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This article examines the value and usefulness of expanding a particular approach to service learning in an educational setting. As a result of participating in a graduate seminar that combined cultural studies with service learning, reflecting on involvement in a service project, and a careful reading of relevant literature, the authors advocate for a more critical engagement with the reality of overwhelming social injustice. Moreover, the authors suggest a four-step framework (critical service learning), which is informed by both cultural studies and critical pedagogy. Finally, the authors argue for the adaptation of this framework into the school curriculum—thereby providing students with particular tools—which foster a critical engagement with society.

Introduction

Service learning as an educative tool seems to have gained popularity in recent times (Paulins, 1999; Tice, 1999; Burns, 1998). From middle schools to graduate seminars, the allure of service learning has been that it offers the potential for students to participate in service activities thereby allowing for a more profound and expanded view of the world they live in and help to shape. However, while many service learning initiatives help to facilitate a critical engagement with the reality of overwhelming inequities, many more simply provide students an opportunity to volunteer and perform community service, or worse; a quasi-internship with no clear link to the intellectual apprehension and practical amelioration of social injustice.[1]

Service learning typically involves a classroom setting (from middle school to university level) and the participation of students in a community service project. The instructor may act as a facilitator, helping the students integrate the service experience back into the classroom and beyond. It is our contention that, while school-sponsored community service often provides an enlightening and rewarding experience for participants, service learning in general and *critical service learning* in particular may furnish educators and students with an important opportunity to integrate and facilitate the ide-

als of a more radical democratic engagement with one's society. In other words, democracy can be viewed as a radical social practice that requires one to take a critical inventory of one's social location in terms of power and privilege and by understanding our relationship and responsibilities to others.[2]

This paper looks at the value and usefulness of expanding a particular approach to service learning in the educational setting. As a result of our participation in a service learning project (as a requirement of a graduate seminar in our Cultural Studies in Education course-work) and reflection on our subsequent involvement with a library project in an economically disadvantaged housing community near the University of Tennessee, we have posed the following questions that we hope will guide our inquiry: Does service learning matter in education? Should one take issues of social justice seriously? And finally, can service learning projects, informed by cultural studies, help move us toward a more conversant and engaged society?

As a consequence of personal experience, review of current literature, and an immersion in social theory, we contextualize and explore the increased utilization of service learning in the world of education. Using our experience at the Winton Homes Library (WHL)[3] as a departure point for our analysis, we have developed a four-step framework of *critical service learning* from a cultural studies perspective. In addition to evaluating the merits of this four-step framework, we share some of the ideas that emerged as our involvement in the project continued. While the analysis of the WHL itself excavates many important issues of social difference, we highlight the interplay between faith-based organizations and particular social justice agendas as an example of the kind of evaluation and interpretation that is demanded by a critical service learning approach.

In Phase I of the paper, we explore what critical service learning has to do with education and whether or not social justice issues have any place in the classroom. Furthermore, we examine the merits of infusing service learning with key cultural studies perspectives (i.e., concerns with social justice and social difference, the notion of praxis and negotiations of power). Lastly, we close the section with a presentation and justification for the usefulness of our four-step critical service learning model in the educational setting.

Phase II expands on each of the four steps of critical service learning. We contextualize these steps from our experience in having taken part in a service learning project, as a requirement of our participation in a graduate-level course in a cultural studies setting. Not only do we present and highlight four steps of critical service learning, but we point toward our experience at the WHL to illustrate what these steps can look like in action. In addition, we explore the interplay between faith-based organizations and social-change initiatives as an instance of the type of analysis that may fall out of these kinds of projects.

In closing, we readdress the questions that were posed at the outset and see if the idea of critical service learning can be activated as a tool in the endeavor to move toward a more inclusive, socially relevant educational experience. Moreover, we suggest some direction for future inquiry and encourage and welcome an ongoing dialog with respect to these issues.

Phase I
What Does Critical Service Learning Have To Do With Education?

