of service learning – John Dewey’s philosophies on experience and education.

Rather than approaching definitions as an argument about what service learning “is” or looking for an essence of service learning, I follow Edward Schiappa’s “pragmatic turn” of looking at which definitions of service learning ought to apply in particular contexts. This study concludes with an argument for multiple definitions of the term: *service learning as philosophies about education*, *service learning as a program description*, and *service learning as a field of study*. It is only when service learning advocates, practitioners, and scholars begin to critically reflect on their definitional disputes that the impacts of service learning will extend beyond the classroom.

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Chapter One: Definitions, Service, and Definitions of Service

Service learning has been around for decades. The term service learning was used in 1966 and defined in 1969; however, its proponents trace its history back to 1862, with the establishment of Land Grant Institutions (Titlebaum, Williamson, Daprano, Baer & Brahler, 2004, p. 1). The early history of service learning encompasses a diverse set of ideas and practices, including Jane Addams and the establishment of Hull House, John Dewey's laboratory school, Appalachian Folk Schools, the civil rights and women's movements of the 1960s and many of Franklin D. Roosevelt's social welfare projects (Stanton, Giles & Cruz, 1999; Titlebaum et al., 2004; Corporation for National and Community Service, 2007a). A common goal in these movements is the improvement of society. Historically, the two components that seem to be required are service and education, although education includes formal and informal ways of learning. By 1966, when the term "service learning" is coined by Bill Ramsey and Robert Sigmon, it is meant to describe "the combination of conscious educational growth with the accomplishment of certain tasks that met genuine human needs" (Titlebaum et al., 2004, p. 5). The term is first applied to college and university programs, but by 1970, the Youth Conservation Corps engaged 38,000 people between the ages of 15 and 18 under the title of service-learning (Titlebaum et al., 2004, p. 5).

Since 1970, the proponents of service learning have continued to grow in size. The statistics are staggering. In 1992, the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) was established to help promote service within the United States. Since its inception, the CNCS reports that “more than 400,000 individuals have served through AmeriCorps¹; and, more than 1 million high school students participate annually in service-learning initiatives funded by Learn and Serve America” (CNCS, 2007b). Additionally, CNCS was appropriated over \$520 million by the federal government for fiscal year 2006, with \$140 million “to remain available without fiscal year limitation” (Kirby, Levine & Elrod, 2006, p. 3). As Butin (2003) argued, a look at the educational landscape indicates the prominence of service learning:

More than half of all high schools use service learning in the curriculum, Campus Compact boasts a membership of more than 900 institutions of higher learning, and the National Center for Service Learning in Teacher Education reports that more than 200 teacher education programs employ service learning in their courses. (p. 1674)

As service learning continues to grow, competing definitions of the term have emerged. Each organization that enacts service learning finds itself attempting to define the term, often in divergent ways. Some authors (Furco, 1996;

¹ While AmeriCorps programs do not use current students to engage in service activities, it is considered service learning by the federal government and counted in its statistical data. Practitioners who are active in AmeriCorps sometimes use the term “community service-learning” to distinguish it from “academic” or “school-based service learning.” Despite this distinction, many AmeriCorps participants work for schools coordinating service learning programs (R. Fewins, personal communication, February 6, 2007).

Pritchard, 2002) claim service learning has been under defined; others (Butin, 2003; Sheffield, 2005) claim it has been over defined to the point of being “ambiguous” and without meaning. Others still (Stanton et al., 1999) argue that service learning should not be defined at all, because definitions inherently restrict the possibilities.

There are two key elements fueling the movement to define service learning. The first element is the sheer amount of money available to implement service learning projects and courses. In an era of shrinking budgets, more and more public and private educational institutions are looking for ways to increase outside revenue. Service learning not only has a substantial amount of government funding behind it, but it also an easy “sell” to individual and corporate donors. Corporate donors tend to give to the institutions that provide them with employees. A recent study, conducted on behalf of the Association of American Colleges and Universities, found that 73% of employers would like higher education institutions to place “*more emphasis*” on “the ability to apply knowledge and skills to real-world settings through internships or other hands-on experiences” (emphasis in original, Peter D. Hart Research Associates, 2008, p. 8). By defining service learning as the application of knowledge outside of the classroom, proponents are able to garner corporate donations for their programs. While there are no statistics available to determine exactly how much money corporations are giving to promote service learning, one of the largest funders,

State Farm Insurance Companies, already has dedicated millions of dollars in the past nine years as a part of their “education excellence” initiative (J. Rogers, personal communication, December 4, 2006).

The second element fueling the growth of service learning is related to the first. In order to measure the impact of programs and classes, researchers must first determine what it is they are measuring. Many funders, including the federal government and State Farm, require assessment measurements to ensure that the money is well spent. Additionally, although there is a large amount of money available to implement service learning, its status in academia is somewhat questionable. Advocates of service learning have increased; however, its recognition as an academically sound method of learning has not kept up. It is often considered a “co-curricular practice, funded through ‘soft’ short-term grants, and viewed by faculty as ‘just’ an atheoretical (and time-consuming) pedagogy that may be detrimental for traditional tenure and promotion committees to take seriously” (Butin, 2006b, p. 474). Advocates have pushed for quantitative measures of the effects of service learning in order to institutionalize service learning as a practice within the academy. As service learning has gained in popularity, advocates have turned their attention to ensuring its institutional longevity. All of these elements have combined to make the definition of service learning highly contested.

Purpose of Study

This study conducts a rhetorical history of service learning and analyzes the arguments used to justify different definitions and usages of the term. Examining definitional controversies over the use of the term “service learning,” I unpack formal and informal definitions of service learning from the inception of the term in 1969 to the present, and the arguments that are proposed for or against particular definitions. Studying how interlocutors use argumentation strategies for definitions, by definition, and about definitions can help explicate whose interests are served through service learning. Recognizing that all definitions are political and historically situated, I suggest a return to one of the philosophical roots of service learning – John Dewey’s philosophies on experience and education.

Rather than approaching definitions as an argument about what service learning “is” or looking for an essence of service learning, I follow Edward Schiappa’s “pragmatic turn” of looking at which definitions of service learning ought to apply in particular contexts. This study concludes with an argument for multiple definitions of the term: *service learning as philosophies about education*, *service learning as a program description*, and *service learning as a field of study*. It is only when service learning advocates, practitioners, and scholars begin to critically reflect on their definitional disputes that the impacts of service learning will extend beyond the classroom.

In the first chapter, I look at what the study of rhetorical history has to offer a study of definitions and argument, the purpose of definitions and how they function, and demonstrate how *service* and *learning* both have individually been historically contested terms. In chapter two, I examine the historical construction of the term *service learning*. From its inception in 1969 until the government debates service learning in 1990, I trace the values and philosophies that were embedded in the term through argument strategies, including condensation symbols, persuasive definitions, disassociation, binary oppositions, framing, and historical associations with citizenship and civic engagement. In chapter three, I examine government involvement in service learning.

Once the federal government becomes involved in service learning, I demonstrate a shift, in Burkean terms, from the purpose of the act to the act itself. While advocates tried to portray service learning as a universal concept, the government elucidated criteria that formed an analytical definition of service learning. The two concepts eventually collide, causing a definitional rupture over the essence of service learning. Throughout chapter three, I use the historical situation to illuminate whose interests are being served through service learning. In chapter four, I propose an intervention into the discourse that surrounds the term. While the historical and philosophical roots of service learning are contested, I suggest a return to Dewey's pragmatic ideals about experience and education. I offer three definitions of the term that allow for a flexible usage of

the term that reflects the current political situation. By examining how a term ought to be used in a particular context, I hope to begin a larger conversation on service learning that extends beyond the definitional boundaries by which it is currently being constrained.

Reflections and Reflexivity

I first became interested in service learning while working with the Honors Program at Wayne State University in 2006. I was asked to work with three faculty members that had created a service learning program and needed assistance with fundraising and marketing the program. In my first meeting with the faculty members, I asked what they meant by service learning, as their program seemed similar to many of the internship programs across campus. I never received an answer that distinguished the two programs in my mind, so I began to research service learning and its definitions. Simultaneously, I began researching funding sources and writing grant proposals for Wayne State's programs. I became Wayne State's representative to Michigan Campus Compact, a state-run organization that distributes federal funding for service learning and helped plan several service learning conferences.

After one year, 50 percent of my salary was funded by grants for our service learning initiatives. I was amazed by the sheer amount of money and publicity the programs garnered, but I also became increasingly uncomfortable

with some of the practices I observed. Projects were designed by students to apply concepts from the classroom to meet needs in the area surrounding the university, yet almost all of the projects went away when the semester ended. The needs, however, still remained. No one at the university seemed concerned about this issue and when I tried to raise it in conversations, my questions were deflected with claims about how much students learned. I began to wonder who most was being served by service learning.

I found no help outside of the university either. I attended and planned a number of conferences about service learning. I served as a member of a commission to discuss service learning issues for the Corporation for National and Community Service. I participated in legislative advocacy for service learning with Michigan Campus Compact. In each of these forums, I brought up my questions about service learning. While many people would nod and sympathize, few offered any assistance or indicated they had similar issues. I discovered that many people designed programs to fulfill short-term needs (e.g., disaster relief) and thus did not face these issues. What seemed most perplexing was the lack of interest in even discussing potential drawbacks to service learning.

The literature reflected the lack of reflexivity as well. Within the service learning literature, I found hundreds of articles and books that extolled the virtues of service learning, but few that questioned the concepts surrounding it. Funding

streams existed to increase participation in service learning by “disadvantaged youth,” but I could only find one book (Butin, 2005) that discussed potential reasons why these youth were not involved. In 2007, I was asked to move to a new position at Wayne State. As a part of the position, I would review and assess academic programs and departments. For the other part of the position, I was to form and chair a task force on community engagement, and write the university’s application to the Carnegie Corporation of New York to receive classification for its work in the community. As a part of the project, I was to document all of the university’s engagement and outreach, including choosing which programs would count as service learning. I chose to use a broad definition for service learning, in part to boost the university’s application, but also because I had never figured out how service learning was different from similar programs. If the program took place in the community, provided a service in response to a defined need, and was done for academic credit, I counted it.

The definitions I use for service learning depend on the context. My primary usage, in this study and in general conversation, is to describe specific programs. The arguments that I make in this paper are informed by the knowledge I gained about service learning and from my experiences and conversations with its practitioners. Theoretical constructs from argumentation and rhetoric help guide my analysis. My impression of service learning practitioners is that most of them are too busy trying to help people and change

how education is delivered to worry about what many of them view as “theory” work. Yet there is room for both the theory and the practice. A historical study of language, definitions, and arguments can offer a different and arguably improved way of viewing the conceptual framework of service learning.

Definitional Rhetoric

Service learning is traditionally studied and written about in the discipline of education. This traditional disciplinary location makes sense, as many authors write about service learning as a “pedagogy” or “methodology for teaching.” The location of service learning in education focuses primarily on how service learning is enacted, however. While a few scholars have examined the discourse of service learning (see Butin, 2003; Sheffield, 2005; Taylor, 2005), none have approached such discourse from a rhetorical perspective. A brief literature review of the communication discipline indicates a scarcity of research on service learning or the rhetoric of its practitioners. The few articles that are published typically describe programs that take place in communication classes, often in public relations - a discipline where experiential knowledge is common and internships are strongly encouraged, if not required. An examination of the rhetoric of service learning, therefore, is long overdue. Specifically, the definitional disputes over service learning should be of key interest. Schiappa

(2003) has aptly shown that the field of communication has much to offer with regards to disputes over definition.

To understand definitions of service learning, it helps to know the context in which they are created. As Black and Coward (1990) argued:

Language does not simply reflect its past history nor its current function. Linguistic value has to be understood in relation to other aspects of the overall structure of language. We have to understand not just histories of words, but the relationship of terms to other terms, the relationship between terms in statements, the relationship between statements. (pp. 128-9)

In examining definitions, a contextual and historical approach is crucial. Turner (1998) argued that in the study of rhetoric, “historical research provides an understanding of rhetoric as a process rather than simply as a product; it creates an appreciation of both the commonalities among and the distinctiveness of rhetorical situations and responses” (p. 2). She clarified further when writing, “rhetorical history offers us the opportunity to see rhetoric as a perpetual and dynamic process of social construction, maintenance, and change rather than an isolated, static product” (p. 4); the same opportunities are presented when examining definitions through history.

Rather than approaching definitions as an argument about what service learning “is,” this analysis follows Schiappa’s “pragmatic turn” of looking at what definitions of service learning ought to apply in particular contexts (p. 106). Using Schiappa’s comprehensive work on definitions as a basis, this study seeks to analyze the following research questions:

- What are the key definitions of service learning? How do these definitions become arguments for or against particular ideologies?
- What are the implications of defining service learning in particular ways? How do definitions affect programmatic decisions?
- How do different definitions function to change the debate over service learning?

By examining the definitions of service learning, this study evaluates the arguments that have been enacted. In 1995, Schiappa wrote that there were few examples of scholarly argument evaluation studies, “despite the common view that argument evaluation is a very important function of argument analysis and criticism” (pp. ix-x); these words are still true today. While there has been an increase in the number of argument analyses that appear in scholarly journals, few analyze the role of definitions in rhetoric and argumentation.

Analyzing definitions and how they serve as arguments in and of themselves can illuminate how definitions are used in practice, and thus how they function as a rhetorical strategy in societies. As Schiappa (2003) argued, “a rhetorical analysis of definitions...investigates how people persuade other people to adopt and use certain definitions to the exclusion of others” (p. 4). Yet definitions exist in a particular historical context. The definitions of a word can change over time and place. As Beer (1994) stated, “The meanings of...words vary across space: the external words of communities and the internal worlds of individuals. Meanings also vary across time, as crossword puzzles from different eras will attest” (p. 192). Definitions reveal word meaning as a function of use across rhetors and in particular times and places.

Defining Service

Definitions are embedded in language “in order to function as a sort of road map demarcating what words mean. These road maps depict the definer’s reality; they function as claims about the way language and the world are” (Schiappa, 2003, p. 21). Because definitions can change across time and geographic boundaries, the context in which the words are used becomes crucial. While definitions may denote a particular meaning, there also may be connotative meanings that carry with the terms over time. Taylor, in his etymology of “service” finds:

There are five primary semantic strands of service in contemporary English: “service to country and community,” which includes military, diplomatic, public, and community service traditions; “service to God,” which includes multiple religious uses; “servanthood,” which includes activities providing aid from lower to upper class; “charity,” those aid activities moving in an inverted class direction; and, “service economy,” activities that add value through service. (2005, p. 104)

The term “service” is an example of how definitions can change and morph over time.

Taylor's analysis of the word “service” traces it back to the turn of the 12th century. It enters the English language “through the Old French term *service*, which, in turn, came from the Latin *servitium*” (p. 108). As Taylor noted, “The root definitions of *serve* and *service* refer to a specific type of class-based activity. *Service*, in this earliest traceable meaning, is what the underclass does to aid the upper-class” (p. 109). In this era, service is a kind of ontological

category meaning a condition of servitude. As the term is used over time, it acquires semantic flexibility, allowing for a performative category that refers to a type of activity (p. 111). By the 13th century, the term *service* includes “a variety of religious meanings, diverse diplomatic and political meanings,” as well as “references to the ontological and performative versions of servanthood meaning” (p. 113).

By the 14th century, *service* implied a social hierarchy; however, “the direction of the aid aspect of service can run either up or down the rungs of this class ladder depending on the context of use. *Service* contains its own antonym. There's room under the conceptual umbrella for *service as slavery* and *service as charity*” (p. 109). The semantic roots of *community service* draw from this meaning of *service*, which functions as “the class-neutral bridge that then allows for the reversal of the hierarchy of *service*...by which *service* comes to mean ‘help provided to those most in need’” (Taylor, 2005, pp. 111-12). This reversal of hierarchy also allowed service to be used to describe a variety of activities, “such as *national service*, *military service*, and also *public service*.” Service also has several specialized religious meanings, including “‘the service of God,’ ‘a religious service,’ or a ‘service book’” (Taylor, 2005, p. 111). These multiple conceptualizations of *service* throughout history contribute to the confusion surrounding definitions of service learning.

