

## **Traditional vs. Critical Service-Learning Engaging the Literature to Differentiate Two Models**

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*There is an emerging body of literature advocating a “critical” approach to community service learning with an explicit social justice aim. A social change orientation, working to redistribute power, and developing authentic relationships are most often cited in the literature as points of departure from traditional service-learning. This literature review unpacks these distinguishing elements.*

**A** growing body of literature is advocating a “critical” approach to community service learning with an explicit social justice aim. A social change orientation, working to redistribute power, and developing authentic relationships are most often cited in the literature as points of departure from traditional service-learning. This literature review unpacks these distinguishing elements.

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Traditional vs. Critical Service-Learning



The image above is a map of the United States, which is severely degraded and lacks detail. It appears to be a scan of a document where the map's content is mostly lost to noise and artifacts. The word "Tradition" is visible at the top left of the map area.



Traditional service-learning is a form of experiential education that combines classroom instruction with community service. It is designed to help students develop a sense of social responsibility and civic engagement. In traditional service-learning, students are typically assigned to a community organization or project for a set period of time. They are expected to complete a certain number of hours of service and then reflect on their experience. The focus is on the service itself, and the learning is often seen as a byproduct of the service. Critical service-learning, on the other hand, is a more reflective and critical approach to service-learning. It emphasizes the importance of understanding the social and cultural context of the service. Students are encouraged to question the status quo and to explore the underlying causes of social problems. They are also encouraged to develop a sense of social justice and to work towards creating positive change in their communities.

### ***The Classroom Component***

The classroom component of service-learning is a crucial part of the overall experience. It provides students with the opportunity to learn about the social and cultural context of the service. In traditional service-learning, the classroom component is often limited to a few lectures or readings. In critical service-learning, the classroom component is more extensive and includes a variety of activities such as readings, discussions, and assignments. The focus is on developing students' critical thinking skills and their ability to analyze social issues. The classroom component also provides students with the opportunity to reflect on their service experience and to discuss their thoughts and feelings with their peers and instructors. This reflection is an important part of the learning process, as it allows students to connect their service experience to their academic learning and to develop a deeper understanding of the social and cultural context of the service. The classroom component also provides students with the opportunity to learn from their peers and to share their own experiences and insights. This peer learning is an important part of the service-learning experience, as it allows students to learn from each other and to develop a sense of community and social responsibility.

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the first of these is the fact that the system is not a simple one. It is a complex system, and as such, it is not possible to understand it by looking at its individual parts. The system is a whole, and it is only by looking at the whole that we can understand it.

The second of these is the fact that the system is not a static one. It is a dynamic system, and as such, it is not possible to understand it by looking at a single point in time. The system is always changing, and it is only by looking at the changes that we can understand it.

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Michigan  
Journal of Community Service Learning

Multicultural  
Education 11  
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Readings  
for diversity and social justice: An anthology on racism,  
sexism, heterosexism, ableism, and classism  
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Learning 10  
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Combining service and learning: A  
resource book for community and public service  
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Community service as values education  
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Where's the learning in  
service-learning?  
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Social Justice 29

The English Journal 64

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Service-learning in higher education:  
Concepts and practices

Journal of College Student Development  
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Combining service  
and learning: A resource book for community and public  
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About  
Campus 7

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Boundaries 2

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Journal of Community Service Learning 2  
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Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis 15  
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Cultivating the sociological  
imagination: Concepts and models for service-learning  
in sociology

American Behavioral Scientist 43

Community Development Journal 41

Equity & Excellence in Education 40

*Mitchell*

*Journal of  
Student Development 39*

*Journal of College*

*Journal of Education*

*American*

*The practice of change:  
Concepts and models for service-learning in women's  
studies*

*NASPA Journal 43*

*American Behavioral Scientist 43*

*The Journal of Experiential Education*  
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*Experiencing citizenship: Concepts and  
models for service learning in political science*

*Diversity Digest*