In a nation of increasing diversity, a widening chasm between rich and poor, and an anesthetizing focus on consumerism, education may be failing to connect students to the realities of social difference. In this sense, educators seem to be missing an opportunity to better 'equip' their students to become active participants in the social practices required to sustain a democracy. Education has traditionally been charged with some daunting tasks, not the least of which is citizenship education. But what type of 'citizen' is it that is being educated? If one adheres to the notion of an *active* democracy and the development of a critical service learning agenda, schools can help to focus more attention on service to the local and global community as a way of connecting their students to each other and the world around them; thus, creating a more engaged citizenry.[4]

We begin the discussion of the role of service learning in education with the examination of the teacher in a social justice project. If we accept the notion of teacher as intellectual (Giroux, 1997; Giroux, 1998; Giroux, 1999; Kincheloe and Steinberg, 1993), then we believe it is valuable to expand upon this idea, and recast the teacher as a particular sort of intellectual—subscribing to a version of Antonio Gramsci's "organic intellectual" (Gramsci, 1971). Gramsci suggested that the role of the intellectual is to strive for an acute understanding of the complex theoretical underpinnings of a particular society, while simultaneously democratizing this profound understanding to the mass population, who it affects most dramatically. In other words, the organic intellectual continually interrogates and wrestles with the theories behind the hegemonic power relationships in society at large and tries to expose them in digestible terms to the broader population. In support of this notion, Ellen Cushman (1999) suggests,

> When intellectuals not only reach outside of the university, but actually interact with the public beyond its walls, they overcome the ivory tower isolation that marks so much of current intellectual work. They create knowledge with those whom the knowledge serves ... Academics can reach these goals in two ways: service learning and activist research. (p. 330).

Furthermore, Kathy Hytten (1998) contends, "The ethical point is that academic work is not simply a commodity for other intellectuals, but should help individuals better understand their lives and conditions so that they can work towards positively altering them" (p. 253). It seems important that university educators and teachers not only begin to see themselves as this kind of organic intellectual, but also recognize and embrace a concept of service partnerships that is an important part of their responsibility to their students and to the community at large. The incorporation of a service learning initiative within the curriculum may play an important role in fostering the kind of 'useful knowledge' that Cushman (1999) speaks about.

Given the contemporary proliferation of community service and service learning projects,

service has taken on different meanings in different locations; therefore, it is necessary that we (especially as educators) discern what a valuable service project might look like. Many scholars on service, (Cushman, 1999;Paulins, 1999; Tice, 1999; Burns, 1998; Fisher, 1997) agree that a service learning approach is preferred to community service or volunteer projects. As teachers, we may be the first lines of defense in making sure that our projects meet a more service learning type of criterion, rather than one of community service or volunteerism. The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) has advocated a four-step approach to service learning: (1) preparation, (2) action, (3) reflection, and (4) demonstration (Burns, 1998). While this approach moves away from volunteerism and community service, we advocate a slightly different four-step approach that incorporates a cultural studies inspired approach to service. We call this version critical service learning. Critical service learning also incorporates four fundamental steps: (1) pre-reflection, (2) theory, (3) action, and (4) reflection.

Using this framework, students at the university and secondary level may be better able to act and reflect upon their relation to aspects of power, knowledge, authority, etc. Terrence Tice (1999) indicates that service is "a dynamic process that is fundamentally about 'investigating the connections among culture, power, knowledge, authority, meaning.' It is both a critical and a political project." (p.39). Additionally, Leonard Burns (1998) believes, "Service learning is an interdisciplinary instructional strategy that facilitates the development of knowledge and skills while helping students understand and accept civic and social responsibility." (p. 38). Thus, it seems clear that service should be *political* in that it is directed toward the improvement of society and the familiarizing with civic responsibility in a democracy.

As a result of the plethora of existent opportunities for service, teachers as reflective decision-makers, must be aware of the potential dangers of simply sending students out to "volunteer" in the local community. In ever-diversifying communities, it seems that the least

desirable consequence of a service project would be perpetuating the further marginalization of people based on gender, race, sexual orientation, class or ethnicity. Following the framework of a critical service learning project, teachers, students and communities have a chance to work together to form a more equitable partnership in the confluence of their talents and the attainment of the stated goals of a given community. For example (these steps will be explicated further in the next section), pre-reflective steps allow teachers and students to situate themselves politically, economically and socially within the setting where the service is to take place. While pre-reflection can motivate those participants with particular privileges to examine their social location in relationship to others, it can be equally as important for those in the class who are part of a marginalized population (which may in fact be encountered in a particular project). In fact, the process of pre-reflection might spur an individual to participate in a project that has personal resonance due to the stated aim of that organization. In other words, far from being an exercise for and by the privileged (particular students and teachers), we acknowledge the fundamental importance of encouraging, facilitating, and cultivating the different perspectives that indeed may be present *with-in* the classroom prior to embarking on any type of project. The instructor should allow for and facilitate a dialogue about the differences that may exist in the classroom as a way of helping students explore and understand where and how they fit in the social and cultural landscape.

