

The “Learning Service: of Service-Learning: An Exploratory Study in a Business Ethics Course Context

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Drawing on our teaching and learning experiences and work with community-based service-learning projects over the years, we explore how students are able to learn the value of service to other through service-learning. Qualitative analysis is used to better understand how students are able to learn for, with, and through community. In particular, multiple levels and nestings of community connections appear to help students feel a deeper and more meaningful connection to course learning, team and classmates, school and university, local community, global community, and transcendent purpose.

In response to a growing sense of complex interdependencies in our world, to reported crises in civic responsibility and ethical leadership, and to public critique of business education, international educational networks and associations (e.g., Campus Compact; Principles of Responsible Management Education; The Talloires Network) have called for increased focus on community engagement in universities and business schools globally. Community-based service-learning (CBSL) has correspondingly seen proliferation in institutions of higher education around the world. There are an increasing number of centres of service-learning as well as established networks, for example Bentley College, Campus Compact and Enactus (formerly SIFE). At the same time, there are reports of increasing emphasis in higher education on commercial interests, competencies, and career goals over higher moral purposes such as learning service to other and community (e.g., Bauerlein, 2015; Brooks, 2014). Lightstone (2014) recently asked how we can better bring together “...the world of academe, and the concentric circles of communities around the University.” CBSL is a pedagogical approach that provides opportunities for students to learn the value of serving others through engaging with their communities in meaningful and transformative ways.

Drawing on our teaching and learning experiences, we explore how students are able to learn the value of service to other through CBSL. The first author has integrated CBSL projects into undergraduate and graduate management courses, as well as mentored extracurricular service-learning projects intermittently over the past 20 years. Both authors have applied curricular and extra-curricular service-learning projects over the past 6 years. We begin by reviewing some of the literature on experiential learning and service-learning, with a particular focus on service-learning in the context of business ethics

education and community engagement. We then describe the context and methods for our study. We answer a call for additional empirical research on the relationship between CBSL and business ethics education (e.g., Seider, Gimour, & Rabinowicz, 2010), as well as a call to further study the methodological variations in service-learning projects (Yorio & Ye, 2012). Although much research has been done on the connections between service-learning and community engagement, our focus on multiple levels and nestings of community connections within CBSL projects contributes to an understanding of how to guide and consciously structure service-learning projects. We conclude with implications for scholarship and practice in CBSL, as well as for ethical leadership development.

COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICE-LEARNING

The literature suggests a rise in demand for service-learning and support of service-learning in institutions of higher education (Helm-Stevens & Griego, 2009; Kenworthy-U'Ren, 2008; www.compact.org). As mentioned above, this coincides with calls for academic institutions to increasingly engage with their communities, especially with regards to student-community engagement (Garver, Divine, & Spralls, 2009; Mason O'Connor & Lynch, 2011; Millican & Bourner, 2011; Thomson, Smith-Tolken, Naidoo, & Bringle, 2011). There has been an increase in theoretical and empirical study of CBSL over the past decade (e.g., Bringle, Phillips, & Hudson, 2004; Casile, Hoover, & O'Neil, 2011; Cress, Yamashita, Duarte, & Burns, 2010; Flannery & Pragman, 2008; Goldberg & Coufal, 2009; Helm-Stevens & Griego, 2009; Lester, Tomkovick, Wells, & Flunker, 2005; Schlesinger & Cohen, 2009; Seider et al., 2010; see also special issue on service-learning in *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 2005).

We adopt Kendall's (1990: 20) definition, which describes CBSL as initiatives where students work on needed projects in the community that are tied to course learning goals and involve critical analysis and self-reflection. Other scholars have emphasized how structured reflection is key to making a community engaged learning experience impactful for students (Boud, Keogh, and Walker, 1985; Jacoby, 1996). Service-learning has been found to be particularly effective in business education (Karakas & Kavas, 2009; Lamb, Swinth, Vinton, & Lee, 1998; McCarthy & Tucker, 2002; Salimbene, Buono, Lafarge, & Nurick, 2005) and business ethics education (Vega, 2007) and leadership development (e.g., Baran, Jones, & Hipp, 2011; Cress et al., 2010). The experiential component of service-learning allows business students the opportunity to promote a wider approach to ethics (Kohls, 1996), emphasize social involvement and the important role businesses and business decisions play within a community (Fleckenstein, 1997), and increase their moral capabilities (Godfrey, 1999; Kenworthy-U'ren, 1999). When linked with service-learning projects, business courses can potentially provide the student with personal and interpersonal development, the opportunity to engage in reflective practice, the experience of critical thinking and perspective transformation, and the chance to realize the responsibility of ethical leadership and social citizenship (Angelidis, Tomic & Ibrahim, 2004; Cress et al., 2010).

The literature outlines additional potential benefits that students can receive from a CBSL experience including clarifying values, encouraging multicultural awareness, developing a host of managerial skills (problem solving, project management, communication, research, etc.) and building student community, among others (e.g., Helm-Stevens & Griego, 2009; Kolenko, Porter, Wheatley, & Colby, 1996; Mason O'Connor & Lynch, 2011; Waldenstein & Reihner, 2001; Ward & Wendel, 2000; Yorio & Ye, 2012; Zlotkowski, 1996). Much of the management education literature focuses on the "learning for community" aspects of service-learning; that is, how students are able to apply newly learned (or in development) skills and knowledge in a model of delivery and/or stewardship (e.g., Helm-Stevens & Taylor, 2009; Salimbene et al, 2005; Segal & Drew, 2012).

