CHAPTER 3

OPENING UP SERVICE-LEARNING REFLECTION BY TURNING INWARD

Developing Mindful Learners Through Contemplation

Trae Stewart

INTRODUCTION

Service-learning holds the utility of reflection as paramount. It is the glue that allows service activities to manifest into actual learning. Combined with Dewey's pragmatism, reflection is part of service-learning's basic epistemology and is what distinguishes it from other types of experiential education. The problem, however, is that reflection by definition ("bend back") asks students to focus on the past and, if done correctly, then asks them to critically apply their learning from this process to future learning and experiences. Reflection does not focus on present thoughts, emotions, senses, and behaviors. Further, reflection in service-learning has arguably taken on a hyperpragmatic, product-oriented place as a project management and assessment tool. It is an extrospective practice, driven from the outside on
transitory external stimuli, and maintains the teacher as intelligence expert who has pre-determined not only what knowledge is, but the process to achieve that knowledge.

The types of reflection techniques that the field of service-learning seems to advocate also center on more traditional, narrative strategies (e.g., journals, discussions) and further risk our students approaching service-learning mindlessly. This calls into question service-learning’s conceptualization as a counter-normative pedagogy that “qualitatively changes the norms and relationships of the teaching-learning process” (Howard, 1998, p. 22).

This chapter begins with a brief summary of the purpose of reflection in service-learning, as well as the most common mediums of reflection as delineated through a review of the field’s most recommended guides/resources. Then, I link the overuse of certain reflection practices with mindlessness and learner automatization, which can be countered through contemplative practices that support the development of mindfulness. Contemplation, its absence from Western education, and its link to service-learning through spirituality are discussed. A critique of Kolb’s model vis-à-vis mindfulness precedes a call for “opening up” of service-learning epistemology and thus the types of reflection used. A new “Bicycle Wheel Model” to conceptualize the more existential learner-centered approach concludes the chapter.

**REFLECTION IN SERVICE-LEARNING**

Reflection is a significant element in effective service-learning and is considered the conduit between volunteer service and academic coursework. This liaison enables one to influence the other and results in a more enhanced understanding of each. Tyler, Giles, and Schmiede (1996) refer to reflection as “the glue that holds service and learning together to provide optimal educative experiences” (p. 16). To these authors, effective reflection has five characteristics, or Cs: (1) continuous over a learner’s education and service involvement; (2) connected to the academic and real-life needs of learners; (3) challenging to learners so that they are provoked to think more critically; (4) contextualized in terms of design and setting so as to add to the linkage between thinking about content and applying it; and (5) communication with peers and community organizations.

While there is general agreement in the field of service-learning regarding the necessity and importance of reflection, myriad conceptualizations of reflection exist. Part of this diversity derives from reflection’s interdisciplinarity, with each discipline offering a definition based on its unique epistemological foundations and goals. Characteristics do repeat across these definitions, however. Comprehensively, reflection is understood to be a deliberative practice of thinking about past experiences or knowledge in order to make meaning, enable better choices or actions, or increase effectiveness in future attempts. In other words, reflection is a constructivist act that serves to transform a learner’s existing schema.

Toole and Toole (1995) have imagined reflection in service-learning to encompass a pre-service phase, an in-service phase, and a post-service phase. McCarthy (1996) also notes that reflection should include pre-service, in-service, and post-service phases as a way of supporting students continually through their service-learning process instead of simply treating reflection as a capstone activity. Pre-service reflection assists students in locating and confronting any pre-existing beliefs, as well as preparing them for any possible culture shock that they might confront in their service-learning environment. In-service reflection assists students grappling with emotions or experiences encountered while volunteer service hours remain but that are not synchronous to the actual service act. Regardless of its placement, Crews (2002) adds that reflection must be “intentional, structured, and formal” (p. 41). The actual practice of reflection has been contrasted to its intended use. Wade (1997) notes that both teacher and student inexperience with reflection often creates cultures within schools where reflection is afforded inadequate time, ultimately damaging the learning that both students and teachers would have otherwise reaped.

Given the diverse conceptualizations of the intent and application of reflection in service-learning, it is understandable that the mediums of reflection used are numerous. Logically, space here does not allow for a comprehensive review of all available resources. For this reason, select guides identified as best resources on reflection by the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse were reviewed. Many are published by key organizations in the field of service-learning (e.g., RMC Research, National Youth Leadership Council, Campus Compact, Community–Campus Partnerships for Health). Table 3.1 summarizes the reflection mediums offered in these resources. In the cases where the number of reflection activities was large or activities were already grouped according to type, thematic groupings were applied and/or maintained.