Importantly, in the development of a new project, this initial step could allow the community a voice in the creation of the project, citing the needs and talents that they bring to the process. An intricately woven step of praxis (Freire, 1970), action informed by theory, allows the partners (1) to break new ground in the development of a lasting exchange, utilizing existing theories that explore power dynamics, issues of race and culture, radically democratic ideas, and potentials for real social change and (2) to develop the innate abilities present in each individual through thoughtful action.

Finally, reflection allows all partners to consider where they have come from and where they have gone, what changes need to be made, what improvements should be considered for the future, how the project should be demonstrated to those outside of the alliance, and what the next step should be (which becomes a pre-reflective step toward engagement in a new project or to a more critical involvement in a radically democratic society).

Examples of social justice projects include, but are not limited to the following projects. One model may be participation in a literacy project that matches university students with local *socieconomically disadvantaged or marginalized* children. Prosser and Levesque (1997) discuss a three credit hour course called the Student Literacy Corps, where students meet with neighborhood youth from a nearby housing project and share in the reading of the world and the word. This is a notion developed by Freire (1987) that posits, "Reading does not consist merely of decoding the written word or language; rather, it is preceded by and intertwined with knowledge of the world. Language and reality are dynamically interconnected." (p.29). This type of project mirrors our participation at the WHL and contributes to our notion (that we discuss in a later section) of 'reading the lives of others.' Other projects include serving in a soup kitchen as part of a nutrition course as outlined by Nweze Nnakwe (1999) or as an aspect of a high school pottery and culinary arts class as detailed by Dudley Barlow (1999). In both of these cases, students use skills learned in their coursework to help serve their local community while attempting to understand the plight of homelessness and hunger and the students' position and potential for creating change. Obviously, there does not exist enough space to enumerate or describe the many possibilities that exist, but regardless of the type of project, it is important that the students focus part of their attention on their role as agents of change. As V. Ann Paulins (1999) warns, students may seek out their own type of project, but this is why some type of univocal notion of what service learning is should be sought.

The kind of service partnerships we advocate

is predicated on some important cultural studies ideas. Therefore, professors and teachers must be well-informed and active in social policies if they are to make a difference in their students' lives. Although the service projects that one participates in (especially those that take a cultural studies approach seriously) need to have a social justice orientation, we are not suggesting that service projects (in the context of the educational setting) be built from the ground up. Rather, that critical service learning tools could be implemented in *any* social justice oriented service partnership.

Service needs to be seen as an integral part of an "engaged pedagogy" (hooks, 1994) where teaching is a transformative activity that connects the student with the world outside of the classroom. Karen Warren (1998) states, "Students must be prepared to understand the context of their service in the socio-political dimensions of social justice." (p. 134). Likewise Rice and Brown (1998) advocate:

> Service learning pedagogy coupled with curriculum in issues of inequity and privilege—and intentionally designed opportunities for critical self-reflection— can assist students in understanding the relationship between institutional oppression and the issues that affect them and people at their service site. (p.145).

Phase II
The Four Steps of Critical Service Learning:[6] A Deeper Explanation

Having briefly outlined what the four steps of critical service learning are, and how they differ from the NASSP's, we devote some additional time to explicating exactly how we see the steps being utilized (keeping in mind that each project will possibly look quite different in the end). We note at the outset that we see this four-step process taking on a circular (perhaps even spiraling outward) motion where the end is really a new beginning toward a more critical engagement with society at large.

Pre-reflection
Pre-reflection is the initial phase of a critical service learning project. Prereflection at its root has reflection. In this case, one should reflect upon and politicize oneself (i.e., investigating

who we are and what we stand for, as well as investigating our past service experiences, our preconceptions about the project and our predictions as to its outcome). Freire (1992) refers to this investigation of self as seeking "political clarity." Freire states,

> A politicized person is one who has transcended the perception of life as a pure biological process to arrive at a perception of life as a biographical, historical, and collective process. A politicized person is one who can sort out the different and often fragmented pieces contained in the flux. Political clarity is possible to the extent that we reflect critically on day-to-day facts and to the extent that we transcend our sensibilities so as to progressively gain a more rigorous understanding of the facts. (p. 130).