Condensing History

Service learning practitioners base their work in a number of contextual beginnings and these historical contexts shape the definitions that emerge as service learning advances in popularity, as well as the justifications for advancing service learning as a widespread practice. The multiple contexts of service learning also demonstrate the variety of both value systems and notions of *service* that influence its definitions. *Service* becomes a “condensation symbol,” which has no clear indication of meaning, but instead condenses “a host of different meanings and connotations that might otherwise diverge” (Sapir, referenced in Zarefsky, 1998, p. 8). Condensation symbols offer a powerful means of unifying a host of different concepts under one larger umbrella. As a part of the condensation, both denotative and connotative meanings are embraced. Seemingly dichotomous notions of service (e.g., *service as charity* and *service as slavery*) can exist without the tension being questioned and examined. The polysemic nature of the condensation symbol allows advocates to draw on differing associations, creating arguments that appeal to a large number of audiences.

Learning is also used in a variety of ways. Lachman (1997) demonstrated that while common lexical definitions of learning focus on the process of gaining knowledge or skills, the field of psychology uses a specialized definition of learning to refer to the modification of behavior (1997, p. 477). Even when a

community can agree on the definition of *learning*, issues surrounding learning are often contested, including how learning is best achieved and what knowledge or skills should be learned. Service learning definitions encompass a number of assumptions about learning. From Dewey's notions of education to perspectives on "social justice," service learning practitioners drew from an amalgamation of theories about learning and education to justify their work. The resulting combination condenses a number of historical contexts and ambiguous concepts to create service learning.

Dewey's Notions of Learning

John Dewey's work in the Laboratory School at the University of Chicago from 1896 to 1916 was central to the formation of his thoughts on learning and its relationship to the concept of experience. Dewey was reacting, in part, to a usage of learning that focused on "acquisition of what already is incorporated in books and in the heads of elders" (1938b, p. 5). The fundamental characteristic of Dewey's educational philosophy was the "organic connection between education and personal experience" (1938b, p. 12). Dewey believed that education in the 1920s and 30s was too authoritarian, pre-ordained and strict, and had little to do with students' actual experiences. Dewey felt traditional models of learning were too concerned with delivering knowledge and instead needed to take into account the unique differences that each student brought to

the classroom. While the connection between learning and experience may seem simple, Dewey thoughts were more nuanced. He argued that while “all genuine education comes about through experience,” this “does not mean that all experiences are genuinely or equally educative” (1938b, p. 13). When the curriculum is standardized, each student will perceive the knowledge differently because of their past experiences. Thus, teaching and curriculum must be designed in a way that allows for individual differences.

Dewey used his classroom to create structured learning activities that tested his ideas and mirrored democratic society. Students actively participated within the mini-society to work together to solve common societal problems. Believing in the inherent curiosity of humans and their desire to learn, his students were given the opportunity to examine their ideas, beliefs, values, and institutions for the purpose of critical inquiry, investigation, and reconstruction (Ornstein & Levine, 2000). Dewey’s experiential classroom encouraged a problem-solving environment oriented toward life in a democratic society (Fogarty, 1997). For Dewey, education served a broad, social purpose, which was to help people become more effective members of a democratic society.

Dewey believed education and democracy were inherently tied to communication; he argued, “education consists primarily in transmission through communication. Communication is a process of sharing experience till it becomes a common possession” (1916, p. 11). Dewey argued that a model of

communication that does not allow for the free exchange of ideas and experiences does not provide a representation for life in a democratic society. Learning, as it was conceived during Dewey's time, focused on the one way transmission of knowledge from the educator to students; instead, Dewey felt students needed dialectical educational experiences that enabled them to become responsible members of society. Dewey's ultimate vision of public education was the production of good citizens, which years later became one of the primary arguments to justify service learning (Ryan & Cooper, 1998).

Social Justice and Learning

Another frame of reference service learning advocates drew from was social justice. The term "social justice" was first coined by Sicilian priest Luigi Tamparelli d'Azeglio in 1840, and began as a philosophy to guide Catholicism (Prentice, 2007, p. 266). Modern day Jesuits continue to focus on social justice, requiring "community participation, solidarity with other humans, and care for the earth" in order to "overcome societal and economic inequities." Jesuits focus on the poor and vulnerable, to put their needs first. As a part of their focus on the poor, Jesuits support the transformation of the economy, including the right to form unions and fair wages (Cuban & Anderson, 2007, p. 144). Outside of the Jesuit tradition, Catholic education is another means of promoting social justice. Catholic education teaches that "faith and love for God is demonstrated most

clearly in active service to others” (Stewart, 2008, p. 59). For social justice advocates, Jesus Christ serves as an example of how Catholics should lead their lives. Pope John Paul II argued that “Catholic education serves the future of all American by teaching and communicating the very virtue on which American democracy rests,” spreading the value(s) of Catholic teaching to all, whether the individual is Catholic or not (quoted in Stewart, 2008, p. 60). Learning in this instance is similar to Dewey’s - both supposedly support democratic ideals. The difference lies in how learning takes place and what is learned. In Dewey’s ideal, learning encourages new experiences and the sharing of those experiences with others for the purpose of democracy. In Catholicism, the purpose of education is to demonstrate and teach faith and love for God. Catholic education would, in many ways, be what Dewey was arguing against as too authoritarian, pre-ordained, and strict. However, in service learning discourse the nuanced theoretical conflicts in *learning* are condensed into a single term.

Expanding Boundaries

The joining of two condensation symbols into a new term expands the boundaries of possible definitions. One thing is clear: all definitions of service learning contain strategic choices in framing and association, serving the interests of some and excluding the interests of others. At times, these choices are clearly elucidated and visible; however, as service learning gets redefined

through time, the value systems embedded in the term become elided and the “emotive meaning” changes. Exploring the contextual and textual definitions of service learning since the inception of the term can help explicate the arguments contained within definitions and how definitions function on a number of argumentative levels. In this way, this study expands the boundaries of both service learning and argumentation scholarship. Service learning advocates struggle with the question “what *is* service learning,” rather than looking at how we ought to use the term or what it is that should be described by service learning.

As Schiappa argues, “Normative questions of [how terms should be used] cannot be answered acontextually; they virtually compel interlocutors to address the pragmatic needs of a given community of language users located in a particular historical moment” (2003, p. 45). To help service learning advocates move away from essentialist definitions of service learning, chapter two of this study presents an historical analysis of service learning definitions from 1966 through 1993. Drawing from a number of theoretical contexts, a group of educators name their programs service learning. Early service learning scholarship is rife with scholars arguing what the essence of service learning is and the definitions put forth often contain implicit and explicit value assumptions. In 1989, the federal government begins to get involved in the debate over service

learning and its value, making implicit and explicit claims about the values associated with the term.

Chapter three examines definitions of service learning from 1993 until 2008. In 1993, the government defines service learning in legislation, using many of the criteria and ideas from early service learning practitioners, creating new associations and framing the situation differently. To attempt to encompass all uses of the term, Sigmon (1996) created a typology of four possible definitions of the term dependent on particular term emphasis and the presence or lack of the hyphen. The flexibility of the term worked against the proponents of the first definitions, and similar to the case of affirmative action, created an “inherent instability” that gives opponents the ability to coopt the term for their own purposes (Zarefsky, 1997, p. 3). In recent years, a few scholars have attempted “strategic maneuvering” (Zarefsky, 2006) to rupture the definition of service learning in an attempt to make clear the values embedded in the term and whose interests are being served.

Chapter four advocates for a two fold return to pragmatism: first, a return to Dewey’s notions of experience and education, and second, a pragmatic look at how the term service learning is used and which is the best definition for a particular context. Recognizing that all definitions are political and historically situated, I suggest three uses for the term service learning in today’s society: *service learning as philosophies about education, service learning as a program*

description, and service learning as a field of study. By comparing Dewey's thoughts on education and experience to how service learning is currently enacted, I begin a larger conversation about service learning that attempts to meet the needs and interests of the users of the term.

Chapter Two: Defining Service Learning

From the start, service learning advocates seemed to recognize the persuasive nature of language. In 1965, Bill Ramsey created a program in Tennessee that paired university faculty and students with community organizations and government agencies to research development. The program was funded by the Tennessee Valley Authority to help apply university resources to social and community problems (Stanton, Giles, & Cruz, 1999, p. 64). Ramsey expanded the program the same year to introduce students in a vocational training program to people working with advanced technology; the new portion of the program brought together employers, unions, students, educators and government agencies to offer a holistic training program to the students, including not only “on-the-job” training working with nuclear technology, but also education in the areas not available at the plant, such as English, math, and science. In 1966, the program was awarded funding from the Departments of Labor and Commerce, and Ramsey hired Bob Sigmon to help him expand the program (Stanton et al., 1999, p. 66). Soon after, the institute that employed Ramsey and Sigmon felt the program was getting too far astray from its scientific roots. The institute’s board elected to move the program to the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) in Atlanta; it was there that Ramsey and Sigmon created the term *service learning*.

As with many other definitions, the term was created because of a perceived need on the part of the researchers to describe the phenomenon they were involved in. Ramsey explains:

I remember specifically deciding that we had to give this program a handle; we had to give it a name. These were not interns like medical interns, although there were some similarities. They were not practice teaching. We were trying to find a phrase that would describe the program, and we tried all kinds of things: *experiential learning*, *experience learning*, *work learning*, *action learning*. (quoted in Stanton et al., 1999, p. 67)

Ramsey and Sigmon recognized that their programs were similar to others (internships, practice teaching) but wanted a term that indicated the uniqueness of the program. The first written definition of service learning appeared three years later. In 1969, the Southern Regional Education Board defined service learning as “the accomplishment of tasks that meet genuine human needs in combination with conscious educational growth” (as cited in Stanton et al., 1999, p. 2).

Definitions of Service Learning

Determining what definitions to examine and what texts to highlight for the purposes of this study was made easier by the historical work of three early service learning practitioners: Timothy Stanton, Associate Director of the Public Service Center at Stanford University; Dwight Giles, Senior Lecturer in Field Studies at Cornell University; and, Nadinne Cruz, Executive Director of the

Higher Education Consortium for Urban Affairs (1999). Stanton et al. focused on the “pioneers” of service learning. They used interviews, historical research, and narratives to explore service learning – how it began, how it evolved, and what its purpose was. As I researched service learning, I discovered that many of the most cited authors were quoted as “pioneers” in Stanton et al.’s book. While the book did not examine the definitions from an argumentation perspective, it did trace the history of the definition and how different programs chose to use the term. I relied substantially on Stanton et al.’s work because there were so few publications about service learning before 1985 (the year Stanton et al. identify as the “cutoff” date for being a “pioneer”). Because their work identified several key moments in service learning history, I used those as my guide for research. I looked at the creation of Campus Compact in 1985 and then the government’s involvement after 1985. While Campus Compact is cited as an important moment in service learning history, the government’s involvement was more crucial to definitions of service learning.

For government documents, I searched the Lexis/Nexis database for all mentions of “service learning” from 1969 to the passage of the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993. Many of the transcripts I found were people from nonprofit and human service organizations testifying to Congress about the value of service learning; however, almost all of these were descriptive of programs and very few of them offered definitions of service learning or

prescriptive claims. In 1989, the U.S. House of Representatives began to discuss the issue of national service and service learning was debated for the first time in formal legislative hearings. I examined all government documents that discussed service learning from 1989 on and ended this chapter with the advent of the government's definition of service learning.

Arguing Service Learning

The earliest definition was intentionally vague in order to include a wide range of programs, yet neither the term nor its definition were value neutral. Practitioners seeking to define their programs were, in all likelihood, unfamiliar with the term “condensation symbol”; however, the combining of two value-laden terms was a conscious decision. Ramsey, one of the “creators” of the term, explains:

We decided to call it service-learning, because *service* implied a value consideration that none of the other words we came up with did. In my mind, it was never intended to restrict us to those things that can be put in a box called service. It was more of an attitude, more of an approach to be of service. It's not just any experience that's important for the kinds of education we were talking about. It's experience with a value judgment involved. You could have experience with the mafia, and it would be tremendous learning perhaps, but it's not the kind of thing we were talking about. We were looking for a value connotation that would link action with a value of reflection on that action – a disciplined reflection. That was the model. It had to be real service – not academics, not made up, not superficial, not tangential, but real – and that's why it had to be agency based. It also had to be something that involved disciplined learning, not just casual learning. (quoted in Stanton et al., 1999, p. 67)

The advocates understood that the term held more meaning than a simple lexical definition.

More than a word that describes a particular thing, the term was embedded with certain values and characteristics reflecting the discourse community that created it, as well as the original values condensed within the individual terms. In an attempt to name their programs, practitioners employed a number of argument strategies to portray what they were doing and the ideals behind the programs in order to build support. In the process of naming the programs, the choices created inherent ambiguity that allowed opponents to redefine the situation and coopt the term for their own interests.

Essentialism and Entitlement

The construct “service learning” also implies a Burkean sense of entitlement, where “the nature of the term as an ‘act’ is defined not just by its place in the context of a certain language, but by its extra-verbal ‘context of situation’” (Burke, 1966, p. 359). While *service* may have specific meanings for particular discourse communities (e.g., the military and its members’ service to their country), it is not this context that early practitioners meant to imply. The programs were meant to have a “purpose,” and this purpose was what separated service learning from the “act” of volunteering. Jane Kendall (1990), one of the earliest service learning practitioners, argued that in the beginning service

learning was meant to help “participants see their [service] questions in the larger context of issues of social justice and social policy” (p. 20). Service learning definitions condensed the values and intentions of the program coordinators, rather than explicating formal criteria or goals.

Even though the definition was vague, the “purpose” can be seen in the value-laden terms within the definition and the rhetoric of the practitioners. The “accomplishment of tasks” assumes that some *thing* has happened and been “accomplished,” which provides an orientation towards a goal, but the goal of service learning is obscured. The goal must meet “*genuine* human needs,” indicating that there may be false needs that are articulated; yet, what is “*genuine*” is never explicated. Service learning advocates are thus able to argue that programs that do not meet their hidden goals are not “*real*” service learning, for reasons like the programs do not meet “*genuine* human needs.” While it is unclear what is genuine, service learning advocates are clear about who decides what a genuine need is. Ramsey insists that it must be “*real* service” (italics added) and “not academics, not made up, not superficial, not tangential, but *real*”; it is apparent that early practitioners intended to rely on community agencies, rather than researchers and scholars, to define the needs of the programs (quoted in Stanton et al., 1999, p. 67). Academic programs that do not originate in the community become by definition not “service learning,” or at least not “*real* service learning,” which allowed practitioners to pick and choose which

programs counted. “Conscious educational growth” is also a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for “*real* service learning” to take place (Ramsay, quoted in Stanton et al., 1999, p. 67). What advocates did not clarify is who was supposed to achieve “conscious educational growth” or how to determine when it was achieved.

The emphasis on what was “real” or “true” versus “not-real” or “false” assumed that there was some sort of essence of service learning for practitioners to seek. This rhetoric masked the assumptions behind service learning, and set up a false dualism that impacted the definitions and practices of service learning for many years. Programs that fail to meet vague “genuine human needs” or achieve the proper “educational growth” are excluded from counting as service learning for advocates, but not from consideration for government funding. From the 1960s through the 1980s, advocates’ use of vague language only affects their efforts to be inclusive, as the dispute is irresolvable. As I demonstrate in chapter three, it is when the definitional disputes became a rupture that the impacts of essentialist definitions become obvious.

Naming

While not explicitly in the definition, the situational context of service learning clarifies the dichotomies that were created by early practitioners’ attempts to “name,” and thus define their programs. As Schiappa (2003) notes,

“naming has the effect in practice of stabilizing the meaning of that portion of human experience being entitled” (p. 116). In this instance, lines are stabilized between “real” and “not-real” programs, and questions about who decides what a “genuine human” need is, or what counts as “conscious educational growth” are put aside. In this early stage of defining service learning, there is no dispute over the definition. Denotative conformity existed solely because there were so few practitioners who knew the term. Mary Edens, for example, began working at Michigan State University in 1975, at what may be the first volunteer program in the United States that utilized students as volunteers and was administered by a university. Despite the fact that Michigan State’s program was hailed by service learning historians as one of the first programs that was considered service learning, “Edens was not aware of the term *service-learning* or its concept at the time” (Stanton et al., 1999, p. 97). Similarly, Rob Shumer, another early practitioner, said, “We didn’t call it service-learning, but it was integrated into what we did” (Stanton et al., 1999, p. 101). What service learning faces through the 1970s is a definitional gap. The difference between a definitional gap and a definitional rupture is that “a gap can be resolved without the process of defining itself becoming an issue; not so with a definitional rupture” (Schiappa, 2003, p. 8).