While the table indicates substantial diversity among reflection activities, the literature seems to embrace written and oral forms most often (Tyler, 1996). Morton (1996) observes that journals are a commonly used form of reflection in service-learning. He noted several formats for journals and also mentioned that more formal assessment methods, like papers, may be assigned for reflection as well. Ramsay (1999) also cites journals and reports as “more widely recognized tools” (p. 190) for making meaning from experiences. Rice and Pollack (2000) support journals as an effective tool for service-learning reflections, citing the student–teacher dialogue that comes about in the assessment phase of reflection. Moreover, a journal essentially acts as a safe space where students may air controversial opinions in a medium that would allow a teacher to help them explore and challenge those controversial opinions discretely.
TABLE 3.1 Reflection Methods Mentioned in Frequently Recommended Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Publication/Guide</th>
<th>Reflection Methods</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amulya, 2004</td>
<td>Critical moments reflection; inquiry-based reflection; journaling; story-based interviewing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bringle &amp; Hatcher, 1999</td>
<td>Journals of various types; research papers; case studies; directed readings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cairn &amp; Cole, 1993</td>
<td>Over two dozen on speaking, writing, activities, and multimedia/performing arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eyer, Giles, &amp; Schmiede, 1996</td>
<td>Various reflection activities, including reading, writing, doing, and telling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fletcher, 2002</td>
<td>Stream of consciousness; collage of words; service interviews; rap and rhyme responses; show and tell; human sculpture; group poem writing; compile questions left unanswered; imagining the future; graffiti museum; emotional go-around; service sites visualization; group banners; all tied up; service journals; time capsule</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goldsmith, 1995</td>
<td>Devoted entirely to journals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaye, 2010</td>
<td>Literacy-focused methods, including journals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwest Service Academy, 2006</td>
<td>Dozens, 15 second activities to long-term activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Youth Leadership Council, 2008</td>
<td>Dozens of write, read, tell, do; journals; poster fairs; podcasts; bulletin boards; Web sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piccolo, 2008</td>
<td>Group discussions; journals; analytic papers; portfolio presentations; reading responses; electronic forum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rama &amp; Battistoni, 2001</td>
<td>Case studies presentation; portfolio; small group activity; large group discussion; journals; papers; interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reed &amp; Koliba, 2001</td>
<td>Reflection starters; role plays; quotes; group exercises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMC Research Corporation, 2004</td>
<td>50+ reflection actions arranged by grade level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seifer &amp; Connors, 2007</td>
<td>Group dialogue; journaling; digital storytelling; photo journal; visual storyboard; video; exams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siltcox, 1993</td>
<td>Journal writing; directed writing; oral reflection on feelings; student as expert; cognitive teaching</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Service-learning literature also suggests a strong presence of oral forms of reflection. Waterman (1997) finds that oral reflection, as part of a full class, smaller unit, or one-on-one, can also be a successful tool for further engraving the written reflection. Stanton, Giles, and Cruz (1999) point to group discussions as a particularly effective means of engaging in reflection, as peers in groups often help to bring out another’s biases and beliefs, brought about by structured disequilibrium—something unsettling to them, yet still structured in a way to help the students learn from it.

Findings and commentaries suggest a gross repetition across those reflection methods that the field of service-learning recommends. My discomfort is founded on my belief that pedagogies are epistemologically grounded and, therefore, are structured to help learners acquire knowledge based on an understanding of what knowledge is or what knowledge should be considered important. While service-learning’s basic epistemology is rooted in pragmatism, strategies, techniques, or methods utilized in the process, especially those touted to play a pivotal role in knowledge formation (i.e., reflection), certainly fall within an epistemology’s purview. Following this line of logic, what is service-learning saying about the types of knowledge that we expect from service-learners when we apparently continue to advocate the same, and arguably traditional, methods of reflection?

These findings are additionally concerning, given claims that service-learning has resorted to convention in order to meet the standards of legitimacy maintained by institutional and cultural powers (Scott, 2004), and as a result secure its existence. Through social reproduction, hegemonic forces scrutinize non-traditional entities according to contexts that incorrectly apply to the “out” group (i.e., service-learning). While irrelevant to their initial intentions and goals, less powerful, not yet legitimized groups find themselves persuaded to comply. As a result, Scott (2004) argues, service-learning has become hyperpragmatic. Reflection has been reduced to a project management tool, which allows the service-learning project to run more efficiently, a goal rather than an objective in the process. A poignant example can be drawn from the use of journals in service-learning. Anson (1997) writes, “journal writing in many service courses may serve the purpose of creating a log or record of experience, but falls short of encouraging the critical examination of ideas, or the sort of consciousness-raising reflection, that is the mark of highly successful learning” (p. 163).

More dangerous still is that in a product-oriented approach, educators are viewed as “intelligence adjudicators” who interpret and enforce correctness. These circumstances entrap students in ontological mindsets and existing categories, maneuver them into a pre-determined course of learning, and maintain the teacher-student power hierarchy. While mindsets can allow an individual to make better use of diverse patterns and stimuli, predefined assumptions that accompany mindsets can dangerously imprison a thinker into an absolute and unconditional worldview. Mindsets entrap us by category (Langer, 1989), bind us to the past, and result in our approaching situations mindlessly.

Mindlessness, a term developed by psychologist Ellen Langer (1989), is the result of actors engaging in automatic behavior or approaching situations myopically, narrowed by “premature cognitive commitments” (Ch-
nowitz & Langer, 1981): “Mindlessness is passive information-processing in which the individual rather automatically relies on distinctions previously drawn, instead of engaging in active categorizing and new distinction making” (Langer, Bashner, & Chanowitz, 1985, p. 113). When mindless, we approach situations as routine, as if the process and end result have been determined prior to our engagement. We surrender our agency and are subsequently transformed into “automatons,” operating without conscious self-direction or purpose.

In other words, mindlessness makes us approach situations context-free and “as though [knowledge] has a single meaning and is available for use in only that way” (Langer & Piper, 1987, p. 280). A domino effect of escalating cognitive inflexibility and narrowed perspective taking ensues. When faced with information that does not fit within our existing schema, we accept an outcome orientation, discriminating among the information based on its perceived function (Mezirow, 1994). Familiar habits and situations increase potential for mindlessness by allowing us to pay minimal attention to the process and focus instead on ends. While repetition can assist in making us more familiar with concepts, saturation may occur and result in our inability to apply the “learned” concepts in novel contexts. Langer (1989) explains,

> When we begin any undertaking, we have a mental picture of its beginning, middle, and end. In the beginning we tend to be energic and mindful. In the middle phase, we may perform the task mindlessly or mindfully. If we are performing it mindfully, we are involved in creating new distinctions while we do it. We do not have a sense of ourselves as separate from the task. The task may seem effortless as long as we are involved in process and distinctions are being created. If we do the task mindlessly, we rely on distinctions already made. As the task nears its end, we typically become focused on outcome and also expect fatigue to occur. We now notice the task as separate from ourselves as we evaluate the outcome. (p. 137)

An example can be made from the volunteer act in service-learning. Students customarily enter into a service site with fresh eyes. Out of concern for learning the ropes of their service activity, gathering information for their assignments, or even out of discomfort from being immersed in an environment culturally at odds with their own, students pay attention and are aware of environmental, or external, stimuli. The majority of service-learners gradually become more comfortable with the service environment, clientele, and themselves as service providers. As experiences, contexts, and procedures become familiar, established, or routine, service-learners risk approaching their experiences mindlessly.