In our particular case, as white males, we realize the starting point for the ongoing pursuit of political clarity should begin with our dual privilege in society—white and male.

In this pre-reflective turn, it is important to focus on the prefix as this step takes place before any action occurs and may even happen before the participation in any service learning project occurs. In our seminar class, and in the subsequent service learning experience, we were able to use this beneficial step by considering, for instance, how we would plug into an already existing project. The pre-reflective stage allowed for the examination of pre-conceived assumptions and prejudices. In addition, it helped participants to challenge and expand these notions by fostering a dialog, with in the seminar setting, among those from diverse experiences.

Theory
Freire (1987) argues that as we begin to read the written word, we also begin to read the world—the construction of the word and the world are essentially simultaneous. In teaching, it is necessary that students realize this dynamic is at work before negotiating in any space of social difference. This theory lends itself well to this particular project and emphasizes the necessity for this sort of dual step in the critical service learning framework. In this way, theory and action work intricately together because one without the other can make

furthering a social justice agenda more tentative and less sustained. In the library project we participated in, we addressed past theories posited by Gramsci (organic intellectual and hegemony), Foucault (in relations of power), Freire (in our pedagogy), as well as contemporary notions theorized by Giroux, McLaren, Kincheloe and Steinberg (teacher as intellectual) and hooks (engaged pedagogy). In order to better understand and promote an agenda of social justice in service learning projects, educators are strongly encouraged to immerse themselves and their students in theory, which may help explain phenomena at work when students enter the service environment. It is also important that the teacher be aware of the abilities of their students and adjust the introduction and discussion of these theoretical ideas according to the abilities of their students.

Action[7]
Drawing from a cultural studies tradition, action must be the accompanying harmony that helps inform and update theory. Given that one's actions can take on many forms and will be particular to specific service learning locations, it is difficult to frame an all inclusive rule for activity; however, we suggest that the action include some type of dialog and/or dialectical understanding with those whom you are partnering in order to assure that the voice of that partnering organization is evident in the action. In addition, it is important that the service partners understand and fulfill their responsibilities in the partnership as well.

Through our participation/action in the library project, we have been able to draw in applicable theory, and in our reflections we have been able to pre-reflect about what might be next for the library and for future social justice projects (and, perhaps most importantly, future critical involvement in our democracy).

Reflection
The final step in this framework for critical service learning is reflection. In many ways, this step is the foundation for the entire endeavor. Through critical reflection one has the opportunity to integrate and personally contextualize the experience of service learning. Again, the instructor and fellow classmates play a crucial role in helping to facilitate and expand on each other's readings of their experience. As educators, it is important to create a space where students can share and reflect upon their experiences. In the particular case of our service learning seminar, our fellow classmates and we had the opportunity to present a critical analysis and report of our experience. This kind of reflective opportunity, coupled with the guidance of our seminar instructor, helped to stimulate a critical dialog between the seminar participants, as well as afford the class as a whole an opportunity to better articulate the larger meaning of the experience of participation in a service learning project.

In order to more accurately portray what we mean by reflection in this process, we use our particular project as an example of where our reflection has led us.[8] In the next section, we describe what the project entailed and then we investigate one of the notions that we developed as a result of our participation (which is ongoing). In the conclusion we revisit our reflection and make some determinations about where it is leading us particularly, and how this experience might help to frame the importance and value of participating in critical service learning projects in general.

The Winton Homes Library Project: A Case Study
Our participation at the Winton Homes Library (WHL) was initiated by Handel Wright through a class entitled, *Issues in Cultural Studies* at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville in the fall of 1999. An important aspect of class participation was to become involved in a service learning project at a local community service organization. After many attempts to connect with various service organizations, we chose the WHL as our service placement, which had been created by a local Knoxville church. A further requirement of our participation was to reflect and prepare a project report that would help us to better analyze and articulate our experience at the WHL.[9]

The stated aim of the library, partially evidenced by a flyer that was mailed to members of the church, was to provide the children of Winton Homes a safe space for reading, eating snacks,

one on one contact, and peer-mentoring. We agreed to participate, and for the remainder of the semester we volunteered at the library for a minimum of 2 hours each week.

