

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Civic responsibility is comprised of actions and attitudes associated with democratic governance and social participation. Actions of civic responsibility can be displayed in advocacy for various causes. By advocating social issues or environmental concerns, people strengthen their commitment to their community as well as to their own individual citizenship (Weeks, 1998). Some attitudes related to civic responsibility include the intention to serve others, the belief that helping others is one's social responsibility, and the tolerance and appreciation of human differences (Markus, King, & Howard, 1993).

Students enrolled at institutions of higher education have the opportunity to transform their social interests into advocacy through personal connections with the community (Weeks, 1998). Higher education has been commissioned to teach the values of a democratic society. These democratic values honor individual diversity, the common good of the larger community, and the active enterprise of social improvement (American Council on Education, 1949; Wingspread, 1993). A variety of higher education policy statements have been written that discuss civic responsibility and the potential impact of social participation on students.

Historically, higher education has been viewed as a vehicle to promote holistic student development. Included in holistic development is the component of civic responsibility (American Council on Education, 1989). The Student Personnel Point of View (American Council on Education, 1989), An American Imperative: Higher Expectations for Higher Education (Wingspread, 1993), the Student Learning Imperative (American College Personnel Association, 1996), and the Declaration on the Civic Responsibility of Higher Education

(Elhrich, & Hollander, 1999) are policy statements that reflect the importance of civic responsibility in higher education.

Since World War II, higher education has placed more emphasis on basic freedoms and civic responsibility (American Council on Education, 1989). In 1949, the Student Personnel Point of View called for stronger forms of community involvement. College graduates were expected to be well-informed citizens more involved in their communities and prepared to lead the future of America. Institutions of higher education were given the responsibility to provide experiences that developed a firm sense of democracy in students (American Council on Education, 1989).

Almost 50 years later, a second piece of literature examined civic responsibility in higher education. This statement, An American Imperative: Higher Expectations for Higher Education (Wingspread, 1993), created a set of civic virtues that paralleled the values of the United States Constitution. Institutions of higher education were called to provide students with opportunities to experience society and then reflect on their experiences as an integral part of their education. These social experiences were to be provided through firsthand exposure to the community, politics, or business. Colleges and universities were challenged to graduate civic-minded students with a sensitivity toward the needs of their communities and empowerment to create social change (Wingspread, 1993).

A year later, the Student Learning Imperative (American College Personnel Association, 1996) proclaimed that college-educated people should possess a sense of civic responsibility. Institutions of higher education were challenged to provide both on and off-campus experiences to promote civic activities. Furthermore, this policy statement purported that students learned by

interacting in their environment, therefore, participation in community governance and self-reflection were suggested to increase learning (American College Personnel Association, 1994).

Most recently, the Declaration on the Civic Responsibility of Higher Education (Ehrlich & Hollander, 1999) was drafted. This document promotes the teaching of democratic skills through students' participation in roles of active citizenship. It challenged higher education to reinvigorate its civic mission with a recommitment to the ideals of democracy by engaging with the community in activities and teaching (Ehrlich & Hollander, 1999).

Although these policy statements express a desire for higher education to promote civic responsibility, most faculty members are trained in positivist research methods that discourage community participation in defining problems and gathering data (Checkoway, 1996). With faculty emphasis on traditional methods of knowledge acquisition, there is little attention given to developing the personal qualities needed for civic life, effective democratic self-government, and the ability to work collaboratively (Astin, 1998). Instruction is merely viewed as teachers being the providers of knowledge to passive students who are the recipients of that knowledge. These methods of research and instruction do not utilize actual experience for learning (Checkoway, 1996). Furthermore, there is seldom mention of civic responsibility in curriculum reform, and most higher education programs lack requirements that focus on issues of American civic life and democracy (Astin, 1998).

Regardless of what still has not been accomplished, higher education has the obligation to promote civic responsibility in students through curricular and co-curricular experiences (American Council on Education, 1949). One of the most effective methods of increasing citizenship participation and civic responsibility is through community service both inside and outside of the classroom. Community service can potentially provide a motivation for learning

and prepare students for citizenship. Interaction with the community can be used to foster critical thinking and encourage reflection on personal values. Reflection on service experiences can aid in learning how to deal with both cultural and personal differences. When community service is coupled with academic coursework, it can enhance student learning and compensate for deficits in traditional classroom pedagogy (Beckman, 1997).

Institutions of higher education have successfully promoted civic responsibility through co-curricular volunteer service programs and curricular service learning (SL) courses. Unlike SL, students who participate in non-academic volunteer service programs do not receive course credit or typically have a reflection process incorporated into their service experience. Volunteer programs tend to be strictly service oriented. Although there are benefits for the student who is serving and those being served, volunteer programs are not structured towards reciprocity as much as SL courses.

Instead, these programs are usually able to readily respond to student needs and are open to student initiatives. Volunteer programs also have the ability to be more responsive to community needs because they have more flexibility in solving community problems than SL courses. The service projects for SL courses are usually pre-determined at the beginning of a semester and not changed during the course (National Center for Service Learning, 1982).