Overuse of particular reflection strategies runs a similar risk. Kellermann (1992) contends that “most strategies are automated in both their acquisi-

and enactment…they are learned and used tacitly” (p. 239). Wiemann and Daly (1994) echo this viewpoint by acknowledging that overlearning a particular strategy will cause it to drop from conscious awareness. Individuals’ mindless responses (i.e., without conscious control or intention) when accommodating frequent requests have been documented through numerous empirical studies (see Langer, 1989, for various examples).

Ostensibly aware of the prospect of mindlessness, proponents of reflection have warned against repetitive and routine acts of reflection. Schön (1983) argues that a practitioner may miss opportunities to think about what s/he is doing when a practice becomes more repetitive and routine. The individual “learns, as often happens, to be selectively inattentive to phenomena that do not fit the categories of his knowing-in-action, then he may suffer from boredom or ‘burn-out’ and afflict [the people around him] with the consequences of his narrowness and rigidity” (p. 61). Specific to this latter point, Mezirow (1991) has warned that by overuse of certain forms of reflection, particularly those that are already broadly used in more commonly accepted pedagogies, a pedagogy becomes further entrenched in, and an indirect proponent of, the broken system that it initially aimed to change.

**MINDFULNESS**

In contrast to mindlessness is mindfulness. The term mindfulness is translated from the Pali word sati, meaning “bare attention” (Gunaratana, 1990). The act of being mindful, therefore, is the non-judgmental, non-reactive, conscious awareness of and attention to experiences in a present, contextualized reality (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Deikman, 1982; Hanh, 1976; Martin, 1997; Kabat-Zinn, 2005).

Key here is that mindfulness practice differs from mindless approaches in that it does not attempt to make meaning from external stimuli and past experiences by cognizing them into pre-conceived categories (Brown & Ryan, 2003). Acknowledgement and acceptance of stimuli, rather than meaning-making, is the aim. The focus of attention is unrestricted, left to explore and thus gain insight into thoughts, feelings, or sensations as they consciously arise (Bishop et al., 2004). As Gunaratana (1990) summarizes, “Mindfulness is goal-less awareness. In Mindfulness, one does not strain for results. One does not try to accomplish anything. When one is mindful, one experiences reality in the present moment in whatever form it takes. There is nothing to be achieved. There is only observation” (p. 84).

In “Mindfulness in Plain English,” Venerable Henepola Gunaratana (1990) explains that mindfulness is analogous to peripheral vision. While we are aware of objects on the margins of our sight line, we are often uncertain
what the objects actually are because we have not yet concentrated direct attention on them. Once we do focus on the object, it is categorized according to existing schema in an attempt to understand or know it. As a result, other stimuli in the flow of experiences remain unattended to and are allowed to surge past. Mindfulness is lost.

A change in contexts prior to this point via an infusion of approaches that develop mindfulness may proactively thwart the potential development of mindfulness. Such practices would train learners to be present in the moment, open up to all stimuli, and simply observe and acknowledge them without intent to understand. For service-learning, traditional reflection activities are not an option since, by definition, they ask students to attend to something that has already transpired and are goal-oriented (e.g., assignment for a grade, making meaning). In the following section, introspective contemplation will be offered as a complementary practice to reflection.

**CONTEMPLATION DEFINED AND ITS LINK TO MINDFULNESS**

The English word *contemplation* is etymologically linked to the Latin *contemplari*. In Roman times, elected church or state leaders would take auguries in the open space of the temple before taking office. During an augury, the leader would stand quietly and attentively, watching for potential omens/signs in the form of birds. From this act, contemplation has come to mean to observe, consider, or gaze attentively. It is a way of knowing.

A single conceptualization of what it means to contemplate, or a single means by which one engages in contemplation, is unrealistic. While Roman leaders might have stood still, dozens of practices have been identified as contemplative. These include sitting in silence, guided imagery, visualization, labyrinth walking, recitation, Tai Chi, meditation, and yoga. For a more complete list of contemplative practices by type, the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society (www.contemplativemind.org) offers a “Tree of Contemplative Practices.” This single resource has almost 40 practices thematically grouped. Thematic types include *activist, stillness, generative, movement, ritual/cyclical, creation process, and relational*.

Contemplative practices attempt to develop a heightened awareness of the present moment by observing the contents of one’s consciousness, body, senses, and emotions. Contemplative practices do not attempt to change or control the content according to externally-defined categories. Rather, contemplation cultivates an epistemology of interiority (Hart, 2007). Byquieting external stimuli, the mind looks inward and detaches from “patterns of conditioned thinking, sensation, and behavior” (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1993, p. 122). In this instance, our consciousness becomes open to flowing, temporal, and non-linear content, thereby deepening and expanding awareness and insight. All things are seen as interconnected. Contemplative practice therefore advocates non-attachment so that we do not become absorbed by content: “This opening within us in turn enables a corresponding opening toward the world before us” (Hart, 2007, p. 2). When properly practiced and not encased by external parameters, contemplation leads to mindfulness through an attitude of equanimity and de-automatization (Deikman, 1966). Not all contemplative practices are believed to lead to mindfulness, however. Parameters will be discussed later.

**OUTCOMES ASSOCIATED WITH CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTICES**

The extant literature on contemplation is bountiful, ranging from peer-reviewed empirical journal articles, to practitioner-focused book chapters and training manuals, to pop culture and secular newsmagazines/Websites. Meditation has received by far the most attention in academic circles, with almost 200 peer-reviewed publications available. Other contemplative practices such as labyrinth walking, yoga, and Tai Chi have also received consideration. What is notable about these studies is the diversity of circumstances and populations included. They have included contemplation training and practice periods ranging from 5 days to one month to an academic semester. Cancer patients, prisoners, medical school students, counseling psychology students, learners with hyperactivity disorders, and undergraduate students and athletes from China, the U.S., Australia, and other corners of the globe have constituted the studies’ samples. Random assignments, control groups, pre-/post-test responses on validated instruments, physiological and anatomical tests (e.g., MRI), parental report, and self-reports provide varying degrees of methodological precision in the studies’ designs.