Typically, the volunteers, the majority of whom are women, from the local church[10] that organized the library, arrived first to meet the University of Tennessee volunteers at the library. Since many of the women, living in the suburbs of Knoxville, traveled a good distance, timing became a problem. To alleviate some of this burden, one of the university volunteers was given a key to the library in case one of the other members did not arrive on time due to traffic or picking up their own children from school.

Upon opening the library each Thursday, the children were encouraged to eat snacks (usually sandwiches, chips, and juice) and proceed upstairs to check out new books or return old ones. While the kids did not have library cards, they were encouraged to check the books out. Each child could check out up to two books for one week. There was no fee associated with the library and no fee or penalty was imposed if the children did not bring the books back on time (or at all for that matter). The hope was that they would come to understand and follow the simple rules of the library and learn responsibility and sharing skills. Furthermore, it was hoped that the children would utilize the library as a resource for reading materials on a variety of subjects which they may not have access to in their homes.

Each Thursday one or more of the volunteers would organize an activity. For example, one volunteer had a story time and drawing exercise where he read a story and encouraged the children to participate by asking them questions and having them draw pictures that related to the story. Other volunteers would spend one-on-one time with individual children reading, talking, or helping with artwork projects. Since we were from the university, it was assumed that we might have more experience in 'volunteer' type of activities. This being the case, we were given a great deal of latitude and our input and opinions had been sought from the beginning of our participation with the library. However, in keeping with the nature of the project, we felt that it would be more appro-

priate to simply participate at the library in whatever capacity we could, rather than become more involved (at least in the beginning) at the request of the founders.

The atmosphere of the library was chaotic and boisterous. Children would run and scream and there was actually little if any quiet time to read or study. However, the Board adopted the recommendation of the head of the Winton Homes Ministries (a faith-based organization that operates from a simple edifice atop a hill within the Winton Homes and wields considerable power) who suggested that the library provide a 'nurturing, safe, and friendly environment with gentle guidelines, not rigid rules.' The volunteer members from the church agreed with this assessment, but conceded that if any of the other (older) church members ventured out to the library they would be mortified to see the apparent chaos. In this sense, the day-to-day activities of the library extended far beyond the responsibilities and expectations of a library per se.

There was no rigid structure to the organization and implementation of duties and responsibilities at the library. In addition, there was never an orientation period for any of us. We were expected to just pitch in and help. We were seen as 'authority figures' or adults. On the other hand, it was not at all clear who was in charge sometimes. There was no chain of command established and there was no protocol for any situation. For example, there was no first aid kit on hand. There was no contact list to call parents or caretakers in the case of an emergency. There was a general 'open-door' policy (any child may come into the library to use the facility) thereby making it very difficult to keep an accurate count of who was in the library at any given time. The familiarity of the location, the children's acceptance and anticipation of our arrival and simple routine were the main guideposts for the day-to day activities.

As a result of our involvement with the library and subsequent experiences with the children and other constituents (the church, community residents and WHM), the next section expands on one of the many issues that emerged as an outcome of our critical analysis in order to help illustrate the type of reflection we see as pos-

sible and valuable in our four-step framework.

An Evangelism vs. Mission vs. Cultural Studies Approach to Service: Equipping Ourselves with the Tools of Critical Service Learning

As a result of filtering our service learning experience at the WHL through the lens of cultural studies, we have unearthed an interesting dynamic at work in the library. We believe that our perspective, cultivated through other course work in cultural studies and as a result of the seminar course, helped us critically question the phenomenon encapsulated in our subheading: "An evangelism vs. mission vs. cultural studies approach to service."

An Evangelism Approach

On the surface, evangelism may seem to have altruistic aims in service, but we would argue that it might, in fact, hinder the process of social change. We define evangelism as an agenda created without the audience in mind and given to others (E.g. volunteer members of a church) to perform (i.e., the act of delivering Christ to the "Christ-less"). In other words, evangelism may be more about self-service, than any type of practical service or empowerment for others.

In an interview with the president of the women's group (who started the library) at the church, she indicated that they were serving in Winton Homes for "evangelism." The president further emphasized her point when she indicated that she wants to be the "body of Christ" to these children, to be "in relation" with the people of Winton Homes. We find this language somewhat alarming, and it has the potential to establish a hegemonic power relationship with these children and this community. In other words, it is possible that the sentiment, 'We are the body of Christ, you (Winton Homes) are not, so we are here to give it to you,' is present. Winton Homes Ministries (WHM) is also quite involved in this process, having partnered with the church and Knoxville's Community Development Corporation (KCDC), a local arm of HUD. Given the religious perspective of each organization, it is not surprising that neither the WHL nor the WHM have much interest in the secularity of this project. As an example of this evangelizing attitude, we were made to take down signs that indicated we were having a Halloween party because of the pagan connotation this holiday holds. We instead posted flyers announcing a fall festival.