In both volunteer service and SL, individuals participate in service projects that will benefit their community from which they derive no monetary compensation (Waterman, 1997). However, SL is distinguished from volunteerism by including academic coursework and the components of reflection and reciprocity. Coursework and reflection link the students experiences in relation to greater social and personal issues. Reciprocity of benefit provides a

connection with the students who are serving to the person or group being served (Kendall & Associates, 1990).

The concept of SL has been in existence for many years. In 1969, SL was defined by the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) as the accomplishment of tasks that meet genuine human needs in combination with conscious educational growth. SL blends two complex concepts: community action and efforts to learn from that action and connect what is learned to existing knowledge (Stanton, Giles, & Cruz, 1999). Kendall (1990), the former executive director of the National Society of Experiential Education (NSEE), notes that a good service learning program helps participants see their [service] questions in the larger context of issues of social justice and social policy - rather than in the context of charity (p.20).

SL is a form of experiential education that is employed to promote active citizenship through partnerships between communities and universities. Those partnerships create a connection between coursework and real life experiences (Parker-Gwin & Mabry, 1998). Experiential education is a pedagogy that differs from traditional education by rejecting the notion that truth is independent of knowing and argues that application, understanding, and mastery lead to the acquisition of knowledge (Dewey, 1938). Students learn by actively participation in the community instead of learning about social problems strictly in a classroom setting (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996).

Reflection is a key component in experiential education. It is a unifying learning process that replaces the dualistic tendencies of traditional education where the teacher is the authority figure who imparts knowledge to students via didactic methods (Kendall, 1990). Reflection is a process of mentally looking back on an experience and making meaning of the events in an individual's perception of his or her world. The process of reflection unites individuals with their

communities (Freire, 1970). The cycle of experience and reflection grounds all forms of experiential education and is a key component to educational programs that combine service and learning (Kendall & Associates, 1990).

SL courses differ from traditional education because they include the component of reflection. Reflection integrates what is learned at the SL site with the academic concepts. These reflections are then used as a foundation to understand, interpret, and analyze service experiences. Opportunities for reflection are woven throughout the SL course providing a living text from which student acquire knowledge.

In SL courses, reflection can be performed in a variety of ways. One form of reflection is reading literature and written materials such as case studies, government documents, and professional journals. Reading has the potential to increase the understanding of an issue and provide multiple perspectives (Eyler, Giles, & Schmiede, 1996).

Written exercises are also used as a means of reflection. Journals, reflective essays, portfolios, and grant proposals are a few ways to reflect through writing. Such exercises sharpen writing skills and the process of articulating structured thoughts. A piece of written work also provides a permanent record of the service experience that can be referred back to in the future (Eyler et al., 1996).

Reflection can also be accomplished by doing projects or activities. Self-directed activities such as simulations, role-plays, slide presentations, and program development projects engage multiple skills and are conducive to groups. Doing an activity is sometimes more effective for those that learn by hands-on experiences rather than academic exercises (Eyler et al., 1996).

Oral exercises are yet another way to reflect on an experience. Formal and informal discussions, focus groups, presentations, and cooperative learning provide reflection through speaking. Talking about a service experience allows expression with verbal and non-verbal behavior and practice for oral communication skills (Eyler et al., 1996).

Research shows that reflection provides a way for the service experience to continue even after the individual has left the work site. After performing service work, most people spend a considerable amount of time thinking about, talking about, or relating their service experience to other aspects of their life (Primavera, 1999).

It has also been found that the type of reflection is a predictor of outcomes related to SL. Written reflection is a significant predictor in most outcome measures related to stereotyping, tolerance, personal development, closeness to faculty, problem solving, critical thinking, and perspective transformation. Also, some outcome measures of learning, understanding and application are predicted by written reflection (Giles & Eyler, 1999).

Reflection through discussions is a significant predictor of most outcome measures related to closeness to faculty, learning, understanding and application. Some outcome measures related to the characteristics of personal development, citizenship, problem solving, critical thinking and perspective transformation are also predicted by reflection through discussions. (Eyler & Giles, 1999).

In-class reflection and talking to others about their service experiences can have an impact on students' learning. Students who reflect in-class at least once a week have higher personal social values and perceived academic benefit from the SL than students who only reflect once or twice a month. Of the students who reflect in-class, those that perform on-going

and summative written exercises have positive changes in personal social values and civic attitudes (Mabry, 1998).

Students who reflect outside of class, at least weekly, have significant changes in personal social values. Discussing service experiences with faculty, site supervisors, and peers contributed to significant gains in civic attitudes when compared to students who only discussed their service experience with their peers (Mabry, 1998).

There is a fair number of studies related to service learning and reflection. However, no research was found that examined the pedagogy, frequency, and environment of reflection in relation to civic attitudes by student characteristics and interest in future service.