In their review of research on the integration of meditation into higher education, Shapiro, Brown, and Astin (2008) grouped research-based findings that evidence the need to consider more mindful approaches in teaching and learning into three categories. These categories are used in Table 3.2 to thematically group the findings that repeat across the literature and parallel documented service-learning outcomes.

Upon review, the overlap between documented outcomes from engagement in contemplative practice and engagement in service-learning is noticeable. While service-learning has been linked to additional positive
### TABLE 3.2 Select Outcomes from Engagement in Contemplative Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cognitive &amp; Academic Performance</th>
<th>Increased ability to reduce distracting thought and behaviors, capacity to focus attention, and greater self-awareness (Simons &amp; Clabaris, 1999; Woolacott, 2007; Zylowska et al., 2008)</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Development of internal technologies (e.g., perceptual and cognitive abilities) that optimize the quality of attention through the control of physiological states (Murphy, Donovum, &amp; Taylor, 1997)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Increased attention levels (Jha, Krompinger, &amp; Baime, 2007; Miller, 1994; Slagter et al., 2007)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Thickened brain regions associated with attention and sensory perception correlated to amount of meditation (Lazar et al., 2005; Narr et al., 2007)</td>
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<td>Increased academic achievement as measured through GPA scores (Hall, 1999)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Realignment of brain activity from the right (stress) to left (joyful) hemisphere (Davidson et al., 2003; Kabat-Zinn, 2005)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Increased thought patterns, coping, flexibility, long-term thinking, linked to stress reduction, flexibility, and affect regulation following stressful events (Fredrickson, 1998)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Increased physiological coherence thought to improve cognitive performance (Tiller, McGrat, &amp; Atkinson, 1998)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Reduced stress and anxiety, and enhanced psychological well-being (Baer, 2003; Brown, Ryan, &amp; Creswell, 2007; Jän et al., 2007; Shapiro, Brown, &amp; Biegel, 2007; Shapiro, Schwartz, &amp; Bonner, 1998)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lowered anxiety, depression, anger, fatigue, and stress-related cortisol (Tang et al., 2007)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Reduced stress, increased positive mood development, and quicker recovery from negative mood states (Broderick, 2005)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Reduced reactivity to stimuli perceived as threatening, better emotional regulation, lowered anxiety/stress (Baer, Smith, Hopkins, Krietemeyer, and Toney, 2006; Brown &amp; Ryan, 2003; Creswell, Way, Eisenberger, &amp; Lieberman, 2007)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Whole Person Development</td>
<td>Fosters psychological, social, and spiritual growth (Davidson et al., 2003; Hardy, 1987; Miller, 1990; Rensier, Pappel, &amp; Moon, 1991; Shapiro, Schwartz, &amp; Sanerick, 2002; Whitmore, 1986)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Enhanced sense of trust, relatedness, interpersonal closeness, and relationship quality with others (Barnes, Brown, Krusczak, Campbell, &amp; Rogge, 2007; Tlocynski &amp; Tendrick, 1998)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enhanced emotional awareness, management, and sensitivity (Goleman, 1995; Selowey &amp; Mayer, 1995)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Enhanced empathic tendencies (Shapiro &amp; Bronow, 2007; Shapiro &amp; Walsh, 2003)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increased compassion for self and others (Shapiro, Astin, Bishop, &amp; Coren, 2005; Shapiro et al., 2007; Walsh &amp; Shapiro, 2006)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Strengthens meta-cognition (Segal, Williams, &amp; Teasdale, 2002)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Increased feelings of benevolence and common humanity; reduced feelings of difference/discrimination; enhanced self-concept/self-esteem; enables handling stress and impulse control (Enawadheha &amp; Tort, 1997; Miller, 1994)</td>
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</table>

Individual and civic outcomes, select impacts that parallel those from contemplative practice include:

- increased social, cognitive, and interpersonal skills (Krute & Billig, 2002)
- improved moral reasoning and problem solving (Eyler, Root, & Giles, 1998)
- demonstrated more respectful attitudes and caring toward diverse groups (Yates & Youniss, 1996)
- growth in personal development (Giles & Eyler, 1998; Yates & Youniss, 1996)
- reduced risk behaviors (Billig, 2000; Meyer & Sandler, 2001)
- increased general self-efficacy (Billig, 2000; Furco, 2003)

### CONTEMPLATION IN SERVICE-LEARNING

Given the similar outcomes from engaging in contemplation and service-learning, I revisited the previously highlighted guides to reflection to search for the inclusion of contemplative practices (see Table 3.1). Only three of the guides reviewed include methods that are definitively contemplative in design, meaning that they are designed to focus on the present, are introspective in nature, and are not product- or results-oriented (Fletcher, 2002; Northwest Service Academy, 2006; Reed & Koliba, 2001). Practices include guided imagery, visualization, and stream of consciousness, with the first two repeating across more than one of the guides.

Though my second review revealed service-learning's consideration of contemplative practices, it is also clear that these practices remain secondary to more traditional approaches to reflection. This deficiency is troubling, given that it can be safely assumed that service-learning practitioners might be directed to these publications when looking for materials and ideas about designing, implementing, and assessing service-learning. In other words, by not including the full range of options (i.e., contemplative practices), we are silently discouraging their use.