A Mission Approach

Mission, on the other hand, at least seems to have the recipient of the service in mind, but that this agenda and subsequent service is created with a *perceived* need in mind. For example, in a recent flyer received from the church, the call for volunteers includes this sentence, "Employees at the WHL estimate that 80–90% of parents there do not know where their children are, nor do they care what they are doing. This library can be a safe place for the children to come and learn, to share to form relationships, and to simply spend a happy hour or two."

Being active participants at the WHL, we were unsettled that such propaganda would be promoted in the church. Not only does no one have the information to hazard such a statistic, but the very idea of it sends a completely false impression to the wealthier church patrons that the poor are 'irresponsible and don't care about their children.' In our critique of the church (and some of their implied and tacit objectives) as a result of this service learning opportunity, we are supposing that this top-down approach to service (evangelism and mission) occurs in many situations and we are able to use this instance as an example of how we might problematize the seemingly benevolent aims of particular organizations.

A Cultural Studies Approach

It is important to explore this dynamic from a standpoint of power relations. The fact that the community of Winton Homes has not been included in the library discussion can be viewed as problematic. In our estimation, it seems as though the inclusion of those who are assumed to be the focus of the project should be self-evident. The exclusion of the Winton Homes residents not only undermines their value as competent decision makers, but it also serves to reinforce the hegemonic power structure that is manifest in the politicization of poverty. Without explicitly participating in the systemic perpetuation of oppression, the

founders of the WHL may in fact be aiding in the oppressive treatment of the socially disenfranchised by paradoxically offering to address a perceived need. One problem is that the residents of Winton Homes have never been asked if a library would best address the needs of *their* community. Instead, the founding members of the library have relied on the WHM to mediate the needs of the residents. Of course one obvious problem with this alliance is that the WHM and the WHL have a self-proclaimed investment in the missionization of the residents. In this case, it seems appropriate to question the substitution of 'mission' for tangible social, political, and economic empowerment. The exclusion of the residents of Winton Homes from the planning stages of the library and the implications of their exclusion may be far reaching.

The decision (or non-decision) to include the residents of the village in the planning process is indeed complicated. First of all, as mentioned above, the founders assume that the children of Winton Homes need some help and guidance in order to overcome the 'shortcoming' of their substandard education and environment. However, it occurred to us that a second issue of exclusion might be important to explore. This issues deals with the notion that "inclusion" in the sense we have been talking about is indeed a class, race, and often times gender specific construct. The notion of board meetings and mission statements, while commonplace for many organizations, assumes that many people in a community are well versed in the rules of such inclusion. In other words, our critique that the inclusion of the residents of Winton Homes in the discussion of the library would have eliminated a power imbalance is predicated on the assumption that this particular group would know how to go about *being* included in a way that would be taken seriously by those in power.

Several of the essays in Fisher's, *Fighting Back in Appalachia* (1993) but particularly Szakos' "Practical Lessons in Community Organizing in Appalachia: What We've Learned at Kentuckians For the Commonwealth" provides some useful insight into how to go about getting a community involved. Of course, there are in-

herent differences in the WHL project, which is faith-based, and which already had a goal but no clear path to attain it and in the example that Szakos describes. However, in the sense that the community was included, respected, and allowed to voice their concerns all throughout the process, we found Szakos' essay to be a valuable template. An additional benefit to the method of organization that Szakos presents, is that differing styles of contribution were not overlooked, but explored and expanded thereby giving a greater sense of community among all the participants. It is this aspect of building a community agenda that we think is missing from the WHL project, and in the long run will insure that white, middle-class-Christian values will be promoted and perpetuated at the library.