Giving the programs a “name” allowed practitioners to create a discourse community where they could discuss ideas and compare notes. It is during the

early 1970s that Jim Feeney began to bring people together that seemed to be “dealing with the same issues” he was having with his service learning programs, but “in isolation” (Stanton et al., 1999, pp. 154-5). Feeney organized a conference and “those who attended formed the Society for Field Experience Education (SFEE)” (p. 155). At the same time, a group of practitioners focused on government internships formed a competing organization, the National Center for Public Service Internships (NCPSI) (p. 156). It is at this point that the definitional gap begins to widen. As Mike Goldstein, one of the founders of the Urban Corps, described it:

There was an interesting dichotomy that developed between the SFEE and NCPSI. For many years, each organization felt that it had the holy grail, and that the other organization was somehow running astray. *What particularly concerned me was that we were getting fixated on terminology. What you called your program defined it, rather than what your program was.* The internship people wouldn't talk to the field experience people, and so on. It seemed to me that *except for this kind of rhetorical distinction, there really wasn't any distinction.* The programs conceptually overlapped, if not 100 percent at least 80 percent. (italics added, Stanton et al., 1999, p. 156)

What Goldstein described was a definitional gap that could have become a definitional rupture. Instead, the two organizations focused on a name for a merged entity. Goldstein noted, “Interestingly, from that point forward, there was substantial convergence among the programs and a willingness of people to say, ‘You can call it whatever you want as long as when we look at it, we can recognize it’” (p. 157). While the argument seemed to be based in a false dichotomy of terminology (e.g., internship people versus field experience people),

instead it was based in a lack of denotative conformity about the words and their meanings. The two groups were able to see the similarities in the purposes of their organizations and overcome a definitional difference.

In language, naming an object, an event, or an emotion helps society organize the world. Names are crucial for recognition within and outside of a discourse community. Burke's (1966) theory of "entitlement" helps explain how the "naming" process occurs. It is not just the naming of an object or an action that gives it power; instead, it is the process of entitlement. This is particularly true for "terms for the sociopolitical order," which "depend upon the verbal order in the way that the natural order does not" (p. 375). With terms from the natural order, such as *apple*, a picture of the object or the actual object exists as a referent to explain what is meant by the term. Sociopolitical terms, like *service learning*, are more dependent on the context of situation to sum up, or entitle, "a nonverbal situation" (Burke, 1966, p. 372).

Using two condensation symbols to name the situation created new meanings while also maintaining the values condensed in the symbols. When practitioners argued that it could be called anything as long as "'when we look at it, we can recognize it'," they did not list the criteria that service learning would encompass or otherwise explain what service learning meant. Instead, practitioners felt that as long as there was "service" and "learning," the program would be acceptable. This attitude about the two condensation symbols, joined

together as one, allowed a diverse group of scholars to unify under a broad definition of service learning. As Zarefsky argues, condensation symbols “are particularly useful in defining an ambiguous situation because people can highlight different aspects of the symbol yet reach the same conclusion” (2004, p. 613). It was not until later years that the inherent ambiguity in the definition would become important.

Persuasive Definitions

Several scholars have noted the persuasive use of definitions in argument, including Schiappa, Walton and Zarefsky. Generally, word meanings are categorized in two ways: denotative and connotative. The denotative meaning of a word is used as a description for informative purposes. Denotative meanings of words are often found in dictionaries or used by a speaker to explain a concept to an audience. Connotative meaning indicates the feelings or attitudes attached to a word, or the “emotive meaning” (Walton, 2001, p. 118). While seemingly dichotomous, denotative and connotative meanings are often combined to create a broad range of meanings. The etymology of a word, for example, can “form an invisible context that can shape meanings and understanding for those attuned to them” (Beer, 1994, p. 191); thus the denotative meaning can mask the connotative meaning attached to it.

Understanding how these concepts relate to each other can assist scholars in examining arguments contained in definitions.

According to Stevenson (1944), the purpose of a persuasive definition is “to alter the descriptive meaning of the term, usually by giving it greater precision within the boundaries of its customary vagueness” (p. 210). Persuasive definitions work “by redefining the descriptive meaning of the word, while covertly retaining its old familiar emotive meaning” (Walton, 2001, p. 118). Citing the works of Aomi and Stevenson, Walton (2001) identifies four characteristics of an effective persuasive definition:

1. The word being defined has strong emotive connotations.
2. The descriptive meaning of the word is vague and ambiguous enough to be semantically manipulated.
3. The change of the meaning by redefinition is not noticed by naive listeners.
4. The emotive meaning of the word remains unaltered. (2001, p. 119)

Persuasive definitions abound in legal and policy debates; yet, not all definitions are equally effective, persuasive or otherwise. While “all descriptions encourage a particular point of view and invite some reactions as opposed to others,” Schiappa argues scholars need to examine the choices made in creating the definition, including, “What point of view is being privileged, and what is being left out? Which aspects of the phenomenon are we being encouraged to consider and which aspects are being neglected?” (2003, p. 162).

While *service learning* condensed a number of attitudes about *service* and *learning*, the term “real” before *service* signifies the use of a persuasive definition (Stevenson, 1944, p. 214). For early advocates, *service learning* combines two important, but distinct, concepts. *Service* is not meant to “restrict” practitioners to “those things that can be put in a box called service;” service is “an attitude” or “experience with a value judgment.” In other words, service is more than the lexical definition; it has emotive connotations, but the “attitude” or “value judgment” is ambiguous. What attitudes are accepted or rejected? What values make the experience a proper one? The descriptions are vague and manipulatable, meeting the second criteria for an effective persuasive definition. The type of service necessary is “*real service*” and it is defined by what it is not; it is “*not academics, not made up, not superficial, not tangential, but real.*”

The redefinition occurs when the term is combined with *learning*, but is “not academics.” Instead, the redefinition relies on *learning* based in experience and action; however, *learning* is also defined by what it is not. *Learning* is “not just any experience;” practitioners “were looking for a value connotation that would link action with a value of reflection on that action.” The type of *learning* is distinguished: it must be “disciplined learning, not just casual learning” (Stanton et al., 1999, p. 67). The learning cannot happen by accident, but must be planned and structured. As Zarefsky demonstrates, a persuasive definition occurs “in the course of naming” something. “The name is, in effect, an implicit

argument that one should view the thing in a particular way. But the argument is never actually advanced.” The positive emotive connotations of *service* and *learning* remain, even though the two are combined and redefined to describe a new object. “The definition is put forward as if it was uncontroversial and could be easily stipulated” (2006, p. 404). The persuasive definition of *service learning* is successful in convincing people that they may not know exactly what it “is,” but they know it when they see it and have positive connotations toward it.

Disassociation and Binary Oppositions

Throughout the 1970s, service learning continued to expand. Denotative conformity became more important as the number of concepts multiplied and the discourse community became larger. In 1979, Sigmon elucidated three principles for service learning:

1. Those being served control the service(s) provided.
2. Those being served become better able to serve and be served by their own actions.
3. Those who serve are also learners and have significant control over what is expected to be learned. (p. 10)

These principles are meant to distinguish service learning, or “real service,” from other forms of volunteer service by evoking three concepts: reciprocity, learning and reflection. However, a number of power dimensions are inherent in the principles, which form the basis of the definition and offer an indication of whose interests are “being served.”

Binaries in service.

First, the language used to describe the two groups, “those being served” and “those who serve,” demonstrates how power relations are masked. The groups are categorized, by definition, into a false dichotomy of *server* and *served*. This dichotomization precludes the “class neutrality” that Taylor claims exists in the root meaning of *service*. At the same time, the shared root word between the subject, object and verb, i.e., the fact that the *server* provides a *service* to the *served*, makes it appear as though the terms are value neutral. Arguments about what *service* a *server* provides to the *served* become confusing and seem circular, further eliding the strict lines drawn between the two groups within the definition of *service learning*. Additionally, the binary opposition set up creates a form of disassociation.

Disassociation, as first elucidated by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969), is a form of argument strategy that “consists of breaking a concept into parts in order to identify one’s proposal with a more favored part” (Zarefsky, 2004, p. 612). One example of disassociation is the distinction between “real service” and service as “superficial” or “tangential.” Another form of disassociation is inherent in the binary opposition set up between *server* and *served*. If one is A, then one is not B. Simultaneously, if one is B, then one is not A. “Philosophical pairs” function to create a hierarchy, where one of the pair is “usually considered to metaphysically, epistemologically, or ethically superior

to the other” (Schiappa, 2003, p. 36). Reciprocity would seem to indicate that both the server and the served have control over the process; the first principle, where the *served* (henceforth referred to as *recipient*) control the services provided by the *server* (henceforth referred to as *provider*) would support the notion. However, both groups are referred to in passive voice, and only one group is taking action, “those who serve,” while the other group passively waits to be *served*. The group taking action is never explicitly named (*server* would be the proper term), making the groups seem more equal than they are.

The third principle, however, argues that the *provider* will have “significant control” over what the *provider* learns from the *recipient*. Thinking of service as a lecture may help illustrate the disparate power relations. While the *recipient* may control the content of the lecture, the *provider* determines the topic, thereby limiting the area of discussion. The fact that the *recipient* is in need of services that the *provider* can offer inherently skews the amount of reciprocity that can occur. The reciprocity is also mediated by the institutions that set up the process. By definition, service learning is not one individual finding another individual in need and helping them. Instead, the program is created by an academic institution and/or a community or nonprofit organization. The *recipient* has typically gone to a social service organization for help or is in a tutoring program at a school. The *provider* is a student who is serving for course credit and a grade, whether at the college level or in the K-12 system, or for a stipend

and educational award. The institutions predetermine the services offered, what the server will learn and the context that the service takes place in. The service is a structured opportunity and meaningful interaction can only occur if the program is properly structured.

Additionally, in the second principle, the *recipient* becomes better able to “be served” by their own actions. While the *recipient* may be able to control the services, the services are only provided when the *provider* is willing to learn from that form of service. At this time, service learning opportunities are voluntary and students had to sign up to participate. The *recipient* has a responsibility to learn to be better at being *served* but also better at *servicing*. The definition leaves unclear who the *recipient* will eventually learn to *serve*. Is it possible that the *served* can move from a position of needing services to provide them? Possibly, but the relationship is not reciprocal by any means. The *server* is always in a position of power over the *served*. The binary opposition precludes the positions that could exist between the two terms.

Binaries in learning.

In *learning*, the *server* is in a dominant position as well. The *server* (or *provider*) controls not only what they expect to learn, but teaches the *served* (or *recipient*). The content of what is taught is determined by the *provider*, the *provider* only learns what s/he wants to learn, and the *recipient* simply learns to be better at being the *recipient* and/or to be the *provider*. The *recipient* also

learns to become the *provider* “by their own actions,” so in a sense, is learning to act; however, the *recipient* should not learn to act like the *recipient*, but like the *provider*. The *provider* learns how to teach the *recipient* because the *provider* already knows how to *serve*; yet, the notion that the *provider* already knows how to serve stems from certain assumptions about the *provider*. The purpose of service learning is to extend concepts learned in the classroom and apply the knowledge in real life. While the *provider* may seem to control what is learned, it is more likely that the course that includes service has predetermined the concepts being learned. The *provider* may have some control over whether or not to take the class, but the *provider* has little control over what s/he is supposed to learn. One of the problems that arose early on in service learning was how to document the learning for the purposes of assessment. The solution to this dilemma was reflection.

The concept of reflection (or what Ramsey, one of the founders of service learning, called “disciplined reflection”) was developed during the late 1970s and early 1980s. In order to create “disciplined learning” and experiences that go beyond Ramsey’s example of an internship with the Mafia, service learning advocates called for structured opportunities for students to critically reflect on their service. These “reflection exercises often asked students to reflect on their values and suggest what implications the learning had for action as well as for illuminating the subject matter being studied” (Eyler & Giles, 1999, p. 10).

Service learning advocates assume that servers are open to the notion of service and willing to reflect on the activities in ways that will change the values and assumptions they hold about those being served, without ever questioning what advocates' assumptions are about the student (*server*). "Disciplined reflection" becomes mandatory and a form of self-reporting, indicating students who serve have little control over what they are expected to learn. Service learning advocates never address what happens if a student does not learn. If a student's reflection paper indicates the student only saw behavior that reinforced negative stereotypes the student held about poverty, homelessness and class, it is unclear what a practitioner is supposed to do.

Both the server and served have minimal control over the process; however little attention was paid to the binary oppositions set up, which assumed all participants fell neatly into server/served categories. The initial definition of service learning and the contexts that surround the term were never questioned.

As hooks (1994) notes:

[T]he privileged act of naming often affords those in power access to modes of communication and enables them to project an interpretation, a definition, a description of their work and actions, that may not be accurate, that may obscure what is really taking place. (p. 62)

Little emphasis was placed on assumptions in the discourse surrounding service learning. There was an assumption that there was something for servers to learn from those who are being served. This view was summarized by the slogan Stanton (1992) suggested at the first national conference held by the Washington

State Campus Compact, “I serve you in order that I may learn from you. You accept my service in order that you may teach me” (cited in Stanton et al., 1999, p.4). Service learning advocates assumed that the server always had something to learn from the served and left unanswered the critical questions that occurred when the server has also held the position of the served. The served are supposed to “become better able to serve,” but there was no explicit claim how that was supposed to happen.

Border Crossings

Janet Eyler and Dwight Giles were two of the service learning “pioneers.” In their later work on service learning (1999), they shed light on the assumptions of early advocates. Eyler and Giles argued that service learning projects were beneficial to students because it may have been the first time “they get to know someone whose life differs dramatically from their own” (p. 13). Service learning, according to Eyler and Giles, was often students’ “first exposure to poverty” and they “tend to see the issues in terms of individual failings or misfortunes – to blame the victim” (p. 18). Meeting people who students “never would have met” was considered an important part of service learning (p. 25) and service learning helped “provide opportunities for getting to know people one might not ordinarily know” (p. 26). Statements such as these indicate that advocates based their assumptions in humanist notions of a unified subject, and “that there is an

imprisoned essence of student waiting to be liberated by proper pedagogical practice” (Heald, 1991, p. 137). The tension was within the definition; a student cannot be someone who has previously been served. By definition, poverty and need were not a part of the server’s lived experience.

Service learning advocates also assumed that there was direct interaction between the server and the served. This assumption may have been true in programs that provided direct service, such as tutoring or assisting with employment applications, but the needs of the nonprofit organization today may not coincide with advocates’ needs. Many nonprofit organizations need assistance with marketing plans, writing applications for grants, and creating databases to track clients. Service learning gets incorporated into classes that have subjects that are relevant, which may not include direct service. In this type of service learning, the served is the organization, not the “victims” that the servers may never meet.

Framing service learning.

Despite its steady growth in practitioners, until the 1980s “service-learning advocates were a small, marginal group within higher education” (Stanton et al., 1999, p. 5). Some service learning practitioners struggled with administrators who disliked service learning based on the idea that it was not academically rigorous. Tim Stanton, an early service learning advocate, discovered the term in the 1970s through the Society for Field Experience Education. Despite Stanton’s

acceptance of the term as a description of the work he was doing, he and his colleagues consciously chose not to use the term “service learning” for several years because, “Words count. They can get you in trouble.” Practitioners “did not want our efforts...to appear to faculty as some sort of ‘touchy-feely’ exercise, which is what those words would connote in their minds” (Stanton et al., 1999, pp. 153-4). While Stanton recognizes that “words count,” there is no indication that the inherent binary oppositions built into the word “service” may also “count.” None of the service learning literature addresses any issues with how service learning is defined at this time, only that service may have “touchy-feely” connotations. Despite this fact, during the 1980s, there were several influences that helped to increase service learning’s popularity in academic, government and community organizations.

In 1985, several influential university presidents joined together to create Campus Compact: The Presidents’ Initiative for Public and Community Service. According to service learning practitioners (Stanton et al., 1999), the purpose of the Compact was to “organize their colleagues to draw national attention” to the problem of student apathy and disengagement and “to develop and support measures on campuses to encourage and support student volunteerism” (p. 167). Campus Compact tells a slightly different story of its founding. The Compact was created by three presidents of prestigious universities (Brown, Stanford, and Cornell) and the head of the Education Commission of the States.

The organization was formed to respond to media portrayals of college students as “materialistic and self-absorbed, more interested in making money than in helping their neighbors.” The Compact was founded because “the university presidents believed this public image was false; they noted many students on their campuses who were involved in community service and believed many others would follow suit” (Campus Compact, 2007).