Some might argue that journals and dialogue-based activities can also be considered contemplative practices, depending on their use. Although I do not disagree entirely, I do believe that these methods are limited as a contemplative practice specifically when used as part of service-learning. Language-based activities, especially those that require reporting out to a "powered" entity like a teacher, do not allow for the development of mindfulness, as they are, by default, controlled not only by linguistic categories of grammar, syntax, and lexicon, but also by the practice of creating a product.
for others. For service-learning, journaling (which would require attending to one's own present thoughts, sensations, and behavior) is an impossible means to mindfulness, in my opinion. Journaling, and even contemplative dialogue, during a service activity is unlikely and dangerous. Attempts to do so would draw strange reactions from community partners, who might interpret such activity as disregard for the actual service, as a student's exploitation of the opportunity, and—even more dangerous, depending on the service context—as an objectification of already marginalized clients. More pragmatically, how can an individual mindfully write in a journal while simultaneously engaging in a service activity?

To seek supportive or contradictory evidence in the empirical literature, queries on the keywords service-learning, mindfulness, spirituality, contemplation, and meditation were submitted via the library function on the Web site of the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse, ERIC, various academic search engines available through the author's university library, and Google Scholar. A handful of findings were returned. However, selections appeared to misuse the term contemplation as a synonym for reflection (e.g., Hatcher & Bringle, 1997). Similarly, references to spirituality were limited to the effect of service-learning participation on an individual's spiritual development and/or arguing for a more purposive attempt by the field of service-learning to include spirituality. Metaphysical or spiritual methods of "reflection" were not present in the results.

I will candidly note, however, that if the term service-learning were replaced with service or experiential education, dozens of articles discussing the use of contemplative activities and/or associated results are available. However, given service-learning's distinction from other forms of experiential education, and its promotion of reflection to the success of the pedagogy, substitutions cannot be made from the wide array of pedagogies under the broad experiential education umbrella.

To add depth to this investigation and account for other non-published, peer-reviewed sources, a quick review of professional meetings, events, activities, and conferences was made by using the same keywords. There were several promising findings. For example, Washington Campus Compact sponsored a day-long conference in 2009 focusing on nourishing the soul in service. At this meeting, attendees learned about and engaged in various mindfulness activities, including Tai Chi. In the same year, Youth Service California (YSACL) offered a two-day event to investigate and discuss the relationship between peace, service, and spirituality. Complementary to this meeting, YSACL partnered with the Shinnyo-en Foundation to coordinate a "Study Group on Peace, Service, and Spirituality." Probably the most well-known service-learning event that focuses exclusively on spirituality is the National Faith-Based Service-Learning Conference. At this biennial conference at Messiah College, attendees gather to dialogue and reflect on issues of faith and civic engagement. Support is offered for existing programs and representatives of colleges and universities seeking to develop new service-learning programs with faith or spiritual components.

The admittedly surface-level manifest analysis of the service-learning literature and meetings is not meant to be a definitive statement of the treatment of topics of spirituality, mindfulness, contemplation, and investigations of the soul in the field. What should be garnered, however, is that it appears that a distressingly mere smattering of the attention in service-learning is paid to these topics if judged solely on the events and publications offered through the most commonly searched sources. The message sent by these limited findings should not come as a surprise, however. Radecke (2007) previously chastised the field of service-learning for its lack of reference to spirituality with specific reference to its discounting of contemplative practices "merely because they do not produce a durable record" (p. 23). As long as this continues, service-learning misses opportunities to develop the ontological ground for an ethic of compassion and service necessary for long-term commitment to civic engagement (Mayes, 2001).

This perspective is not ill-founded. Service can be argued to operate within a spiritual framework. It is a spirit for action, justice, giving, equity, or something greater than oneself that leads to and sustains action in those individuals that are authentically connected to and oriented toward service. Proof is in the autobiographies of some of the greatest and most admired civic leaders. Mahatma Ghandi, Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., Archbishop Oscar Romero, Malcolm X, and Mother Theresa all operated in and drew strength from a combined epistemology of spirituality and service. A denial of the role that spirituality has, and arguably continues to play unconsciously, in service providers begs us then to face the question: What would have been the outcomes from these leaders' struggles if they had not had a spiritual motivation, but rather relied on validation from an inequitable and unjust society to direct and support them? It is undeniable that many of us would cringe when considering the possibilities.

**ABSENCE OF CONTEMPLATION IN WESTERN EDUCATION**

Based on the discussions thus far, service-learning's withdrawal from contemplative practices is clearly linked to some force. Possibilities include (1) service-learning's attempt to avoid criticisms levied against experiential education for being too soft, disregarding logic for emotions and personal opinions/experiences; (2) service-learning practitioners' relative ignorance about or arrogance toward non-Western epistemologies and practices; and/or (3) contemplation's evocation of the tensions between religion and education in the United States.
John Dewey, a foundational reference in service-learning, consistently criticized the segmentation of seemingly opposing themes into dualistic relationships. Specific to the current discussion, Dewey felt a particular disgust for the mind/body dualism and advocated for treating the mind-body as an "integral whole" (Dewey, 2008, p. 27). He strongly condemned the established division of the two as a "pervasive flaw that plagues both theory and practice" (Shusterman, 2008, p. 184) and even utilized new compound words body-mind and mind-body in his work so as not to be trapped by linguistic traditions (note the change from / to -). Dewey affirms that "the integration of mind-body in action" is most crucially a practical question, "the most practical of all questions we can ask of our civilization" (Dewey, 2008, pp. 29), and one that demands social reconstruction as well as individual efforts to achieve better unity in practice. Without such reform, "we shall continue to live in a society in which a soulless and heartless materialism is compensated for by soulful but futile and unnatural idealism and spiritualism" (Dewey, 2008, pp. 30). It is from this need for an active nature of knowledge that Dewey's pragmatism stems.

Regardless, 20th century Behaviorists further marginalized contemplation, arguing that non-observable phenomena are not valid and that all internal events are responses to external environmental stimuli. They held that direct experience is the only source of knowledge. With few momentary exceptions, Rationalism's contention that knowledge is derived from reason and Behaviorism's unremitting empiricism has continued to steer Western education for the past century. This is most evident in the preponderance of rhetoric surrounding standards, best practices, metric-driven assessment, and meritocratic funding/pay based on students' scores on a single normed standardized test. As a result, the mind is severed from other elements that inform the human experience, including the body and the soul.