Purpose of the Study

This study was designed to examine civic attitudes of SL students in relation to demographic variables, frequency of reflection by pedagogy and environment, and the likelihood of future service. The student characteristics used were gender, class standing, and grade point average (GPA). The reflection pedagogy were written activities and discussions, and the reflection environments were in-class and out-of-class. Future service was defined by continued service at SL site and future community service in general. Data were collected by administering the Service-Learning Participant Profile (pre-test) and the Service-Learning Evaluation (post-test) (Virginia Tech Service-Learning Center, 1996) to students enrolled in SL courses during the Spring 1999 semester. Student characteristics were taken from the pre-test. The post-test provided the information regarding the frequency, pedagogy, and environment of reflection. Information related to civic attitudes and interest in future service was also provided by the post-test survey.

For the purposes of this study, the term civic attitudes has an operational definition that consists of a combination of scores. The civic attitude score was created using four post-test items that elicited information regarding the intentions and beliefs related to serving others and the appreciation of human difference. These items were added together and divided by four to create a mean civic attitude score for each respondent.

Composite scores were also created for each type of reflection. The written reflection score combines responses from post-test items that elicit information on whether the participant wrote about service activities by keeping a journal, doing a paper or report, and participating in a listserv or on-line discussion. The discussion score combines responses from post-test items that elicit information on whether the participant discussed service activities with other students, site supervisors, or course instructors. Both the written reflection composite score and the discussion reflection composite score summed the responses of post-test items. This sum was used to tally the number of times each pedagogy type was employed.

Research Questions

There were ten research questions that guided this study.

1. What is the relationship between civic attitude scores and the amount of variety in written reflection pedagogy?
2. For students who perform written reflection, what are the associations between civic attitude scores and gender, class year, and GPA?
3. What is the relationship between civic attitude scores and the amount of variety in discussion reflection pedagogy?
4. For students who perform discussion reflection, what are the associations between civic attitude scores and gender, class year, and GPA?

5. What is the relationship between civic attitude scores and the frequency of performing out-of-class reflection?
6. For students who perform out-of-class reflection, what are the associations between civic attitude scores and gender, class year, and GPA?
7. What is the relationship between civic attitude scores and the frequency of performing in-class reflection?
8. For students who perform in-class reflection, what are the associations between civic attitude scores and gender, class year, and GPA?
9. What is the relationship between continued service at the service learning site and civic attitude scores?
10. What is the relationship between the likelihood of future community service participation and civic attitude scores?

Significance of the Study

The present study had significance for both future practice and future research. In terms of practice, staff at SL centers could find the data collected in this study to be helpful. The findings could provide information about how the frequency and pedagogy of reflection relates to civic attitudes among the students in SL courses. Service-Learning Center staff might use this information to assess the extent to which the role of reflection plays in promoting the development of civic attitudes in the SL courses that they coordinate.

Faculty members considering incorporating a SL component into their coursework design could find the results of the study useful. The research findings could provide information on how reflection relates to civic attitudes in SL students. Faculty could use this information to

assess if SL is promoting civic attitudes in the manner they want it to and how they could incorporate effective reflection activities.

The present study was also significant in terms of suggesting future research. The present study did not measure results by ethnicity. Future scholars may wish to examine the issues of reflection, civic responsibility, and race. Understanding differences in reflection and civic attitudes by ethnicity might illuminate how reflection and civic attitudes in SL interacts with the issue of ethnicity.

This study included participants from one institution located in a rural area. Future studies might examine reflection and civic attitudes among students at schools in different settings (urban or suburban). Such a study might provide insight into the role that location plays in terms of reflection, civic attitudes, and demographic characteristics.

This study was created to only measure students reflective activities and civic attitudes during a one-semester course. A longitudinal study could be designed to measure the levels of civic attitudes during college versus after graduation. Such a study could be used to track the permanence of civic attitudes outside of the college environment and prove whether the learning that takes place in college SL courses has a long-term impact.

Limitations

The present study was not without some limitations. One such limitation was due to the nature of the data. Data in the study were self-reported. Respondents could have been less than candid when completing the pre-test and post-test. If this occurred, the results might have been skewed (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996).

Issues of definition limited the study. The post-test used an operational definition of civic attitudes; therefore, there may be other components of civic attitudes that the post-test did not measure. If so, the results of the study may have been influenced.

The study was also limited by the characteristics of the students in the sample. The gender and choice of college major in the sample were not representative of the entire campus population. Therefore, some of the information resulting from this study might not be generalized to the entire study body.

Organization of the Study

This study was organized around five chapters. Chapter One provided a description of civic attitudes, SL, the pedagogy of reflection, and the research questions that guided the study. Chapter Two reviewed the literature relevant to the study. The third chapter describes the methodology employed in the study, including sampling techniques and procedures used to collect and analyze data. The findings of the study are reported in Chapter Four, while the final chapter discusses those findings and implications for future practice and research.