The framing of the situation demonstrates a split that begins to develop in the service learning field. On one side, the situation is framed by service learning practitioners as three prominent university presidents coming together to publicize that students are not engaged. Students, in this frame, simply do not act and need to be motivated to engage with the community; the university needs to take steps to motivate the students. The argument accepts the media portrayal of college students as materialistic and self-absorbed, maybe in part due to the prestige of the institutions the presidents came from. This frame reinforced the binary oppositions found in early service learning definitions, including notions of the server being white, middle-class, privileged children who lacked experience with “real” life. Service learning becomes the solution to the problem. Advocates of this frame are looking for students to learn about “the other” through service.

In the second framing, the “institutional framing,” the Compact was created to respond to the argument that students were not engaged. The

purpose of the Compact was to promote how motivated students were to engage with the community. In this frame, students are not self-centered or interested solely in making money. Service learning becomes the vehicle to demonstrate there is no problem with students. Students were learning about “civic education” and “citizenship” by engaging with the community. This frame relies on notions of *service* as “citizens” who are “giving back” to the nation in return for their rights and liberties, similar to military service. Tim Stanton, one of the early service learning practitioners, recalls that many practitioners were “happy to see college presidents organizing to advocate for public service, but we were mad at the concept of service they were putting out.” The Compact’s concept of service “appeared to be pure volunteerism separated from the curriculum.” Advocates feared that if the Compact’s notion of service prevailed in higher education, attempts to integrate service learning into the academic purposes of institutions would be derailed (quoted in Stanton et al., 1999, p. 167).

Regardless of why it was founded, the Compact gave service learning advocates added legitimacy within academic institutions. Once college and university presidents committed to “helping students develop the values and skills of citizenship through participation in public and community service,” it became easier for academic practitioners of service learning to relate the concept to their institutions’ goals and strategic plans (Stanton et al., 1999, p. 11). Soon after its inception, Campus Compact began to use the term *service*

learning in its literature, exposing more people to the ideas and practices. In 1989, the Johnson Foundation hosted the Wingspread conference, where early advocates worked to articulate and publish the principles of service learning (pp. 5-6).

While the first definition appeared in 1969, twenty years later the term had exploded. With the rising concerns in the 1980s to reform education for the “new economy,” service learning gained popularity with practitioners and legislators alike. Critics felt that higher education had become removed from society and the knowledge students were learning in the classroom had no application to everyday life in the community and in the workplace (e.g., Boyer, 1987; Association of American Colleges, 1991; Bannerji, Carty, Dehli, Heald & McKenna, 1991). Because *service learning* was already entitled in a way that made programs accessible and understandable to government agencies, it allowed legislators to use narratives of those who had benefited from service learning to point to efforts to change the way people are educated. This added legitimacy helped fuel the growth of service learning, as government funding increased dramatically for programs considered service learning.

Citizenship Associations

Due in part to the increased visibility of service learning, in 1989, Congress debated passing legislation that would promote service opportunities

for youth. Many of the programs under discussion were labeled *service*, not necessarily *service learning*, but the discussion elided the differences indicating the strength of *service* as a condensation symbol. During the debates on H.R. 660, legislators reinforced notions of status quo servers as white, middle-class students and those being served as poor people of color; it is this one-sided relationship they sought to change. Representatives used associations of service as an obligation of citizenship to reinforce notions of poverty and race. Representative Panetta argued in the *Hearings on the Issue of National Service* (1989), “it’s particularly important that we try to reach those 2.5 million disadvantaged youths, drop-outs, and kids who have really not had the opportunity to find some ability to contribute to their community” (Committee on Education and Labor, p. 3). Disadvantaged youth needed “an incentive...to work” (p. 3), as well as “enough opportunity to find a productive and respectable place in society” (pp. 8-9). The implication was that “disadvantaged” youth were not currently productive, making a contribution to their communities, or respectable. Representative McCurdy further enforced this notion, arguing, “this plan offers citizenship” to disadvantaged youth and through these programs “a young person can gain a sense of pride and civic responsibility” (p. 24). This argument relied on the institutional framing of service learning set forth by the Campus Compact: the problems were the disadvantaged youth and their lack of

understanding about the responsibilities of citizenship. By “learning” to do “service,” the youth in question would gain “citizenship.”

Race and poverty.

While it may seem that the representatives could have been talking about youth broadly, later in the hearings Representative Morella stated legislators have proposed the bill “particularly with the idea in mind of getting minority students” to serve (p. 93). The legislators’ discourse relied on the stereotypes of a “culture of poverty,” which characterizes the poor as a “distinct culture” filled with “apathy” (Zarefsky, 1986, p. 107). According to legislators, it was a lack of opportunity and a sense of entitlement that led to this apathy. McCurdy even goes as far as to suggest that Federal education assistance, such as Pell grants, should be tied to “the performance of national service” (Committee on Education and Labor, 1989, p. 25). Rather than apologizing for his extreme views, McCurdy stated, “Democracy is the cornerstone of our great society, but it is not free. For each right that is bestowed...there’s an obligation owed in return. Federal aid for education should be an earned benefit, not an entitlement” (p. 25). McCurdy’s implicit claims about the poor and disadvantaged only seeking “entitlements” make it “possible to view the poor as a culture lacking commitment to middle-class values,” such as a commitment to work (Zarefsky, 1986, p. 107).

As Zarefsky (1986) explains, to combat the nihilism implicit in the “culture of poverty” theory, the solution often contains assumptions about the poor

themselves (p. 109). In order to eradicate poverty, it becomes “necessary to change the individuals in the poverty culture” (p. 109). In other words, teach them “middle-class values” like “pride,” “citizenship,” and “civic responsibility.” Panetta also reified these constructions of the poor throughout the hearing; he argued:

There is, I think, an important service ethic that we have to emphasize in this country. We are a democracy. We extend important rights and liberties and freedoms to our citizens. I think that in return we need to call them to duty in this country, to give something back to this country. (Committee on Education and Labor, 1989, p. 3)

Panetta created a rhetorical distinction between “we,” the legislators, and “them,” the citizens. While he seems to admit that the poor are, in fact, citizens, he relied on historically oppressive notions of citizenship.

Historical notions of citizenship.

Panetta’s statement that “we are a democracy” characterizes citizenship as related to the type of government an individual lives under. The legislators operate under a positive definition of citizenship, which explicates, “a legal-political status that some individuals enjoy, some can only aspire to, and still others have little hope of ever attaining” (Schuck, 1997, p. 1). Republican governments have a specific relationship to their inhabitants, and the duties and obligations of those individuals are different than they may be for an individual, or “subject,” living under a monarchy. Legislators’ use of terms such as “sense of duty” and “give something back” signify a reciprocal obligation between the

government and a citizen; yet, the specific nature of responsibilities under a “service ethic” was left undefined.

Under this model of government and citizenship, the rights of a citizen are based on an individual’s commitment to civic life. In return for service to the nation, citizens are given “rights and liberties and freedoms.” This model of citizenship is first explicated in the Roman Codes. The Roman Codes paid attention to the status of all inhabitants of the commonwealth, particularly the distinction between slave and citizen. All individuals who were not slaves were considered “free men,” and as free men, they were entitled to certain rights. There were two categories of individuals: citizens and strangers. Strangers were granted natural law rights, while citizens were granted natural law and civil rights (Smith, 1999, p. 256). Political rights were obtained through wealth, education, and/or military service. McCurdy’s call to tie federal education grants to service would have ensured that service was the only way for the poor to achieve political rights. Since the poor are one of the more marginalized groups in U.S. society, it is unclear what rights, liberties, and freedoms they were entitled to and thus should feel a sense of duty to “give back.”

In legislators’ rhetoric, mandatory service was the only way to get the poor to overcome their apathy and learn middle-class values. Panetta used the example of his son, who voluntarily joined the Peace Corps, to demonstrate the effectiveness of service programs:

I can't describe to you the impact that providing that service had on him in terms of his call to duty and the kind of contribution that he feels is important as a citizen in this country. I think we need to bring that call to duty to other young people throughout this country. (Committee on Education and Labor, 1989, p. 5)

His son had the "call to duty" that was important to citizenship, now it is time "to bring that call" to the poor so that they may learn how to be "citizens."

Additionally, Representative Coleman noted, "young Americans are contributing virtually millions of hours of community service to the poor, the infirm, to the educationally disadvantaged, to the inner-cities" (p. 100). The poor are typically the served, not the server; yet, legislators wanted the poor to learn middle class values, such as duty and a service ethic.

Civic engagement.

The legislators' implicit definition of service moved away from what advocates of service learning initially hoped to promote. One of the primary goals of the programs was to "have students learn knowledge, skills, and self-awareness through structured reflection, so they would be more effective in their service" (Stanton et al., 1999, p. 110). Shumer explains that the term "*service* confuses people," thus, he used civic engagement because "by definition, civic engagement is a voluntary act" (Stanton et al., 1999, p. 103). Service learning practitioners wanted to encourage voluntary acts that would expose students to people and concepts they had not previously considered. In practitioners' minds, the poor had much to teach the middle-class about social issues, not the other

way around. Yet by associating the programs with civic engagement, practitioners allowed Congress to redefine *service* and *service learning* as citizenship education.

Other than references to tying financial aid to service, there was no explicit mention of learning. Smith mentioned that this program would be the first time the federal government would be involved in service activities for undergraduate college students and that tying it to financial aid would “compel young people” to participate (Committee on Education and Labor, 1989, p. 93). Smith also explained the need to compel institutions of higher education to accept these programs, because they “haven’t been able to sustain, either in terms of their rhetoric or in terms of their being, the way they do business – a commitment to serve other people....Now is the time to bring it back home” (p. 93).

According to Smith, compelling colleges and universities through legislating service would indicate that service “is so important to society that we are going to take a stand and make room for it in our structure. The message of the culture is that it is valued to do service” (p. 93). There is no indication throughout the hearings that compelling people to do service may cause them to become resentful or somehow lessen the experience, a clear shift from the idealistic rhetoric of the 1970s.

Despite all of these flaws, a version of the bill is passed in 1990; legislators named it the National and Community Service Act of 1990, and it did not tie financial aid to acts of service, but instead created an educational stipend

that could be used to pay tuition or repay federal loans. The legislation also increased federal involvement in service learning programs through the creation of the Commission on National and Community Service. The Commission was charged with overseeing four areas of service: 1) service learning programs in K-12 schools; 2) service learning in higher education; 3) youth corps programs; and, 4) models for service programs (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2007a, para. 6).

Purpose to Act

In Burkean terms, the term shifted from the purpose of the act to the act itself. In the 1960s, service learning started as a way to develop students' awareness of social justice and political activism (the purpose) and by the 1980s, it becomes important for people to do something to help themselves (the act). The purpose of service learning was no longer a critical component, allowing discussions of effectiveness or awareness of oppressive relationships to fall by the wayside. While the government's definition seems to have two purposes built into it (foster civic responsibility and meet community needs), the above analysis of legislators' testimony indicates that compelling people to do something (civic responsibility) to help themselves (meet community needs) was the critical component of the legislation. The legislators were primarily concerned with getting the poor to act, rather than early practitioners' goals of teaching students social justice and activism through service.

The shift to act, with little regard for the original purpose, created a new understanding of service learning. As the federal government allocated more money and resources toward the act, more practitioners took advantage of the elasticity of the term *service learning* to seek funding for existing programs. The inattention to purpose, the broad-based nature of the term, and the increase in funding all served to set the stage for a definitional rupture almost 10 years after the legislation was enacted. Service learning advocates divide into multiple camps, and all claim to have the “right” answer to the question, “what is service learning?”

Chapter Three: Multiple Definitions of Service Learning

Throughout the 1990s, service learning continued to grow both in popularity and in sheer number of programs. Encouraging this growth was the large amount of funding the federal government offered to schools willing to implement service learning programs. The U.S. Senate issued Report 103-70 (1993), to support the passage of the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993, indicated that within three years of signing the 1990 act, service learning had already had begun to expand exponentially. The Report noted, "In 1991, the Commission distributed funds to 47 states for service-learning, and awarded 58 grants that will provide service opportunities in more than 200 college universities." Additionally, the Commission "provided support to eight model national service programs in 1992, and plans to fund 14 such initiatives in 1993." The Report noted that service learning was "inexpensive." The initial data from the Commission on National and Community Service indicated, "300,000 to 350,000 Americans were exposed to service learning through fiscal year 1992 funding at a cost of \$16.9 million. This translates into a cost per participant of \$48 to \$56." While the Senate Report noted that service learning was a crucial part of the lifelong learning process in K-12 education, it also recognized that service learning programs were growing "equally rapidly" on college campuses. "Campus Compact estimates that at its 305 member schools alone, more than

140,000 students provided about 8.5 million hours of service” from a diverse set of institutions (School-Based Youth Service section, para. 5).

A New Era of Definitions and Arguments

I selected the texts in this chapter by working backwards from 2006 to 1990. When I first began my research on service learning definitions for programmatic purposes, I found a number of articles from Dan Butin, assistant dean of education at Cambridge College and service learning scholar. Butin published multiple articles on the topic of service learning, including a typology on conceptualizations of service learning. By researching the citations from Butin’s articles and tracing backwards through citations, I was able to identify several conversations about definitions of service learning. In 1990, Jane Kendall produced an edited collection of the key works in service learning literature. Kendall’s collection contained articles and excerpts from a broad range of authors discussing diverse topics, such as the theoretical roots of service learning, best practices for reflection exercises, and arguments for and against liberal education. Many of the authors were the same people identified as “pioneers” by Stanton et al., were the most highly referenced scholars on the topic of service learning, and were participants at a number of service learning conferences. I chose their definitions and discussions of definitions as the exemplars of the era because of their combined history and experiences with service learning.

Additionally, I looked at the government's discourse about service learning, including organizations like the Corporation and National Community Service, Campus Compact, and Congressional hearings about the National and Community Service Trust Act (NCSTA) of 1993. Because William Clinton was president during the passage of NCSTA of 1993, a landmark act for service learning, I also examined Clinton's speeches surrounding the passage and renewal of the Act. While I looked briefly at George W. Bush's rhetoric about service learning, there was very little there; the events of 9/11 shifted his speeches to other forms of service, particularly military and national, which seemed outside the scope of this study.

It is in this era that definitions of service learning became highly politicized. Once the government began funding programs, each user of the term had a stake in the outcome of the definition that was chosen. The discourse that unfolded from my research demonstrated that practitioners' attempts at definitional inclusivity and the government's association of programs with previous service initiatives created a definitional rupture between users of the term. While the government's usage of the term had added legitimacy because of its codification in legislation, practitioners continued to try and return programs to their original purpose (border crossing) while simultaneously remaining neutral enough to receive funding. Yet failing to resolve the differences over the usage of the term allowed external critiques of service learning to gain traction. As long as scholars, practitioners, government agencies, and other users of the term

argue about what service learning “is,” it will continue to be susceptible to opponents’ reframing of the term.

Service Learning as Universal Truth

In 1990, Jane Kendall, the Executive Director of the National Society for Internships and Experiential Education, published a literature review of *service learning* and its uses. Kendall used a broad methodology for the review and found 147 terms that she associated with *service learning*, including altruism, citizen involvement, cross-cultural learning, field studies and leadership. Kendall chose *service learning* as the “primary term” (p. 20) and recognized her choice would be controversial. She argued that the “raging debate about language” is simply “a sign that we are on to something” (p. 19). She stated, “What is important about this diversity of language - and the resulting strong feelings and inevitable debates about what terminology to use” was that all of the various traditions and program have independently come to the same conclusion “*that there is something uniquely powerful about the combination of service and learning, that there is something fundamentally more dynamic in the integration of the two than in either alone*” (emphasis in original, p. 19). Despite the recognition that each tradition had “its own history and culture - and therefore its own language,” Kendall condensed these diverse terms under service learning because across all historical, geographical and social contexts, “the same universal truth emerges,” which was “the combination of service and learning

touches something very fundamental about the human spirit and its relations to other human beings and to the surrounding culture” (p. 19). Kendall cared little for the denotative meaning of service learning because the two terms combined have a strong emotive meaning that is a “universal truth” (p. 19).