A further example may help illustrate our point. It is possible to volunteer for Habitat for Humanity[11] and walk away from the experience with several different notions. Assuming that it was a positive experience, one could walk away feeling good about themselves because they helped build a home for someone who could not afford one otherwise, or they may feel good because they were able to utilize some specific talent that they had. Another may see the great work that Habitat for Humanity performs and get others involved in the mission of building houses for the less fortunate. Still another may become engaged with someone for whom the home is being built and enter into a critical type of dialog regarding the plight of the poor and homelessness here in America or abroad. That individual may also take the time to reflect upon his or her own position in relation to the power dynamics at work in this location or may make some decisions about their own politics for future participation in this democracy.

All three volunteers helped build a home with someone who was in need of better housing. One person, however, seemed better able to draw a connection between their life (and possible privilege that they may hold over others) and the life of someone who is seen as marginalized due to a number of issues, including the current political and economic system. The Habitat for Humanity volunteer who wrestled with these issues may be better able

to participate in a critical and engaged manner that takes seriously the elimination of social injustice and the recognition of human agency. A cultural studies approach to service fosters this type of engagement and more easily allows us to use the tools of critical service learning toward the aim of social justice. This kind of approach can certainly be implemented in a classroom setting (as the access to theory may be more readily available), but this approach does not preclude any individual from entering a service situation using a cultural studies framework.

Although service learning (or critical service learning) may be a foreign term to the volunteers at the library or to the church, as educators it is our obligation to make sure that the service learning projects necessarily foster a critical engagement. Ellen Cushman (1999) posits, "Outreach courses help forge a more secure link 'between love of art and human decency,' between intellectual work and work which speaks to common lived conditions of struggle." (p. 334). Thus, praxis with meaningful reflection must be at the center of our method.

If we are to make a difference in the lives of the marginalized (in our case, the lives of the children in Winton Homes), then we need to take their lives *seriously* and acknowledge their agency. It is possible that through critical dialog with a community resident that we may better hear their voice and acknowledge their agency. As a result, we may learn how to better coexist in the future on a more level terrain (again, taking steps to avoid unknowingly reproducing an existent hegemonic power dynamic through our own service project). Maybe, in this way, we will be "standing with" rather than "speaking about" those with whom we are seeking social justice. Can we progress toward achieving justice by working together in a library? Yes, we believe that we can.

Finally, Paulo Freire (1992) talks about the need for the creation of a dialectical relationship with those you are partnering with in service. Freire states,
> ´ The one who knows must know that he or she does not know all things and the one who knows not must know that he or she is not ignorant of everything. With-

out this dialectical understanding of knowledge and ignorance, it is impossible, in a progressive, democratic outlook, for the one who knows to teach the one who knows not." (p.188).

The way we accomplish this is through a dialog that is seen and heard through critical eyes and ears. It is true that a church can accomplish this, and with its priorities in the right place, can partner with communities in a way that takes seriously the agency and dignity of individuals. In this paper it has been stressed that the service learning experience would profit from a more critical perspective than has often been the case, (through evangelizing and/or missionizing methods) and that common endgames of power redistribution, social justice, human agency and radical democracy are sought, which may be better identified through a cultural studies lens.

Conclusion: Where are we going?

Throughout the course of this paper, we have been advocating for the incorporation of critical service learning into the standard curriculum. While service learning cannot and should not be thought of as a panacea for the many problems facing our nation, we hope that it can provide critical tools which one can utilize when attempting, not only to frame problems, but also in seeking possible solutions.

Moreover, it *is* important to recognize two features of American education: (1) Education is going to participate in citizenship education and (2) Teachers are going to be trained in the promotion of that particular citizenship education agenda. Our hope is that critical service learning lay out a course for a particular version of citizenship education, one that takes seriously the aim of overcoming injustice and dignifies social difference. Critics may argue that teachers already have enough to do and there certainly will not be enough time in the day to devote to service activities above and beyond the curriculum. We are suggesting, instead, that service becomes a part of the curriculum (specifically a part of our citizenship education); that the pursuit of political clarity be a part of our everyday lessons in schools; that partnering with our communities is valued; that drawing connections between facts in the classroom and life

outside of it is respected; and that 'reading the lives of others' and subsequently reflecting on it is promoted. We realize this may be a radical change from a learn-by-rote, "drill and kill" curriculum that is often found in many schools (and civics classes), but we believe in the value of critical service learning's merits and its potential for the creation of a more informed and engaged society.

Although there is more to discuss about the implementation of critical service learning projects, we have provided an example of what type of analysis may fall out of a service project informed from a cultural studies perspective. In addition, we have considered what a cultural studies perspective can look like in relation to service education. Our experience with and subsequent analysis of the WHL[12] has provided us with a unique opportunity to address our personal political clarity and move us toward a more critical engagement with society as we seek to complete doctoral degrees in a cultural studies department.