**CALLS FOR SPIRITUALITY IN EDUCATION**

Expecting learners and teachers to detach from their spiritual selves when passing through campus gates or classroom doorways is naïve (Shahjahan, 2004). Rather than trying to deny an essential piece of one's being, the need for a reintegration of the spiritual into education exists (Slattery, 2006). The same advocates acknowledge that spirituality is not easily defined, explained, or understood because it is based in the personal or individual, and is therefore infinitesimally unique (Wane, 2002). However, they also caution naysayers against equating spirituality with religion. Religion, in contrast to spirituality, is conveyed via sacred texts or scripture, is linked to formal traditions and codes, and is observable (Dei, James, Karumanchery, James-Wilson, & Zine, 2000). Education as an institution, however, has
chosen to ignore that contemplative practices are viable pedagogical tools because they have been historically connected to all of the world’s major contemplative spiritual and philosophical traditions, including meditation in Buddhism, yoga in Hinduism, centering prayer in Christianity, Ramana Maharshi in Islam, or deep pondering in the Jewish Kabbalah (Hart, 2004). Yet, many of these practices may be introduced in secular form (Duerr, 2004; Kabat-Zinn, 1996).

Others have advocated for a more balanced education where there will be a simultaneous cultivation of the tangible and intangible aspects of human existence—mind, body, and soul—thereby addressing both the intuitive and analytic sides to learning (Greene, 1971; Noddings & Shore, 1984; Slattery, 2006). They explain that the aim is not to replace the rational with the spiritual, but rather allow each to inform the other.

The development of a soul-centered pedagogy to complement our existing analytic one is not unrealistic. Contemplative practices are already present in educational environments yet are still relegated to co-curricular pursuits (e.g., athletics, theater, dance), even while evidence of contemplative practices continues to mount. For example, a 2006 issue of the Teachers College Record, a top research journal in the field of education, was devoted to the use of contemplative practices in education. And we have seen increased interest in the application of certain mindfulness raising techniques in secular school settings (Duerr, 2004). Wuthnow (1998) hypothesized that this interest is due to Western populations, specifically those in the U.S., moving away from religiously rooted “dwelling-oriented spirituality” to “seeking-oriented spirituality.” In the latter case, individuals “negotiate their own understandings and experiences of the sacred” (Wuthnow, 1998, p. 169).

With this in mind, it is not unrealistic that service-learning could embed methods that allow for the development of interiority through a more complete integration of the self. Apffel-Margin and Bush (2005) advocate for new strategies that utilize inward inquiry to complement traditional expository modes of investigation. In this context, the contemplative practices could play this role. After a brief review of Kolb’s experiential learning cycle and its weaknesses vis-à-vis the infusion of contemplative practices, I present a soul-centered model for consideration by service-learning.

**KOLB’S EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING CYCLE, REFLECTION, AND CRITICISMS**

A ubiquitous reference regarding the placement and utility of reflection in the service-learning literature is Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning cycle (Figure 3.1). According to Kolb, the learner begins by having a concrete experience. Then, through a reflective activity, the learner reviews and reconceptualizes the experience abstractly. The learner then actively experiments with the new understanding, creating new concrete experiences. From this point, the cycle restarts and continuously repeats, permitting lifelong learning through the cognitive transformation of real-life personal experiences.

Kolb’s model has endured criticisms from myriad disciplinary, theoretical, and epistemological perspectives (Miettinen, 2000; Rogers, 1996; Seaman, 2007; Vince, 1998). Specific to its ability to allow for the integration of contemplative practices, the first weakness stems from the sole use of a reflective practice focused on past, retrospective (i.e., outside the learner) experiences. Further, reflection in Kolb’s model is ephemeral. Once it is completed, the learner moves to the next step, and successful application of reflection outcomes to some abstract conceptualization/theory is assumed. No consideration is given to continual reflection on the same experience. Provided that this is the link between experience and learning, a single, one time per experience use of reflection seems untenable and potentially dangerous if a student believes that when the reflection is done, learning happens. This has particular resonance in academic service-learning, which typically has assigned, scheduled reflection assignments that are bound by the academic semester/quarter.

Second, Kolb’s model is presented as a continuous, unidirectional cycle. Kolb’s model segments each stage of the process as if reality exists in a vacuum, not considering that these stages might actually happen simultaneously, out-of-order, or even invert back upon themselves as mini-processes. By doing so, the process becomes temporally and contextually bound and
presents steps as objects or "experience fragments" to be studied rather than a holistic, organic experience. Such a clean segmentation might allow for the easier study of a process but does not reflect the messiness of reality or leave learners with realistic perceptions of an experiential learning process that is seldom linear.

**SOUL-CENTERED "BICYCLE WHEEL MODEL" FOR SERVICE-LEARNING**

A new model of experiential learning could simultaneously address the potential mindlessness of service-learning and weaknesses of Kolb's model. To account for these weaknesses, and for its practical and figurative application, I employ the metaphor of a bicycle wheel. This metaphor will provide a recognizable symbol to describe a model that will strengthen the experiential learning cycle through the infusion of contemplative practices. First, a brief explanation of the anatomy of a bicycle wheel is obligatory. Despite widespread familiarity with the object, it is likely that many have never consciously dissected and labeled it for extended meaning.

Moving from the center of the wheel outward, a bicycle wheel is composed of four distinct pieces: hub, spokes, rim, and tire. The hub is located in the center of the wheel and serves as the base of the entire model. It is also the wheel's connection to the rest of the bicycle. Therefore, the hub offers support to both the single wheel and the larger mechanism. Without a hub, a wheel is simply circles of rubber and metal. Though a wheel may roll for a short period without a hub, it will ultimately collapse in upon itself, missing a central piece where all internal elements of the wheel unite to counter the pressure exerted by external forces.