In Kendall’s definition of service learning, there were “two levels of meaning”: programmatic and theoretical.² Service learning could be “programs” that “emphasize the accomplishment of tasks which meet human needs in combination with conscious educational growth” or it could be “an overall philosophy of education that reflects particular epistemology and set of values” (p. 20). Kendall attempted to create a larger definition that includes both government arguments about service learning as an “act” and practitioners’ definition of service learning as a “purpose.” Rather than arguing what service learning “is,” Kendall attempted a strategic maneuvering that argued both definitions can be correct, because they are defining different contexts. Kendall tried to make the programs distinct from the philosophies held by the first service learning practitioners, yet relied on a the value-laden definition of service learning from the originators of the term (see Titlebaum et al., 2004, p. 5). The new definition cannot rely on traditional dichotomies between theory and practice because service learning practitioners rooted their term in practice and action. Instead, Kendall uses disassociation to define programs as distinct from

² In many ways, this work builds off of Kendall’s analysis and her recognition that service learning had more than one definition; however, the similarities end there. Kendall and I substantially diverge in our conclusions.

pedagogy. In some ways, Kendall seems to present a pragmatic definition of service learning, arguing that service learning can be used differently depending on the context. However, Kendall's stance on the universal and value-free nature of government programs weakens her claims.

Rather than promoting specific value systems, Kendall believed programs would promote “universal truths” to “foster participants’ learning about the larger social issues behind human needs to which they are responding” (p. 20). Another “universal truth” in service learning was “an emphasis on reciprocity” or “the exchange of both giving and receiving between the ‘server’ and the person or group ‘being served’” (pp. 21 – 2). Kendall failed to recognize that the values inherent in her definition were not necessarily universal. “Learning” was not used the same way in every community, nor were “social issues” or “human needs” defined the same by all groups. Kendall was also dismissive of the dichotomy she created between “server” and “served.” While she realized that it “suggests an inequity” between the groups, her only response was that her work “is not about service”; it was about the “*integration* of service and learning” (emphasis in original, p. 24).

Kendall never explicated how integrating *learning* makes *service* an equal relationship between participants, although she was cognizant of the problems inherent in binary oppositions. It is doubtful that Kendall would have supported a program that worked with low-income populations and taught youth that the reason people are on welfare was because they are lazy and shiftless, yet that is

exactly what her response implied. While attempting to create a broad, inclusive definition, Kendall relied on the same value-laden connotations about *service* and *learning* that plague both definitional camps. For Kendall, the definitional rupture that is occurring should not be of concern, as long as everyone can agree on the larger “truth.”

Kendall’s methodology and attempts to be inclusive fall prey to Sheffield’s (2005) criticism:

Service-learning is...increasingly “over-defined.” What I mean by “over-defined” is *not* that the ever-growing myriad of definitions limits the scope of service-learning by penning it into particular externally established means and aims. Quite to the contrary, there simply are *too many* definitions of what constitutes the service-learning pedagogy – definitions that are all accepted as valid by the service-learning community....by being everything for everyone, service-learning is quickly becoming nothing. (emphasis in original, 2)

Attempts to make the definition of service learning more inclusive made the definition meaningless. Soon after Kendall published her study, the federal government stepped in with its own definition of service learning.

The National and Community Trust Act of 1993

In 1993, President Clinton signed the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 into law. In the bill, the Commission on National and Community Service was renamed to become the Corporation on National and Community Service (CNCS). The bill gave CNCS control over three specific programs: AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and Learn and Serve America. In order to

ensure consistency in the way CNCS distributed funds, the bill elucidated the first government definition of service learning:

The term 'service-learning' means a method-

(A) under which students or participants learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service that-

- (i) is conducted in and meets the needs of a community;
- (ii) is coordinated with an elementary school, secondary school, institution of higher education, or community service program, and with the community; and
- (iii) helps foster civic responsibility; and

(B) that—

- (i) is integrated into and enhances the academic curriculum of the students, or the educational components of the community service program in which the participants are enrolled; and
- (ii) provides structured time for the students or participants to reflect on the service experience. (p. 23)

Service learning thus moved from a broad-based term that contained “universal truths” to a specific set of criteria. At the same time, the definition signaled an ideological shift from the activist nature of the 1960s practitioners to the conservatism that began in the 1980s and continued into the 1990s, which shifted social welfare responsibilities from the state to the communities and the people that needed help. It also gave the government an enormous amount of power to control the directions of service learning. In order to qualify for government funding, a program had to subscribe to the government’s definition.

In the 1990 act, Congress did not explicitly define what constituted a service learning program. At the start of the Senate discussion of the 1993 act,

defining the term was a clear mandate. The original definition under discussion was “the most prevalent definition of service-learning,” often referred to as the “ASLER definition,” which was named for the originator of the definition, the Alliance for Service-Learning in Education Reform. The ASLER definition specified:

Service-learning is a method under which students learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service experiences that meet actual community needs and are coordinated in collaboration with the school and community; that is integrated into students’ academic curriculum and provides structured time for a student to think, talk, or write about what they did and saw during the actual service activity; that provides students with opportunities to use newly acquired skills and knowledge in real-life situations in their own communities; and that enhances what is taught in school by extending student learning beyond the classroom into the community, thereby helping to foster the development of a sense of caring for others. (Billig & Eyler, 2003, p. 255)

Congress included and excluded key concepts from the ASLER definition, making choices about program associations and indicating government’s attempts to balance various interest groups. By attempting to balance continuity from service learning programs as they were conceived at that time with a change in the purpose (from experience with the “other” to civic responsibility), Congress was able to appeal to multiple interests at the same time (Zarefsky, Miller-Tutzauer & Tutzauer, 1984, p. 113).

Congressional Balancing of Interests

A comparative analysis of the two terms demonstrates a balancing act between interest groups. First, the government definition moved away from

claims of what service learning “is” and instead argued their definition was what service learning “means.” Moving away from an essentialist definition allowed the government to remove itself from debates within service learning about the nature, or essence, of service learning. Second, the government added the word “participants” alongside students, reflecting the decision to fund programs that took place in “community service programs,” not just schools. This shift broadened the definition, while also associating government action with the early roots of service learning, when programs began in the community rather than in the schools (Stanton, Giles & Cruz, 1999, p. 141). Third, the government did not use the modifier “actual” before community needs. This may reflect the association with service learning’s community roots, since presumably the community would identify its “actual” needs and not false needs. Additionally, the government may not have wanted to get involved in a debate of “actual community needs,” as the bill offered competitive grants for service learning programs. Claiming to know “actual” needs could have opened the program to persuasive definitions from opponents that a particular program did not meet an “actual” need, but a perceived need. Fourth, the government definition fosters “civic responsibility” instead of “a sense of caring for others.” As discussed in the previous chapter, civic responsibility condenses a number of ideas about citizenship, race and poverty that are continued in the hearings for the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 (NCSTA).

Including civic responsibility is closely related to the exclusion of the “skills and knowledge” portion of the ASLER definition. The government definition did not include ASLER’s requirement that service learning provide students with a chance to use new skills and knowledge in real-life situations. While there is no clear explanation of why the government left out this portion of ASLER’s definition, rhetoric from the time period indicate that it was closely related to the decision to “foster civic responsibility.” When President Clinton transmitted the act to Congress, he stated that “opportunity, responsibility, and community...are basic American ideals” (1993a, para. 16). Upon signing the NCSTA, he affirmed that there were “millions of Americans” living in poverty-ridden communities, “who are not really free today because they cannot reach down inside them and bring out what was put there by the Almighty.” The bill demonstrated that youth would “preserve the freedom of America for themselves and for all...by assuming the responsibility to rebuild the American family” (Clinton, 1993b, para. 15). What the government defined was not a way of learning new skills and activities, but instead “a chance to fulfill their abilities” (Clinton, 1993b, para. 16). Participants were not learning new skills and knowledge through Clinton’s conception of service learning; instead, the government simply needed to give them the opportunity to take responsibility. All of the ingredients for success were already within each individual because they were “American ideals.” The NCSTA offered the poor “freedom” and “civic responsibility” while disassociating service learning

with the purpose of “caring for others.” The point of service learning in the NCSTA was once again, in Burkean terms, the act, not the purpose.

In both speeches, Clinton associated the NCSTA with two concepts: Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and John F. Kennedy’s Peace Corps. Roosevelt’s initiative “gave Americans the chance...to do meaningful work” so they could “build America for the future” (1993b, para. 8), while the Peace Corps was an “enduring legacy” of volunteer service (1993b, para. 10). Clinton attempted to associate the NCSTA with two historically popular programs by providing scholarship money in exchange for service (similar to the CCC), and asking people to serve their country through service (similar to the Peace Corps). According to journalist Alan Greenblatt, “What Clinton has failed to do...is confront the fact that what made the CCC and the Peace Corps work were real jobs” (1994, para. 14). Rather than making service learning “real” and “substantive,” some critics felt Clinton created a program that offered a band-aid approach to the nation’s most serious problems (Greenblatt, 1994, para. 1 – 3).

Clinton’s argument by association was quite successful. By using “American ideals” that transcend political party, such as freedom and opportunity, he appealed to a bipartisan Congress to get the bill passed. He used conservative notions of “responsibility” and self-reliance, along with liberal notions of government-provided work to appeal to a broad audience. Using the

condensation symbol “civic responsibility” in the definition of service learning provided Clinton and other government officials the ability for “corollary usages,” such as “freedom,” “opportunity” and “responsibility” (Zarefsky, 2006, p. 411). At the same time, the definition appealed to service learning practitioners who felt their ideas and philosophies were being coopted by Campus Compact and other academic institutions. Clinton successfully chose arguments “that would gain the assent of the universal audience” through his use of condensation symbols and association (Zarefsky, 2006, p. 402).

Once the definition of service learning was entrenched in public policy, the programs gained added legitimacy in the public arena. “Far from being trivial,” government definitions “can involve vast sums of money, can affect the interests of powerful groups, and can be important to shaping public policies at the national level” (Walton, 2001, p. 120). In the case of the NCSTA, there were a number of competing interests. Elected officials wanted to show their constituents that they were achieving results in solving the nation’s problems, particularly lasting issues like poverty and crime. Academic institutions wanted to demonstrate that they were educating students to do more than get a job and make money. Community leaders wanted government assistance in their neighborhoods. While these interest groups competed, they were not mutually exclusive. For example, service learning practitioners wanted to solve the nation’s problems, help neighborhoods and reform educational institutions. The

power of the government's definition was that it was ambiguous enough to encompass all of these interests.

One very powerful interest group was also involved in the definition of service learning, although it is difficult to discern from the definition. Labor unions lobbied heavily to have language added to the NCSTA requiring schools and community groups to avoid displacing workers when implementing service learning programs. This requirement makes sense, especially given the temporary nature of the program participants; however, the bill went further by not allowing participants to duplicate the functions of unionized employees. Yet if participants are not allowed to teach, give immunizations or work on construction projects, the programs fall prey to the criticism that they are only band-aid solutions. As Greenblatt points out, service learning is needed precisely because "there's not enough money for Washington or for local and state governments to hire regular employees to do all the work that needs to be done," as Congress had already identified health and education as two of the largest "community needs" (1994, para. 5). Thus, in some critics' views, the attempts to create broad consensus about service learning through defining the term potentially hurt the ability of programs to be effective in addressing the problems service learning was supposed to solve (Greenblatt, 1994, para. 6).

Disciplining Boundaries

The attempts to create an inclusive definition of service learning, combined with large amounts of government and private funding, had two unintended consequences: it divided those people interested in researching and practicing service learning into multiple camps, and it created a new emphasis on learning rather than the interaction between service and learning.

Dividing the discipline.

When the federal government began funding service learning programs, the intention was to help sustain programs that were already in place, while also creating an incentive to expand the programs and generate new ones; this was how the government proposed to increase service learning opportunities for youth. As Sheffield (2005), a philosophy professor interested in moral claims in service learning, argued, service learning instead became a label that was tacked on to existing programs that had no connection with service learning or the values that early practitioners subscribed to. Often, programs simply added a reflection component to existing requirements for internships, cooperative education programs, and other forms of community outreach and called it service learning. Under Kendall's definition, programs that "became" service learning were acceptable. Instead of a shared language that would have allowed practitioners to communicate with each other, disparate programs fell under the same broad term without any connection between the various initiatives. After

the government defined and began heavily investing resources in programs and evaluative research, the group of practitioners expanded.

Within this expanded group of practitioners, a segment developed that was interested in the evaluation of service learning and attempts to measure outcomes. As the number of programs rapidly increased and researchers tried to quantitatively assess the impact of service learning, more and more people began to ask “what is service learning?” Some researchers interested in quantitative analysis sought answers in order to operationalize their terms and evaluate the efficacy of service learning programs. However, because the programs had few commonalities, it became difficult to make comparisons across data groups. Service learning researchers were forced to look for significant results within a single program and generalize the results; yet, the disparate nature of the programs meant the results could not be replicated. Assessment of learning outcomes is difficult enough, but without a shared definition, it was impossible to advance the research of service learning beyond specific programs. For this reason, most quantitative studies of service learning used small sample sizes and covered short periods of time.

Within service learning practitioners, several camps developed as well. It is difficult to “name” these camps because the lines between them are not discrete; however, most service learning scholars seem to recognize that there was, and is, a problem in the field. Morton, the program director for the University of Minnesota YMCA and service learning pioneer, identified the

problem as “language,” specifically that the field has “an abbreviated and blunt language at present” (1995, p. 19). Stanton et al. (1999) chose to categorize their study of service learning practitioners using a chronological typology. Stanton et al. separated out the “pioneers,” which they defined as anyone entering the service learning “field” before 1985, when Campus Compact was formed (p. 6). The authors never argued a “name” for practitioners after 1985; they simply made arguments that only the “pioneers” understood what service learning “is” (p. xii). As a part of the “pioneers,” the authors chose to distinguish themselves from the rest of the “field.” Morton (1995) argued that service learning advocates need to divide by the “paradigm” they follow, which he identified as charity, project and social change (p. 19). Butin (2003) offered a typology that divides practitioners into four groups based on practitioners’ purpose: technical, cultural, political and poststructuralist (p. 1674). Despite multiple conceptualizations of service learning and how practitioners should divide, no argument gained legitimacy and the field continued to flounder through the 1990s.

Academic disciplining.

The second unintended consequence of a broad definition was the shift in emphasis to learning, as opposed to service. Researchers in service learning often wanted to measure learning outcomes. Service learning advocates spent years trying to distinguish their programs from being “just service.” Critics of

service learning often argued that service learning has no place in schools; instead, service learning should be the purview of parents, religious organizations, and community groups. Kraft (1996), an active scholar in K-12 service learning, attempted to disassociate service learning from volunteerism and community-based learning. Volunteering in Kraft's argument was an "emphasis on service without a formal, structured learning component." Community-based learning extended learning beyond the classroom, but "does not involve any service component;" service learning was everything else. It involved "formal, structured learning" and a "service component" (1996, p. 133).

In 1998, when the NCSTA came up for reauthorization, Clinton was forced to distinguish his efforts from "just service" as well. Clinton tried to disassociate "national service" programs, including service learning, from volunteerism. He argued that "national service has never been a substitute" for volunteering; instead, national service "enhances tremendously the effectiveness of volunteers" (para. 6). "Service" was "an integral part of what it means to be an American" (para. 2). It had its roots in citizenship and was tied to "opportunity and responsibility" so that "Americans" could "make the most of their own lives," unlike volunteering (para. 2-3). Volunteering, in Clinton's argument, relied on untrained individuals and did not rely on compensation like stipends and course credit (para. 6). Advocates of service learning that were located in educational institutions faced similar critiques of being "just service" from within the academy.

To justify the existence of programs in educational institutions, advocates used arguments that stressed the learning that took place. As Goldstein stated, practitioners and critics are “looking at two different things” (quoted in Stanton et al., 1999, p. 209). In higher education, the struggle was to extend service learning across disciplines, and avoid locating programs within the Dean of Students office (Butin, 2006b, p. 474). Advocates argued that finding a definition that can be used by professional schools, humanities departments, and science laboratories was difficult, but the one goal all of these groups had in common was learning (Shumer, quoted in Stanton et al., 1999, p. 208). Eyler and Giles, (1999), argued that definitions were not important as long as everyone agreed on “learning” (p. 3). As Nadinne Cruz, director of the Higher Education Consortium for Urban Affairs, argued, learning itself was a contested concept (quoted in Stanton et al., 1999, p. 208). Among this group of early practitioners, learning was emphasized and service was de-emphasized; as a result, the focus became the learner or the person who did the service. Less and less attention was paid to the person or group being served.