Does service learning matter in education? We see it as playing an integral role in the classroom and beyond, but want to emphasize (as Wright, Fisher, and others would) that it must not serve the status quo and should work toward the benefit of all participating parties in a project. The four-step framework has been constructed with this notion in mind.

Should one take issues of social justice seriously? Yes, if we are committed to a more just and equitable future for all citizens. The school can provide an optimal venue for the promotion and facilitation of this radically democratic ideal.

Can service-learning projects, informed by cultural studies, help move us toward a more conversant and engaged society? Yes, specifically if they are critical service projects. Cultural studies, especially in education, provides teachers an opportunity to reexamine commonly held notions regarding our society and help move toward the creation of a more just, caring and equitable society. Additionally, cultural studies informed projects have a rich tradition of taking issues of social justice seriously, and helping to inform actions against the perpetu-

ation of those injustices. Finally, service learning, filtered through the lens of cultural studies, (what we call critical service learning) encourages an ongoing dialog about both the issues and the possible solutions. Toward that end, we would encourage input and suggestions from both the academic community, and the educational community at large for future directions and discourse.

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Notes

[1] For the apprehension of many of the tenants of Cultural Studies and Service Learning, we would like to acknowledge the work of Dr. Handel Wright, assistant professor of Cultural Studies at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville. Much of the following discussion is the result of our participation in a graduate course he developed and facilitated at UTK called *Issues in Cultural Studies.* This course, in part, sought to blend aspects of Cultural Studies with a practical service learning project.

[2] We have gleaned and partially constructed this definition from our readings of critical multiculturalists such as Henry Giroux, Peter McLaren, Joe Kincheloe and Shirley Steinberg.

[3] For the purposes of anonymity, the names of the relevant organizations have been changed.

[4] Perhaps revisiting a more "progressive" type of education as advocated by Dewey and promoting what Habermas would suggest as a "stronger democracy as outlined by David Matthews (1997).

[5] In an effort toward the promotion of the teacher as organic intellectual, we advocate that schools of education undergo a systemic metamorphosis that results in an adoption of these notions. Furthermore, we are aware that this kind of systemic reorientation to teacher education may in fact be a radical departure for many existing programs, but is critical if one takes issues of social difference seriously.

[6] The four steps of critical service learning are an evolution of a four-step framework one of the authors utilized in a service learning course he developed at the high school level. While the spirit of that framework is left in tact, the incorporation of cultural studies and critical pedagogy perspectives have helped to broaden the intellectual scope of this project.

[7] Our "action" will be more fully explored in the "case study" section of the paper.

[8] We emphasize the fact that this reflection is particular to our project and recognize that reflections may take on many forms: journal writing, field notes, seminar discussions, publications, inservice workshops, etc.
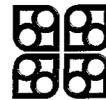
[9] The WHL is a faith-based organization established in Winton Homes, a low-income housing development located in Knoxville. The community is hidden from view of the main road that accesses the community. The typical building in Winton Homes is made up of four two-story apartments that have as many as four bedrooms in them. The utilitarian and non-descript frame buildings are connected by a series of walkways and paved roads that are in need of some repair. The demographic statistics seem to support the fact that Knoxville (where Winton Homes is located), is predominantly Appalachian. According to HUD statistics, the average Winton Homes resident is a white female with a child and annual income of $11,000. Eighty percent of the population is White, eighteen percent are Black and one percent are Hispanic. In addition, only nine percent of the households with children have both spouses present, while females head up eighty percent of the households. The average household in Winton Homes has 2.1 persons per unit paying an average rent of $233.

[10] This is a prominent, mainline Protestant Church which sits high atop a hill in the central section of Knoxville, adorned with stained glass windows and constructed sturdily with beautifully sculpted masonry, it provides a picturesque view for all entering the city of Knoxville via the main highway or the main waterway. The church is mainly comprised of an affluent population who travel from the upscale, western suburbs of Knoxville.

[11] We are aware of the irony of using this example since Habitat for Humanity is a faith-based organization.

[12] As our commitment to the WHL continues, we have used our analysis and reflection to suggest some useful directions for the library that incorporate the involvement and input of community residents in the continuing formation of its future.