Spokes radiate from the hub like rays from the sun and connect it to the rim. Collectively, spokes provide support to the rim and maintain equal distance between the hub and rim so that the wheel can roll smoothly. Missing the occasional spoke is inconsequential in the long run. However, a grave deficiency may allow for a weak spot to develop in the rim, resulting in an uneven ride. Complementary to this, spokes also absorb shock during a journey.

The rim establishes the circular shape of the wheel, thereby establishing a structure for motion. The rim liaises between the internal parts of the wheel (i.e., those that do not make contact with the pavement) and the wheel's external part, the tire. The rim will weaken if the spokes are not equally distributed, and buckle if not supported by the hub.

The tire is the outermost part of the wheel and is the only part of the wheel that has direct, surface contact with the earth. A tire wears and, therefore, has a limited lifespan. It relies on the internal elements of the wheel for support, unable to roll if the rim, spokes, or hub are missing. Likewise, if a chunk of the tire is damaged, it will not roll efficiently or in the intended direction. While bicycle wheels are fixed in place by the hub, they are free to spin both forward and backward, unless an external force is applied to prevent it from moving.

Given the above dissection, a new "Bicycle Wheel Model" will allow for an epistemology of interiority while keeping introspective elements in a single cohesive model. At the hub of the adapted model is the soul. O'Malley (2007) explains that a soul has multiple, contested meanings, but can be understood to be a "tacit and mysterious dimension of human experience" (p. 86) that involves interiority and spirituality. Although not tangible like the hub, a soul is the essence of an individual. It provides a center to our being and supports our mental, physical, and spiritual pursuits. Like a hub to the bicycle wheel, the soul is a learner's liaison to the rest of the universe. For some, the soul is pure, eternal energy and, therefore, can transcend corporeality and mortality. The soul is where all elements of our being unite for collective strength. The absence of a soul, or being soulless, is akin to an emptiness of humanity, or lack of consideration, care, or empathy toward others' realities and existence. Exclusive of the soul, a person is a malleable shell of organic material that will decompose over time. The placement

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*Figure 3.2 Bicycle wheel experiential learning cycle.*
of the soul as the foundational element to this model centralizes learning within the learner. Learning becomes a “way of being” (Ash & Clayton, 2004) rather than responses to external requests.

The spokes on the bicycle wheel metamorphose into introspection via contemplative practices. Introspection refers to the ability of a learner to self-observe and reason about his or her own present, conscious inner thoughts, sensations, feelings, and soul. Contemplative practices, like spokes, are the most direct link to the soul because they are based on the development of interiority by linking mind, spirit, and body simultaneously. Contemplative spokes also connect the soul to external events because they allow for the development of mindfulness, which informs life beyond decontextualized, pre-conceived mindsets. This is a trans-temporal and personal introspective practice that can happen before, during, after, or even completely separate from a service-learning process. It is always focused on the present being, however, and provides continuous support for service-learning, or experiential learning cycle. As it is true for spokes, missing the occasional contemplative moment or opportunity for introspection will not halt the rest of the process. But, longitudinal absence could disconnect the soul from other elements and prevent the individual from progressing mindfully. Findings regarding reduced stress and anxiety through contemplative practices hint that the pressure of introspection may also absorb the shock from external stimuli along a journey.

The rim of the wheel symbolizes directionality. As stated, Kolb’s model implies unidirectional motion. However, experiential learning in reality does not manifest accordingly. A learner can move backward and forward between preceding and subsequent steps numerous times before progressing. The bidirectional cyclic model precludes stagnancy as it permits one to always backtrack if stuck. This movement provides an active mechanism to connect our internal beings with external events, such as volunteer experiences, extrospective reflections, and academic concepts. If the directionality is not supported internally via better knowledge of one’s own senses, behavior, feelings, and soul, one flounders or buckles like a damaged rim. Stagnancy in the process can result, which may be equated with stimuli that cannot be encoded, and, therefore, learning will not occur.

Lastly, the tire equates to observable and measurable elements that are based on the environment. Like a tire, however, these experiences are fleeting or have a limited life, or may even be missed by uninformed teachers or students (Wade, 1997). For service-learning, pieces might equate to the end of an academic semester, completion of volunteer service hours, or submission of a reflection assignment. These moments are replaced by new ones, which, like their predecessors, will rely on the constant presence, support, and stability of the internal elements to maintain course. The tire sections are distinct, with particular goals/duties. The internal elements, on the other hand, are not goal-, but process-oriented. The internal pieces transcend time and context. The experiential pieces cannot progress long without the internal and not at all without the hub, or soul, of a learner. In addition, if the hub is missing, the external service activities and associated learning will not be connected to the larger society. In other words, neither society nor the learner benefits from the service-learning experience. Because the internal elements of this model are different for every individual, each learner’s course will be unique.

I would like to be unquestionably clear here that reflection is not being replaced by introspection in the “Bicycle Wheel Model” (Figure 3.2). I am also not advocating individuals’ inward withdrawal into an isolated consciousness. Rather, this model allows and advocates for a complementary utilization of various practices and strategies that would theoretically increase the ways in which learners interact with external and internal stimuli during service-learning, while simultaneously preparing to do so after the service event is over and they have filled all requests to reflect by an “intelligence expert.”