The service learning literature reflects this shift from the served to the server. Initial programs were created with the purpose in mind – the idea that there were issues that needed to be solved and institutions of higher education could work with community groups to help alleviate problems like poverty, illiteracy, and crime. In these initial programs, the needs of the community were the focus, with students learning about the needs, the community, and the ways

to achieve the goals of the community. Instead, disciplinary learning outcomes have become the end rather than the means to the end.

Analytical Definitions

In all of the rhetoric and arguments that surround service learning, the definition is primarily the point of contention. As service learning expanded, advocates moved away from essentialist definitions of service learning and instead relied on analytical definitions. Analytical definitions rely on “necessary and sufficient conditions” that often create a “linguistic absolutism” (Schiappa, 2003, p. 119). Service learning advocates referred to the “four Rs” of service learning (respect, reciprocity, relevance and reflection), indicating the components that denoted a service learning program, whether the program used the term as a descriptor or not (Butin, 2003, pp. 1676-77). Typologies done by advocates, such as Furco, Stanton et al., and Sigmon demonstrate that it was a “semantic war” that took place throughout the 1990s (Goldstein, quoted in Stanton et al., 1999, p. 209). Furco, Associate Vice President for Public Engagement at the University of Minnesota, attempted to resolve the differences by developing a spectrum that classified service learning, community service, volunteerism, field education, and internships according to two main criteria: intended beneficiaries of the activity and emphasis on service and/or learning (1996, p. 2). Stanton et al. created a typology based on “institutional responses to service” and grouped programs by the type of institution that housed the

programs, the primary educational mission of the institution, and the definition of service used to justify programs (1999, pp. 16 – 19). Sigmon, one of the original creators of the term, took the concept *service learning* and developed a typology that divides the term into four usages, depending on term emphasis and the use or absence of the hyphen³ (1996). Each of these typologies attempted to categorize different usages of the term service learning and identified the components key to that usage, an analytic approach to defining the term. Unfortunately, the authors fell prey to the trappings of essentialism when it came to arguing a definition to use.

The goal of the typologies was to find the “essence” of service learning, indicating a reliance on metaphysical and linguistic absolutism (Schiappa, 2003, p. 119). Even Sigmon’s analysis, which used the same words in four contexts, argued a particular definition was the “right” one. Despite the differences between Furco and Sigmon’s typologies, both agreed that the goal should be “establishing a universal definition for service-learning” (Furco, 1996, p. 10). Authors try to identify the “essence of the pedagogy” (Furco and Billig, 2002), the “true essence of service learning” (Wicks-Ortega, 2002, para.14), “genuine

³ The hyphen in service learning, according to Sigmon, indicates a combination of the two terms. The absence of the hyphen denotes that the two terms are viewed as completely separate from each other. I do not use a hyphen because I examine both of the terms, separately and in combination, to see how the terms are used as definitions and arguments. The use of the hyphen contains its own argument about practitioners’ presupposed view of interaction between the two terms. Given that the hyphen is not used consistently through service learning literature and the arguments behind the usage of the hyphen, I have chosen to not use it.

service-learning” (Pritchard, 2002, p. 7), and the “nature” of the term (Eyler & Giles, 1999, p. 7). Service learning scholars searched to find the “true” meaning of service learning, while simultaneously categorizing the various usages of the term.

By trying to identify the essence of service learning, they created hierarchies between differing senses of the term, and thus, the programs that were enacted. For example, in Sigmon’s (1996) usage of the term, the only “real” service learning is one that has a reciprocal learning experience for both the server and the served. Arguments for “real” service learning assume that a reciprocal relationship is possible and mask the power relations inherent in the program. A program was either service learning or it was something else (i.e., community-based learning, community service, volunteering). Additionally, it allowed practitioners to argue that programs that did not fit their purpose of learning about the “other,” were not service learning. Because the purpose was based in essentialist assumptions about who the server was and who the service was done for, the practitioners simply reinforced notions of power and privilege between the server and the served.

Definitional Rupture

Since the spate of typologies in the 1990s, little has changed. Service learning practitioners still search for a definition that is broad enough to encompass everything that is called service learning, as well as the ideals behind

the original practitioners' intentions. In the 1980s, service learning suffered from a definitional gap; few people knew the term and had to rely on the original practitioners to help determine whether their programs fell within the usage of the term. By the 1990s, the literature moves to conflict over the definition. As the number of programs expanded, so did the usages. The typologies done by Furco and others demonstrate a shift from a definitional gap to a definitional rupture, where facts of essence diverge from facts of usage (Schiappa, 2003, p. 122). Most of the analyses attempt to differentiate how the term is used from what service learning "is." Other typologies list components "necessary" for service learning but leave the components undefined. Reflection is one example of a "key component," "yet any definition of its duration, scope, placement, mode, and structure remain frustratingly absent" (Butin, 2003, p. 1687).

According to Schiappa, when entitlements are disputed, the rupture "is explicit, and participants are compelled to come to terms with the process of definition itself" (2003, p. 130). In the case of service learning, the rupture is never made explicit; instead advocates make claims that the term is over defined (Sheffield, 2005), that the term does not need to be defined because it would create constrictions on what is enacted (Ramsay, quoted in Stanton et al., 1999, p. 211), or that there is a continuum of service and/or service learning (Furco, 1996). The rupture continues because practitioners and advocates cannot even agree on whether the term should have a definition, much less how it should be defined and used. For example, Butin argues that from one perspective,

adequate definitions are necessary; otherwise, “practitioners cannot develop optimal learning environments for enacting” programs, “researchers cannot rigorously measure the value added by service learning, and policymakers cannot focus legislative support” on programs that demonstrate best practices for the field (2003, p. 1687). At the same time, Butin concludes that “the quest for definitional certainty has the potential to constrain rather than foster emergent practices” (p. 1687). Butin is correct that definitional certainty should not be the goal; definitions are located in specific historical and situational contexts. Yet the solution to a definitional rupture should not be to avoid definitions. This is akin to hoping the problems will go away if ignored.

Definitions Matter

Far from being inconsequential, definitions matter. How terms are used can have serious implications for public policy and individual lives. In service learning, millions of dollars are at stake. For fiscal year 2008, more than \$828 million was allocated to the Corporation for National and Community Service, the primary grant making arm of the government for national service programs (Lordeman & Rudman, 2007, p. 1). Campus Compact now has more than 1,000 member campuses competing for funds, with 91 percent of campuses offering service learning as a part of the curriculum (Partridge, 2007, para. 2-3). While funding and finding resources was once a challenge for practitioners, service learning is now heavily funded by both government and private sources.

Combining two condensation symbols extends arguments into policy and philanthropy; it allows funders and legislators to believe they know what service learning “is” and support it.

Another practical implication of combining two terms with a history of entitlements is that the novel term can be associated with other terms. As a result, service learning has its associated impact built into the definition. Service learning, in two of the most prevalent definitions (i.e., ASLER and NCSTA), has the impact of the program as one of its key components. In the ASLER definition service learning “fosters a sense of caring,” in the NCSTA definition service learning “fosters civic responsibility.” The intended result of the program being built into the definition creates the ability of interlocutors to argue that a program that fails to foster caring or civic responsibility is, *by definition*, not service learning. Caring and civic responsibility are both broad terms that are also substantially entitled with multiple contexts. Service learning ends up as a “universal truth,” in part, because it cannot fail. Few programs fail under those broad terms and critics are silenced by a definitional move that allows proponents to disassociate with any programs that fall short of intended goals.

External critiques.

Advocates argue that critics “don’t understand” service learning or that critics are confusing service learning with other types of programs. A recent public argument between the president of Towson University and one of the

members of Towson's faculty centered on service learning and its effectiveness, but the argument has its roots in definition. In September, Robert Caret published an editorial promoting Learn and Serve Challenge Week, a program sponsored by the Corporation for National and Community Service. Throughout the short editorial, Caret conflates *service* and *service learning* and arguments about both terms. Using a broad conceptualization of service, Caret (2007a) offers examples of students performing service both on and off campus. Students do "field work" in the community (para. 3); "civic engagement" is part of the strategic plan (para. 3); students "volunteer while in school" (para. 4); students "organize events" on campus such as "Constitution Day" (para. 5); students work internships (para. 5); students have taken a graduation pledge "to take into account the social and environmental consequences of potential jobs" (para. 6); students perform "service projects" (para. 6); and, all of these things are examples of how "service learning" can help "higher education...make a real difference in the community" (para. 7).

Egger's reply, aptly titled "Service 'learning' reduces learning" (2007), argues that "charity" (para. 3) and "emotions" (para. 6) have no place in higher education. Instead, Egger argues, institutions should focus on "a decent liberal-arts education" (para. 3) to teach respect and civility. The solution is not "a makeshift substitute...that diverts attention and resources" (para. 3), while also decreasing "respect for society by implying that other...less fortunate" people "are owed one's time and effort" (para. 4). Egger argues that service learning

engenders “a sense of resentment and disdain...toward one’s fellow human beings” (para. 4). Additionally, a “knowledgeable professor” should be able to “convey, in a few minutes at most, the intellectual (‘learning’) content” of service learning (para. 6). Egger attempts to shift the frame of reference to the purpose of a university, which is to “train the mind” (para. 6) and reinforce “true liberal education” (para. 3). As Zarefsky argues, the “purpose of shifting the frame” is to try and to expand the scope of the dispute by making it relevant to others; in this case, to anyone who is interested in “true liberal education,” which presumably includes most of the faculty at Towson University (1997, p. 8).

Caret (2007b) responds to Egger’s arguments with one claim: Egger “confuses service-learning with volunteerism” (para. 1), despite the fact that Caret’s initial editorial about service learning references students’ volunteer work. Simultaneously, Caret’s response relies on a broad definition to demonstrate the relevance of service learning. He argues, “Recent surveys indicate that 18 to 24 year olds show the biggest increase in political interest and voting rates within the general population” and Caret believes this is the result of service learning and the “deeper understanding of the connection between self and society” that is a “part of the experience” (para. 2). Caret silences Egger’s critique by arguing that Egger misunderstands what service learning “is” and disassociates the term from volunteering. What Caret implies is that Egger’s criticisms would be valid if volunteering was the concept being discussed, but because the disputed term is service learning, the criticism, by definition, does not apply.

Reliance on broad terms also allows Caret to make inferential leaps about the effects of service learning. While it may be true that interest in politics is on the rise in the 18 to 24 year old cohort, there is no indication that service learning is responsible. Caret's argument relies on the idea that by definition service learning increases civic engagement, which may or may not be translated into voting behavior. Given that federal law prohibits the use of service learning to promote anything resembling partisan politics, it is a tenuous connection at best. Caret ignores the political and historical landscape at the time – one that includes the first African American and the first woman as viable candidates for the position of President of the United States, a prolonged war in two countries and a president with the lowest approval ratings of his administration. Egger (2008) responds with arguments that service learning is no more than “wrapping a veneer of learning over community service” (p. 183).

Ultimately, the arguments about service learning provide insight into a larger discussion of the goals of education and whether or not it needs to be reformed. Egger argues that there are specific political definitions behind *service* and *learning* that indicate the political intentions of advocates. Egger outlines a definition of service and learning from an economic perspective, where “all assets provide flows of services” and “everyone learns, inevitably, from on-the-job experience,” yet “this service is the antithesis of that of service-learning, and neither is this its learning.” Egger also takes advocates to task for their use of “human and community needs” demonstrating that the concept is unclear but

Egger is certain it does not include needs “met by the labor services of the student who is a clerk at Wal-Mart” (p. 184). Additionally, Egger argues that he is not confusing service learning with volunteering because “it isn’t volunteering if it is done for course credit or as a requirement to graduate, any more than if it were done for money” (p. 185). Egger elucidates a number of other arguments about the definition of service learning, including failed attempts to differentiate the concept from internships (p. 186), that service is a means to an end to serve the needs of students and higher education (p. 187), and the vagueness of concepts like “reflection” (p. 187) and “civic learning” (p. 188), which combine so that “its best-known goals seem so benevolent that no well-meaning scholar could dispute them” (p. 191). Egger wants advocates to clearly differentiate between types of service; otherwise, service learning has the effect “of surreptitiously transferring the educational validity” between programs. Caret’s initial conflation of multiple forms of service would seem to support Egger’s claim. Advocates pick and choose arguments for service learning by drawing on multiple vague concepts and then rely on argument by definition to escape criticisms. Whatever critics oppose, it is not *service learning*.

Internal critiques.

Service learning practitioners also fail to critique their practices from within. Because advocates fought for so long to get service learning accepted by educational institutions and governments, practitioners created a group that

offered “unconditional acceptance,” rather than coalescing around a concept that is open to critique. As Cruz states, “If we cannot let loose those profound disagreements” about definitions and usages of service and learning, “we cannot further develop and deepen our thinking on any of our issues” (quoted in Stanton et al., 1999, p. 215). Schine argues that service learning advocates have failed to address their own “warts” and “failures” because it would allow people outside the field to capitalize on the failures and “destroy the movement as a result” (quoted in Stanton et al., 1999, p. 216). Yet, as the Egger and Caret conflict shows, that result is already beginning to happen.

As Butin has argued, it is the lack of introspection and self-critique that has made service learning so vulnerable to outside interpretations of the field and its practices (2006b, p. 477). For Butin, service learning is “in a double bind.” By proclaiming itself a universal and neutral practice, it attempts to avoid political attacks; however, service learning still tries to impart an ideological agenda of educational reform (2006b, pp. 485-86). Butin continues, “Seemingly neutral principles are thus used strategically to promote one’s specific ideological agenda.” This is “what the service-learning movement is attempting to do with ‘civic engagement.’ But in attempting to hold the (imaginary) center, such strategizing in fact politicizes the term in question” (p. 486). Butin concludes with the idea that service learning needs to begin to critique its own limits. He suggests that a separate discipline be created, called “community studies,” which would encompass scholarship that is centered in the community, including

service learning. Once it has been established as a discipline, the community becomes the “mode of inquiry rather than...a political project” (p. 493). It also “allows, in the safety of disciplinary parameters, scholars to debate and define themselves and their field” (p. 493).

Strategic maneuvering.

Butin’s goal is admirable; he attempts to reframe the questions of institutionalizing service learning to force practitioners to come to grips with what is that would be institutionalized. From an argument perspective, he is challenging the “user of the definition...to defend it” (Zarefsky, 2006, p. 406). Service learning proponents have failed to acknowledge their own assumptions and support their assertions, which “violates one or more of the rules of critical discussion” (Zarefsky, 2006, p. 406). Butin does not argue the merits of service learning, but instead asks proponents to examine the “derailment of strategic maneuvering” (Zarefsky, 2006, p. 407). Yet, as Zarefsky demonstrates with his example of “torture,” claims of this sort require the proponent to accept the rule as valid (p. 407). If the proponent does not accept the rule, the interlocutors depend on the audience’s interpretation of the rule and its validity. For Butin, the audience is also the proponents. While there is a larger audience of government officials, higher education administrators and other faculty members, the larger audience does not have its interests served by critiquing service learning and reforming higher education.

In the formation of Campus Compact, university presidents felt they were publicizing current efforts in institutions, not reforming institutions. Government officials expanded notions of national service to include service learning, to serve their own interests of demonstrating action on “community needs” like poverty. As Zarefsky points out, “If a particular audience does not follow the rule, the protagonist could avoid the charge altogether” (p. 407), which is what happens to Butin’s argument. Service learning practitioners ignore Butin’s claims; the audience does not accept the rule violation because in many cases practitioners accept the current definitions or think any definition is too limiting. Butin also attempts to argue that service learning is a viable concept and should be expanded, thus trying to exploit the audience’s commitment to the concept and make his arguments more accepted (Zarefsky, 2006, p. 408).

The problem is not solely that the term is politicized, as Butin claims; instead, it is that many practitioners and advocates refuse to admit that the term is value-laden. Service learning advocates have allowed other people to define the values taught, rather than admitting the values within the term and the movement, allowing critics to set the limits of the debate. Conservative critics argue that service learning is nothing more than liberalism in disguise. If service learning practitioners do not admit the values within the term, the term becomes vague and ambiguous, allowing critics to negotiate the concept to fit their arguments. In an attempt to shift eras and political philosophies, service learning

has weakened the foundations that advocates relied upon. Yet Butin's arguments ignore the primary cause of the dispute: defining service learning.