A multilayered approach additionally addresses the varied learning styles of students. In fact, Thompson (2005) has argued that methods that seek to systematically train a learner to become more sensitive to experience through increased attention and self-regulation of emotion (e.g., “first-person methods”) should work in unison with third-person approaches. Contemplative practices are offered as means to cultivate this ability, and they may even enrich one’s understanding of and efforts to engage in reflection over time (Tremmel, 1993). For service-learning, the potential reflexivity between the two approaches may run even deeper. The integration of contemplative practices that support mindfulness with more experiential action can embed the self in the community (Palmer, 1998). Firman and Vargiu (1990) concur:

Study of the outer world and the inner world are...parallel and complementary. We can then use our understanding more and more to bring out personalities and the world into meaningful correspondence with transpersonal reality. In this way, the generalized visions we have attained in our transpersonal experiences become particularized and can be practically applied to ourselves, to society in general, and to our part in society. (p. 138)

INFUSION OF CONTEMPLATIVE METHODS IN TEACHER TRAINING AND FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

Like extrospective reflection strategies, contemplative practices that aim to increase one’s state of perception have to be learned and take practice.
Unfortunately, very few educators have had continuous experiences and access to these methods within the context of schooling, if at all. For this reason, expectations for full integration of contemplative methods are low unless there is a systematic and purposeful attempt to make ourselves aware of and train others to use alternative approaches.

With particular attention to the use of contemplative methods in K-12 service-learning, the role of teacher preparation programs deserves mention. New teachers often mirror pedagogically what was modeled by their college instructors or by K-12 cooperating teachers and college instructors (Shumer, 1997). If pre-service teachers are not introduced to and asked to try non-traditional activities like contemplation, then it becomes less likely that they will incorporate the practices after they graduate, maintaining the problematic mind/body dualism.

As has been recommended for teacher educators who desire their students to learn of and be comfortable with service-learning so that they may employ it in their future classrooms, contemplative methods should accompany more cognitive techniques within their university courses. University and college centers for faculty development will need to offer training and support to faculty choosing to try these approaches. For example, at the University of Central Florida, a philosophy and religion instructor who has background and academic interest in the application of contemplation to classroom practices includes meditation, breathing exercises, and discussions of mindfulness at “Teaching Circles” at the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning. Faculty may also submit proposals to a biannual faculty development conference and receive monetary support to infuse contemplative methods into a course.

Until that time, this need should be embraced as an opportunity for interested service-learning practitioners to invite community partners knowledgeable about contemplative practices to be co-instructors. Through this collaborative partnership, the field can more fully realize the reflexivity of effective service-learning.

**FINAL THOUGHTS**

There is a powerful quote commonly attributed to Albert Einstein: “No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it.” Einstein is celebrated as one of the most brilliant thinkers of our time. His theories about the universe allowed scientists, mathematicians, and even theologians to consider new possibilities about space, time, structure, and purpose. What is additionally interesting about Einstein is his awareness that continually approaching a problem from the same perspective will never lead to its solution. Service-learning developed out of a similar understanding: education should solve for the “inert knowledge problem” (Eyer, 2002, p. 517), address social problems, and ignite a fire in learners for life-long civic commitment. To achieve these goals would require an alternative approach to pedagogy.

In this chapter, I have endeavored to empower service-learning even more by integrating an additional level of consciousness as a countermeasure to the potential limitations of introspective reflection and mindlessness. While I have argued for a broader epistemological approach to service-learning reflection through the addition of contemplative practices, the new elements should not be seen as a panacea. I do not attempt to be definitive in my assertions or offerings, but to problematize our understandings so as to stimulate the field to engage in its own form of introspection. These approaches should be included in a practitioner’s comprehensive toolbox and used in tandem with a variety of different strategies. After all, “every method has its limitations, so given the diversity of human needs, problems, aims, contexts, and temperaments, it would be foolish to advocate one method as always superior or always helpful” (Shusterman, 2008, p. 213). Tucker (1999) acknowledges service-learning's eclectic epistemology, which would allow for new approaches and position it to contribute to the growing interest in “other ways of knowing” (Yankelovich, 2005)—a trend conjectured to radically transform education in the next decade.

Such experimentalism will foremost require that service-learning practitioners and researchers remain open to possibilities and not commit ourselves to the historicist reductionism that assumes that these experiences are epistemologically invalid. Being mindful of our own subjective biases through “self-contextualizing” will be necessary to release ourselves from mindsets that might be constraining the field’s potential. Certainly, constructivists will immediately doubt the inclusion of introspection because it does not allow for the segmentation of the internal human experience into an “objective” operationalization of measurable variables. For service-learning, such myopia and arguable arrogance serves little use. At times, we must all be comfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity, and with giving up control to the learners themselves.

For scholars, the addition of introspection and contemplative practices offers an opportunity to look at service-learning through a broader range of theory, which could prove to buttress and legitimate the field (Waldstein, 2003). And, Eyer (2002) has commented that service-learning will be enhanced by research examining alternative approaches to reflective instruction. There are various validated and reliable instruments available to support inquiries on the use of contemplative practices as modes of inquiry in service-learning. These resources include: Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS; Brown & Ryan, 2003); Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory (FMI; Buchheld, Grossman, & Walach, 2001); Kentucky Inventory of Mindfulness
Scale (KIMS; Baer, Smith, & Allen, 2004); Cognitive and Affective Mindfulness Scale (CAMs; Feldman, Hayes, Kumar, & Grecson, 2004); Mindfulness Questionnaire (MQ; Chadwick, Hember, Mead, Lilley, & Dagnan, 2005); and, Toronto Mindfulness Scale (Lau et al., 2006).

As a researcher, practitioner, and proponent of service-learning, I strongly desire that the field realize its full transformative possibilities. From my perspective, these endeavors will enable us to reposition ourselves as a counter-normative pedagogy. While many may shrink at the implications of returning to a marginal position, it is, according to Einstein, through non-normative pathways that problems are ultimately solved. Regardless, the field of service-learning must find courage and motivation in its uniqueness. Assimilating to the rituals and routines that have thus far served to control potential through a fear of non-legitimization is not going to secure our existence within K-12 schools or higher education. We can persevere and ultimately succeed, but this struggle will require opening up. And this will include reintegrating interiority, spirituality, soul, and unique personal ways of being into service-learning and community engagement. After all, if one does not do the inner work, it will ultimately manifest in the outer work (Palmer, 1998).

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