As long as the definition of the term remains unresolved, critics will attack what they perceive as service learning and advocates will argue the attacks misunderstand service learning. It is not enough to make clear whose interests are being served or what ideology is present; service learning must be defined. Interlocutors and audiences must agree on what is being discussed before the costs and benefits can be elucidated. The definitional rupture must be resolved for Butin's arguments to gain traction. Service learning cannot be "institutionalized" in education until proponents come to an agreement about how the term should be used and what sense of *service learning* they are discussing.

Chapter Four: A Return to Pragmatism

Rather than definitions that seek to identify some essence inherent to service learning, the term needs to be defined pragmatically. Attempts to shift from the philosophies of service learning “pioneers” to a set of neutral criteria have failed to resolve the definitional problems that have plagued proponents. All definitions are political and no definitions are absolutely correct. There are only definitions that are better or worse for varying purposes and contexts. Attempting to choose a set of neutral criteria is not possible; the choices that are made are a result of an individual’s experiences, beliefs, and values. The choices I have made in defining the term reflect my experiences with service learning programs and my research into the history of service learning, the definitions that are used, and the theory that is evolving.

Examining the needs and interests of the various constituencies that use the term, as well as how it has been used historically, offers a chance to create a definition of service learning that allows the concept to advance beyond arguments based in definition. The history of service learning, both its purposes and the philosophies behind it are contested. One historical connection that deserves greater emphasis is the link to Dewey’s notions of experience and education. Because service learning has a historical linkage to Dewey’s philosophies of experience and education, I suggest a return to service learning’s

pragmatic beginnings. The return to pragmatism is twofold: first is a return to Dewey's initial ideas about education, experience and democracy, and second is an attempt to reach a pragmatic way of using of the term in multiple contexts.

The Future of Service Learning

The political landscape of service learning is changing once again. With roots in societal change, the advent of government involvement transformed a small-scale movement into a multi-billion dollar enterprise. During the 2008 presidential election, service and service learning became concepts that candidates from both of the major political parties could agree on. In September, 2008, presidential candidates John McCain and Barack Obama attended the ServiceNation Summit. The Summit gave the candidates an opportunity to join together and elucidate their views on the role of citizenship and service. The goal of the Summit was to announce a campaign to encourage one million Americans to engage in service by 2020 (ServiceNation, n.d., para. 3). The Summit brought political leaders together from both parties, as well as corporate and nonprofit CEOs, including Time Magazine's managing editor Richard Stengel and the president of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, Vartan Gregorian; each of these people shared the common purpose of increasing opportunities for national service and service learning (ServiceNation, n.d., para. 5). At the Summit, Senator Orrin Hatch, a Republican, and Caroline Kennedy (standing in for Senator Ted Kennedy, a Democrat) announced the bipartisan Serve America

Act, which created the largest government commitment to service since John F. Kennedy, with service learning as a key portion of the legislation (ServiceNation, n.d., para. 5).

Once in office, President Obama encouraged Congress to pass the Serve America Act and it was signed into law on April 21, 2009. The bill provides nearly \$6 billion during fiscal years 2010 through 2014 for service entities, including AmeriCorps and four new corps: a Clean Energy Corps to encourage energy efficiency and conservation; an Education Corps to help increase student engagement, achievement, and graduation; a Healthy Futures Corps to improve health care access; and a Veterans Service Corps to enhance services for veterans. The new law tripled the number of AmeriCorps members to 250,000 from 75,000 and increased the amount of the education award service members receive for their work (Scott, 2009, para. 4). It also created a designation for institutions of higher education, called Campus of Service. The designation is awarded by the Corporation of National and Community Service to institutions that “have demonstrated a commitment to service, service-learning and community engagement.” To demonstrate this commitment, institutions must provide data on the “number of service-learning courses, percentage of federal work study placements in the community, percentage of students engaged in community service, and programs that encourage or assist students to pursue careers in public service” (Campus Compact, 2009, para. 3). Institutions receiving the designation, a limit of 25 each year, will receive funding to

“disseminate service-learning models and information on best practices”
(Campus Compact, 2009, para. 4).

If institutionalization is a goal for service learning advocates, now is the time to act. Practitioners must start the hard work of determining what it is that counts and when it counts, which they have not yet done. Multiple definitions are accepted and internal criticisms of programs, practices, philosophies, or theoretical backgrounds are rare. For example, as a part of a recent interview Cathryn Berger Kaye, a frequently cited author, speaker, and service learning consultant, was asked what has been learned – both good and bad - about service learning. Kaye’s responded, “Everything I have learned is all good.” (Character Counts, 2009, para. 1). When asked about the most common barriers to service learning, Kaye argued there are no barriers; it is supported by President Obama, by Obama’s secretary of education, and through government funding (Character Counts, 2009, para. 5). Most service learning conferences are similar. The focus is on practice rather than research or theory. Participants share program descriptions but rarely discuss problems in implementation or the types of experience that were created. Service learning practitioners present very little public reflexivity about the programs they implement and the assumptions behind them.

In his plenary talk at the 2007 Michigan Service-Learning Institute, the assistant dean of education at Cambridge College and service learning scholar, Dan Butin made several arguments about the limits and possibilities of service

learning and its institutionalization in higher education. He warned again that if service learning advocates do not begin a critical examination from within, service learning becomes more vulnerable to attack by allowing external critics to set the terms of the argument. Because service learning advocates have allowed everything to be service learning, it has allowed critics to broadly portray the liberal intentions of program supporters. Continuing in the work that Butin started with his work on the limits of service learning (2006b), I propose a return to the roots of service learning, in hopes of finding a pragmatic solution to disputes about service learning, definitional, political, or otherwise. By re-examining John Dewey's notions of experience, education, and society, I offer three usages of the term service learning and discuss the interrelations between each sense: as philosophies about education, as a program description, and as a field of study.

Dewey and Education

For Dewey, experience was a central part of his philosophy. In Dewey's use of the term, experience was "familiarity with a matter of practical concern, based on repeated past acquaintance or performance" (Murphy, 1990, p. 64). Dewey experimented with his theories on education and democracy through the Laboratory School, which he viewed as a possible ideal society for students to experience at an early age. Dewey intended for students to use his school as a laboratory for testing ideas about democracy and discussing the pressing

problems facing society. Education was his way of reforming society to promote the type of participatory democracy that he imagined. Dewey wanted to create a method of education that all could share and participate in, not just elites. He drew hope from the public school system, which “destroyed the idea that learning is properly a monopoly of the few who are predestined by nature to govern social affairs” (1916, p. 300). Education, for Dewey, had the potential to be a liberatory practice of social change; however, because all experiences were not equally enriching Dewey identified two criteria by which to judge an experience: continuity and interaction.

Dewey’s principle of continuity.

The principle of the continuity of experience provides the first criterion by which the quality of experience can be assessed for its educative value. This assessment goes beyond the present quality of the experience in order to determine its effect on growth and development, the value of future experiences, and the direction in which the experience is leading (1938b, pp. 28-9). While Dewey argued, “every experience lives on in further experience,” he outlined the task of the educator as selecting “the kind of present experiences that live fruitfully and creatively in subsequent experiences” specifying the direction of students’ growth (1938b, pp. 16-17). Continuity takes place in every experience, but “the quality of the present experience influences the way the principle applies” (Dewey, 1938b, p. 30). The present experience can push someone into

a state of low development, which can limit capability for further growth (Dewey, 1938b, p. 31). The experience that an educator should strive for is one that “arouses curiosity, strengthens initiative, and sets up desires and purposes that are sufficiently intense” to assist people during low periods in their lives (Dewey, 1938b, p. 31).

Dewey’s principle of interaction.

The principle of interaction provides the second criterion by which to interpret the quality of the experience. Dewey argued it was necessary for the internal elements of experience to be balanced with the objective aspects (1938b, p. 39). The trouble with traditional educational models, according to Dewey, is not that they privilege objective aspects over internal ones; rather, traditional models did not account for the internal factors impact on the experience. The educational value of an experience was determined by both internal and external elements and the necessary “interaction” between the two; this interaction formed what Dewey called a “situation.” Individuals live in a “series of situations” because “an experience is always what it is because of a transaction taking place between an individual and what, at the time, constitutes his environment” (1938b, p. 41). Because interaction is part of the situation, the concept is dialectical - it leads to the corollary interaction between the subject and the environment.

The power of Dewey's theory of experience was that the two principles operated in tandem, taking into consideration the temporal dimension of both the internal and external aspects of experience. What an individual has "learned in the way of knowledge and skill in one situation becomes an instrument of understanding and dealing effectively with the situations" that follow (Dewey, 1938b, p. 42). The pedagogical task that results from this theory is daunting. What Dewey envisioned was education as an experience with democracy and social life.

Toward A Pragmatic Definition

Dewey and other pragmatists believe that knowledge is not discovered by penetrating into the objective essence of reality and representing it accurately; instead, it is created by sharing experiences through conversations in which individuals with interests and needs attempt to justify particular knowledge claims in language systems that have prescribed norms and meanings. In this view, knowledge is made when interlocutors can reach agreement about a claim within common norms, conventions and standards of evidence. Knowledge becomes "a product of dialogue, contention, and justification. It is substantive, hard-won, and always open to reconsideration" (Liu, 1995, p. 9). In contrast to Cartesian dualism, pragmatism centers epistemological concerns on how well knowledge claims work in particular contexts. The ability for knowledge claims to work can depend not only on justifications, but also the audience it is being offered to and the circumstances under which it is offered.

In service learning, interlocutors move back and forth between various meanings of the term and it can require someone fluent in the knowledge claims to understand the context in which the term is being used. I outline three usages of the term that all serve different, but sometimes overlapping purposes. By clarifying the usage of the term contextually, I hope to contribute to a larger conversation about service learning – not only how the term should be used in various contexts, but what the community of language users hope to achieve in their usages of the term. First, I discuss *service learning as philosophies about education*. It was often in this sense that early practitioners used the term. For those who “named” service learning, what they were doing was not necessarily focused on improved learning outcomes, but rather the experiences that were gained by everyone involved. Relying on the works of John Dewey and Paulo Freire, people who subscribed to a philosophy of service learning wanted to create a continuity of experience that would contribute to lasting societal change. The second sense is *service learning as a program description*. In this usage, I lump together academic and community service learning because both have the same purpose – combining learning with service opportunities. The third usage I outline is *service learning as a field of study*. This usage is less developed in literature about service learning because of the historical usages of the term to describe a philosophy and programs. However, service learning is at a crossroads. Scholars are beginning to study service learning as a theoretical concept; some of these scholars have never implemented a service learning

program. I argue that now is a crucial time, historically and politically, for service learning to develop as an academic discipline.

Service learning as philosophies about education.

There are several elements in Dewey's philosophy that service learning advocates draw from and others that are overlooked. Dewey's notions of reforming education appealed to early practitioners, who often saw "social justice" or "reform" as their ultimate goal as educators. Many of the "pioneers" felt Dewey was correct in his idea that traditional education was too rigid and static, and that education needed an experiential aspect. Advocates were looking for more than another field work experience; they wanted students to have an experience that would meet the principle of continuity and grow the concept of social change in their students, which would influence students' future actions. Social change and an experiential aspect are two of the attributes that should remain constant when describing service learning as a philosophy about education. The third attribute is that learning that occurs affects everyone through active participation in the experience.

When Ramsey and Sigmon coined the term service learning, the program it described looked very different than programs today; yet, using the term to describe a critical pedagogy comes closest to the original intent. Ramsey and Sigmon attempted to describe both the programs they had implemented in Tennessee and with the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), but what

made the programs unique were the philosophies behind the programs. Sigmon explained in 1979 that “since the SREB days, I have viewed all the active partners in a service-learning experience as learners” (p. 10). Similar to Dewey’s philosophy about “objective observers” and “active participants,” Sigmon believed that the learning experience was mutually shared by everyone involved in the situation, and each participant was affected by the experience, whether a student, faculty member, agency supervisor, or service recipient (1979, p. 10).

As service learning has changed over the years, the emphasis has shifted to a cause and effect model with a focus on assessment of learning outcomes, an attribute that can be eliminated in this context of service learning. Two factors contributed to this shift: 1) government and private funding agencies increasingly rely on assessment to demonstrate that money is well-spent; and, 2) educational institutions are being asked to prove the effectiveness of their methods. Dewey (1931/1998) argued against social science studies that existed for the purposes of “fact-finding” about “cause and effect” relationships, such as those done by scholars to demonstrate the impact of service learning. Instead, he argued for studies that attempted to bring about certain effects because studies about causes could not account for motives. Current attempts to assess service learning programs are often detached and isolated from the lived experiences of participants, and thus “remain a miscellaneous pile of meaningless items” (p. 370), yet service learning as philosophies about education strives to bring about effects like societal change. Dewey’s solutions to causal models were sustained

intelligent inquiry and the reformation of educational institutions to serve the needs of society, which both fit well in this sense of service learning.

For service learning programs, the study of causal relationships closely follows the government's definition of service learning and the subsequent funding of programs. In order to receive funding, practitioners have to measure and assess learning outcomes to demonstrate the efficacy of the program. Rather than focusing on Deweyan notions of educational reform, these studies compile statistics that rarely reflect participants' internal and external experiences yet serve a practical function for publicly funded agencies. The ability to demonstrate that a majority of participants found an experience meaningful does not help educators understand what about the experience was meaningful, why some participants did not find it meaningful, or whether the experience has continuity. Because service learning projects are typically short-term and the programs are so diverse, it is difficult to make comparisons across programs to assess the impact of service learning beyond the individual program. However, these types of statistics are beneficial to funders seeking to justify their expenditures.

As a critical pedagogy, service learning should be less concerned with cause and effect models of education. In this usage of the term, the focus should be about the experience and on the principles Dewey has outlined – continuity and interaction. While data may be needed to prove claims of program effectiveness, people who subscribe to service learning as a set of philosophies

do not have to rely on causal models but instead can focus on the experience. Using the term service learning to describe philosophies does not prevent individuals from also implementing service learning programs or using service learning as a field of study. Substantial overlap can and should occur.

Advocates of service learning in this context describe a way of viewing the world, with social justice or societal change as the end result – concepts not easily quantified or measured, but in this sense the concepts do not need to be quantitatively assessed. People who ascribe to service learning as philosophies about education use the term to mean a critical pedagogy with the following attributes: 1) education should be an experience, not rote memorization; 2) learning experiences are shared by everyone involved because everyone is an active participant; and, 3) education can bring about certain effects and the ultimate goal of education should be societal change. But removing the goal of social change from service learning as a program description brings about several benefits.

Service learning as a program description.

The key difference between service learning as a critical pedagogy and service learning as a description for a program is service learning does not require a particular philosophy about teaching, learning, or service in order to be counted. Using most of the analytical definition the government already created, programs can meet certain characteristics to qualify their programs as service

learning. Four minor changes to the government's definition could allow many definitional disputes to be resolved. First, rather than a method, service and learning should be defined as a program. Calling it a method allows it to be confused with service learning as philosophies about education or a critical pedagogy. While using it to describe a method and philosophies benefits practitioners who subscribe to both the method and the philosophies, it hinders efforts to include disciplines and practitioners who do not view education as an experience or that social change should be the goal of education. Second, removing the goal of "civic responsibility" from the definition would allow programs to break from a value-laden impact. The only impact programs should be required to demonstrate is the application of skills and knowledge learned in the classroom to the real world. "Civic responsibility" is too often used to describe government efforts to get poor people to "help themselves" out of poverty – an abdication of the government's "civic responsibility."

The third change to the government's definition should be to remove the term "thoughtfully" to describe the organized service. "Thoughtfully" does not seem to add any value to the term "organized service," and may indicate organized service should be thought of in a particular way. For early practitioners, "thoughtfully organized service" would mean interaction between white, middle-class college students meeting and helping poor people. For the government, "thoughtfully organized service" is teaching "civic responsibility." Both contexts of the term are defined by what the creators of the definition

“thought” of service. Finally, section A, subpoint ii should add an “or” so that programs could take place in schools, or community service programs *or* with the community. To distinguish this usage of the term, users of the terms should begin to call it “service and learning” to reflect the dialectical interaction between the two terms. This conceptualization would move beyond the “either/or” distinctions that have hindered theoretical and practical efforts that rely on the terms. It clearly expresses interests in the combination of the two terms, held in equal balance.

Additionally, the Corporation for National and Community Service already uses the “and” in its grant making for service learning, i.e., Learn and Serve America; definitional association with the program could help users “recognize” the terms and its entitlements, thereby assisting with denotative conformity. In some ways, the addition of “and” serves the same function as the hyphen does for Sigmon. The use of “and” makes explicit the claims that the concept is uniquely created through the combination of the terms; a hyphen can be perceived as a stylistic choice as it is not used consistently across the literature. The new definition would read:

The term ‘service and learning’ means a program-

(A) under which students or participants learn and develop through active participation in organized service that-

- (i) is conducted in and meets the needs of a community;
- (ii) is coordinated with an elementary school, secondary school, institution of higher education, or community service program, or with the community; and

(B) that—

(i) is integrated into and enhances the academic curriculum of the students, or the educational components of the community service program in which the participants are enrolled; and

(ii) provides structured time for the students or participants to reflect on the service experience. (adapted from the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993, p. 23)

Calling programs “service and learning” meets the needs of a number of users. Separating programs linguistically from the philosophies, albeit a minor change, allows users to claim the programs without having to claim the philosophies behind initial programs, such as Ramsey and Sigmon’s. However, a person could simultaneously follow the philosophies *and* implement service and learning programs. Higher education institutions can continue to operate programs through centers that offer faculty development programs and service opportunities, a sort of combination between Teaching and Learning offices and a Dean of Students office. Programmatically-oriented centers can continue to collect data about student and community participation that fulfill requirements for agencies like Learn and Service America, but also are increasingly necessary for private funding agencies like the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

It also allows space for programs that define “community needs” broadly. For example, a program that works with a state’s department of natural resources teaching biology students to test water quality for human use meets a community need that would not be currently considered service learning because there is no “community organization” involved. Students are meeting a

community need for safe drinking water and simultaneously applying concepts learned in a classroom, meeting two of the criteria for service learning programs. Colleges and universities could work with government agencies to create training programs using graduate students to teach displaced workers how to do environmental clean-up, meeting a current political priority for creating green jobs and encouraging scholars to see action in the community as a necessary part of their academic life. Additionally, programs that do not require "civic responsibility" or "caring for others" as goals would allow a broad range of research-intensive disciplines to become more involved.

Another result of separating service learning as a philosophy from service and learning is the removing the hidden requirement for "border crossing" from programs. Early service learning advocates made assumptions about their students and the internal elements of experience and presupposed that their students were "White, sheltered, middle-class, single, without children, unindebted, and between the ages of 18 and 24" (Butin, 2006b, p. 481). While that may have been true of higher education in the 1960s, later practitioners continued to privilege experiences that put students into contact with the "other" so they could learn (Wicks-Ortega, 2002, para. 10). While contact with the "other" is not necessarily a bad idea, it should not be the primary basis on which to judge an experience. The types of border crossings that occur are based on advocates' assumptions about their students and about communities. Low income people of color go to college, but I have yet to find a program that sends

students of that demographic group to tutor in suburban schools that are primarily White. Throughout the 1990s, the service learning literature is replete with discussions of how students come to better understand themselves and cultural differences without accounting for differences among students and their lived experiences (e.g., Eyler & Giles, 1999; Furco, 1996; Stanton et al., 1999).

As the face of higher education changes, these assumptions have significant consequences. In 2004, 34 percent of all undergraduates were over the age of 25 and 40 percent of undergraduates were part-time students (Butin, 2006b, p. 481). More and more students balance education with jobs, family and other personal obligations, leaving little time for service learning. At the same time, more educational institutions are implementing mandatory service learning as a requirement for graduation. Initiatives like the newest Carnegie classification for “Community Engagement and Outreach” and the government’s “Campus of Service” privilege higher education institutions that require service and service learning for students. Separating *service learning as philosophies* and its historical notions about contact with the “other” from *service and learning* (a program designation) can help practitioners adapt programs to the changing demographics of higher education and recognize the diversity of experiences that students bring to programs.

Service learning practitioners are just beginning to address what happens when the served becomes the server. Because many service learning programs are premised in a philosophy that values “border crossing,” program coordinators

have been thus far unable to deal with how programs need to change based on the lived experiences of students that are poor, are not white, have children, etc. Using a pragmatic definition of service and learning, practitioners could create new ways of implementing programs that meet changing societal needs. Programs could involve parents, as students, volunteering to tutor at their children's schools or find ways to involve children in service and learning alongside their parents. Students who work for nonprofit or government organizations could use their employment as a way of meeting graduation requirements for service and learning. A pragmatic definition recognizes and accounts for an ever-changing political and historical landscape. This usage of service and learning meshes well with a president who has already in some ways begun to define community needs in a broader sense for service and learning. Obama's creation of the Clean Energy Corps already defines the environment as a "community need," extending the definition of community beyond the previous narrow confines of race, geographic location, and income.

In order to survive in the current economic climate existing programs, like Teach for America (TFA), may need to change as well. TFA programs primarily take place in urban school districts and often send middle to high income students into schools filled lower income students of color. As the school report cards mandated by No Child Left Behind indicate, urban school districts are not the only districts that are unable to meet academic yearly progress goals; yet, the hidden requirement of "border crossing" in service and learning programs

prevents programs from expanding to meet “community needs” in suburban school districts. Recently, the Boston Teachers Union voted in favor of the Boston School Department breaking its contract with the TFA program (Vaznis, 2009, para. 7). Citing worsening economic conditions and the potential layoff of hundreds of teachers, Richard Stutman, the union’s president, emphasized that if current teachers were not facing layoffs the union would not object to the program (Vaznis, 2009, para. 27). Boston’s experience is similar to Detroit’s, which ended its program with Teach for America five years ago amidst budget cutbacks (Veznis, 2009, para. 15). While some suburban school districts are also facing layoffs and cuts, others may be facing unmet needs. Broadening what counts as service and learning can help meet the needs of all communities, rather than those that rely on traditional assumptions about the server and the served.

However, definitions are never neutral and a definition divorced from the ideology that it is rooted in may very well cause larger disputes. If there is no hidden philosophy of border crossing in service and learning, there may be consequences that some advocates of service learning as a philosophy may not like. Under this broader conception of service and learning, conservative Christian universities could begin a service and learning program that would use Divinity students to teach interpretations of the Bible to groups of children at community centers or to counsel women considering abortions. While there are legal reasons the government would choose to not fund such programs, there is

no reason religious-based programs could not count as service and learning. Again, it is important to realize that separating the program from a particular ideology by definition creates a new set of possibilities that may not be palatable to many service learning practitioners, but supports the goals of inclusivity. Additionally, a definition that is not dependent upon a particular philosophy relates well to Dewey's ideals for democracy and education. Service and learning programs need to improve recognition of the internal aspects of experience and how interaction between internal and external aspects occurs. Democracy is richer when many opinions and experiences are expressed. Service and learning needs to advance programs that can create discussions about concepts like "community needs" and "public good." What is missing in current usages of the term service learning is a space for those conversations to take place.

Service learning as a field of study.

While Lasky concludes the "benefits of service-learning are clear" (2000, para. 4), the studies that have been conducted thus far are limited to the efficacy of individual programs. One of the most important parts of the Serve America Act is the requirement for the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) to conduct a 10-year, large-scale, longitudinal study on the effects of service learning – the first of its kind (Campus Compact, 2009, para. 8). CNCS will presumably continue to use the term as it is defined in the National and

Community Service Trust Act of 1993, as it currently uses this definition to determine what “counts” as service learning for funding purposes. Yet now could be a crucial time for service learning advocates to resolve the disputes about what constitutes service learning. Rather than limiting the examination to government-funded programs, CNCS should assess programs implemented outside of agency involvement. The agency should also include a comparative assessment of internships, co-operative, and field education programs.

As the government has become involved in service learning, the lines between the various types of programs have started to blur. Internships can be unpaid, meet community needs through work in nonprofit organizations, and require a paper reflecting on how theories learned in a classroom have been applied in the real world – three of the common criteria for service learning as a program. Additionally, students involved in service learning receive a form of payment (i.e., academic credit or a stipend) dependant on the quality of their work. Yet key questions remain 40 years after the term was coined, which CNCS and service learning scholars can begin to answer: Are all of these programs service learning? If not, how do they differ? If these programs meet the criteria for service learning under the government’s definition, should the programs also receive government funding? If not, why not? A comparative study of current service and learning programs, internships, and other forms of experiential education can serve as the basis for a scholarly conversation about the criteria for programs, program goals, and how programs are experienced.

The current government definition attempts to balance the need for both a breadth and depth in service and learning programs, but does not examine programs that exist outside of its definition. Some practitioners use qualifiers to delineate between programs, such as “academic service learning” or “community service learning.” The qualifiers are meant to identify where programs are organizationally located and are typically used by people involved with “community service learning” as a way to differentiate their programs from ones that offer academic credit. Using criteria like “where a program began” creates more superficial divisions between people who may be implementing programs that are similar in every other way. Broadening the programs that CNCS will examine can help practitioners focus on similarities rather than arguing over differences.

Another crucial area of study is perceptions of service learning aggregated by identity characteristics. For example, there is little evidence about how gender roles may influence the service and learning experience. If the CNCS study were to examine how low-income, African American males view service compared to middle-income, Caucasian females, the results may begin to help us understand why participation rates are so low in some demographic groups and so high in others. In April, 2009, right before Obama signed the Serve America Act into law, journalist Andrea Stone argued that the millennial generation is more committed to service than previous generations because of their experiences with 9/11, youth service programs, and an emphasis on

teamwork in education (p. E1). How will the past experiences of a new generation change service learning programs? How will future generations be impacted by the millennial generation's beliefs and attitudes about service and learning? The CNCS longitudinal study can add to the body of knowledge that exists about the effects of service and learning on retention and graduation rates, but more is necessary.

Service learning does not quite exist yet as an academic discipline; yet, there are a growing number of scholars within higher education who study service learning. A substantial amount of overlap exists between "practitioners" and "scholars"; however, service learning as a field is beginning to see scholars who solely study service learning, from disciplines as diverse as teacher education (e.g., Butin), philosophy (e.g., Sheffield), cultural studies (e.g., Taylor), and this study using a rhetorical framework. Some of these scholars may be interested in service learning because of an affinity with the pedagogical philosophies; others may have experienced service and learning programs as students and wish to continue exploring the experiences they gained. Regardless of how scholars were introduced to service learning scholarship, the development of theory is an important step in the evolution of a discipline. In order to develop as a discipline in institution of higher education, much more must be done to nurture scholars and scholarship. *The Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning* is the only academic journal that focuses on service learning scholarship, and the books that tend to be published are either

descriptive of programs and best practices for implementation, or are quantitative studies about the effects of service learning. One notable exception is Dan Butin's (2005) edited book, *Service-Learning in Higher Education: Critical Issues and Directions*, which gathered emerging scholars to apply critical theory to service learning. This is not to say there are no other publishing outlets, but more must be done to encourage service learning scholarship. Butin's work offers hope to young scholars and many fields, such as philosophy and communication, offer the ability to use service learning as a text to be examined using traditional disciplinary methods.

Butin (2006a) has already suggested that service learning scholarship and theory be housed under the name "Community Studies," thus allowing for the umbrella to cover those scholars interested in relationships between universities or nonprofit organizations in communities, field and experiential education advocates, as well as service learning scholars. Butin's suggestion may work very well in some institutions where work in the community is highly valued; however, in order to remove itself from confusion with "community service," I suggest scholars continue to use the term service learning. If the term service learning is not broad enough to encompass connections with field and experiential education, scholars could use the term community-based education. Either of these terms maintains the linkages between service and learning that programs seek to implement.

Encouraging a discipline of service learning serves the goals of multiple constituents. First, it allows scholars to advance theory about service learning and develop a way for service learning practitioners to critically reflect on programs. A discipline could house both quantitative social scientists, who study the effects of service learning, as well as qualitative theorists who examine the use of metaphors in service learning. Ideally, scholars would combine qualitative and quantitative methods to gain a deeper understanding of the roles of language, culture, and society in service learning practice. Second, similar to Women's Studies, another discipline that crosses traditional academic boundaries, scholars could choose to identify as a service learning scholar, or study service learning from their traditional academic home. Joint appointments could be a crucial step in institutionalizing service learning as an academic discipline. The structures already exist in many institutions of higher education, in the form of centers and institutes.

Conferences also play a large part in the development of a discipline. Conferences can result in book collections and publications, and are also valuable in the tenure and promotion process. There are a number of organizations that already conduct large conferences on service learning (e.g., Department of Justice, Johnson Foundation, National Youth Leadership Council, and Youth Service America) and there seems little to prevent the addition of an academic track to begin to gather service learning scholars for a conversation. The problem with studying service learning from a particular discipline is finding

colleagues in other disciplines that are interested in similar questions. At least one attempt has been made to address the lack of research outlets. In June, 2009, the University of Minnesota will host the third annual conference for emerging scholars interested in studying K-12 service learning from a variety of perspectives. Similar initiatives should be encouraged for scholars interested in other forms of service learning, as philosophies about education, as higher education programs, and more.

Service learning as a field of study is a much different context than service learning as a program description. In the previous context, program funding eligibility is a matter of enforceable law. In academia, there is no way to enforce a definition; however, there does not need to be. In academia, scholars have the power to stipulate a particular definition of service learning and move on to the study. One of the benefits of service learning as a field of study is the power to create and then discuss particular definitions of service learning. As an academic discipline, service learning allows scholars to approach the topic from multiple historical and philosophical perspectives. Scholars could approach the subject because of an interest in social justice, citizenship education or Dewey's approach to education and experience. Researchers can include or exclude programs called internships, field work, and experiential education to see whether they believe it should "count" as service learning in program descriptions. Academics can try to persuade each other of the usefulness of particular definitions. It may be that the government's definition will need to

change again to reflect the programs that will be created for future generations. The point of creating a discipline is to create space for intellectual development among scholars, and to allow conflict and disagreement to exist, which can then inform and interact with the philosophy or programs. The value of defining the terms in multiple contexts can not be overstated. The categories are fluid enough to work in particular instances but also allow individuals to move among categories and exist in multiple categories simultaneously; yet, it does not constrain practitioners to identify with a particular ideal about the purpose of service learning (e.g., border crossing).

Conclusion

A history of the usage of the terms and the concepts the terms are meant to describe helps illustrate how definitions are used as justifications for particular knowledge claims. Rather than being a static concept, *service learning* has evolved over time and is dependent on situational contexts. Throughout the evolution of the term, and in part because of the evolution of the term, disputes over the definition have arisen. Interlocutors have used arguments by, from and about definitions to promote specific interests and agendas. Identification of the arguments allows the possibility of analysis and critique, thus doing as Zarefsky called for, and “redeeming and argumentative perspective on definition” (1997, p. 9).

Dewey's theories of experiential education, with its understanding that experience is social and communal and education is interactive and reciprocal, seems to favor the usage of the terms as a pedagogical philosophy that influences methods and programs within educational institutions and community organizations. Rather than holding the programs in comparison to internships and field work, this conceptualization of the terms could potentially encompass them. This sense of the terms addresses advocates' concerns that the possibilities for action would be constricted through definition. Additionally, using the terms in this way recognizes that education and experience are also not fixed concepts, and are constantly changing. Defining *service and learning* separate from the philosophies allows programs the flexibility to interact with changes in education, in democracy and in the world. Programs can continue to gain government funding under the guise of *service and learning*, while proponents can use the combined terms to advance their ideological goals of education reform. A return to Deweyan notions of experience and education within the context of forming a pragmatic definition helps make explicit the ideological claims of proponents who currently use the term *service learning*.

Service learning has much to offer participants, whether the users of the term are educators, policy makers, community organizers, students, or service recipients. As philosophies about education, as a program description and as a field of study, the term connotes an interest in learning that extends beyond the classroom and applies it to real-life situations. The goal of service learning as a

program must be to extend beyond its current narrow constructs of border crossing or civic education for the poor so they may “learn” to help themselves. For service learning as philosophies, advocates can continue their path to creating programs and teaching concepts that promote societal change and democratic practices. Service learning scholars and practitioners must learn to reflect on their own beliefs and experiences to understand the experiences they are creating for others. For service learning scholars, the challenge is to create a space where service learning can be “a mode of inquiry rather than” solely “a political project” (Butin, 2006b, p. 493). President Obama has already begun the conversation; it is up to service learning scholars and practitioners to decide to move beyond conflicts over rhetorical constructions of service learning, so we can begin to determine what service and learning have to offer democracy and community in this historic time.

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