However, one of the guidelines Kolenko et al. (1996) suggest as being critical to successful CBSL is the development of a commitment among students to serving the community and promoting ethical leadership and social responsibility. There is evidence that most students who have been involved in a service-learning project will commit themselves to community service in the future (Crowe, 2003; Hanson & Moore, 2014; McCarthy & Tucker, 2002; Wittmer, 2004), and in some cases to careers in

community service (Salimbene et al., 2005). According to Baran et al. (2011, p.8), CBSL can lead to a “developed philosophy of service.” According to Csikszentmihalyi (interviewed by Taylor, 2005, p. 366), “service learning alerts students to the community that they are part of and alerts them to ways of helping its people.” Service learning is “intimately integrated with society” (Stuteville & Ikerd, 2009, p. 10) and can help students “to learn from those who are different, and in so doing, to make a difference in our communities and in the world” (Dipadova-Stocks, 2005, p. 352).

CBSL also has its roots in problem-based, transformative, and reflective pedagogies that focus on empowering and transforming students as well as developing critical thinking and civic responsibility (e.g., Dewey, 1997; Freire, 1994; Kolb, 1984; Mezirow, 2000; Salimbene et al., 2005). Bamber and Hankin (2011) draw on transformational learning theory to show how students experience a change in worldview through CBSL. Transformative learning is similar to other applications in education and learning such as consciousness raising, conscientization (e.g., Freire, 1994), critical reflection (e.g., Carson & Fisher, 2006), and global citizen learning (Lilley, Barker, & Harris, 2014). According to scholars of adult learning, reflecting on one’s lived experience is critical to the learning process and often results in attitudinal and behavioural changes (e.g., Argyris & Schon, 1978; Kolb, 1984; Mezirow, 2000).

We are aware of recent critique of business education for lacking a socially responsible and transcendental purpose (e.g., Ghoshal, 2005; Giacalone, 2004; Podolny, 2009; Waddock & Lozano, 2013) and for encouraging the development of pro-self over pro-social attitudes and values among students (e.g., Ashforth, Gioia, Robinson, & Trevino, 2008; Dipadova-Stocks, 2005; Ferraro, Pfeffer, & Sutton, 2005; Krishnan, 2008). In her 2012 Academy of Management Presidential Address, Anne Tsui (2013: 167) remarked on growing criticism that “academia has been no better than Wall Street in terms of caring for the world beyond our own interests.” According to Godfrey, Illes, & Berry (2005, p. 309), “the underlying paradigm of business education views humanity and human interactions in purely transactional terms...” These authors suggest that the four Rs of service-learning, i.e. Reality, Reflection, Reciprocity, and Responsibility, provide a counter-point perspective, a richer learning experience, and necessary breadth in business education (Godfrey et al., p. 309).

Our research questions are as follows:

Research Question 1. How do students learn the value of service through CBSL?

Research Question 2. How do students develop a deeper and more meaningful connection to “the other” through multiple levels and nestings of community connections as a part of CBSL?

METHODS

Our primary methods of study were focus groups and interviews with undergraduate Bachelor of Commerce (BComm) students who participated in a variety of CBSL projects in a 3rd year mandatory business ethics course at an Atlantic Canadian university. The mission statements and strategic priorities of the business school and university emphasize, among others, active learning, community engagement, and the development of global citizenship. Convenience samples were used, drawing on four semesters of multiple sections of the business ethics course that included a mandatory team-based service-learning component. Although teams were assigned to ensure diversity, students were actively involved in designing their own specific CBSL projects. Most projects were directly connected to local community organizations and typically involved students meeting with leader volunteers from these organizations and carrying out a service project in the community. In some cases, community members came onto campus to meet with the students and in other cases the students met off-campus with community members. One particular project is described in detail in the next section.

Six one hour focus groups were held in fall 2013 and winter 2014. The focus groups helped to gain better understandings of student attitudes, perceptions, and opinions related to their service-learning experience (Krueger, 2000; Schmiede, 1995). The focus groups also served as a valuable reflection tool for deeper discovery among student participants post CBSL (Schmiede, 1995). The ratio of domestic to

international students was 3:2, which closely mirrors the student body in the BComm program. Eight one hour interviews were also carried out. Demographic information is provided in data tables in Appendix A.

In order to create an environment where students would feel comfortable sharing their opinions, an independent research assistant contacted and recruited students, moderated the focus groups, and carried out all but three of the interviews. 450 students who had previously completed the ethics course and received their grades were invited through e-mail to participate in the study. Students who responded but could not make any of the scheduled focus group times were invited to participate in an individual interview. Confidentiality was ensured and students were informed of the purpose of the study, the benefits of participating, and the option to exit the study at any point in time. Students were asked to reflect on and assess their service-learning experience with respect to level of engagement, skill development, and ideas related to connectedness (specifically connection to business school and university, to local and global community, and to course learning outcomes) (Flannery & Pragman, 2008). The research assistant was trained in focus group moderation and then monitored by the first author during the first focus group to ensure that group interactions were managed professionally and in a content-neutral manner. One page reflection exercises worth 3 points of the student's grade were also included in our data set. Reflections were anonymized prior to coding. Interview questions and a sample reflection exercise are provided in Appendix B.

Transcripts and reflection exercises were content analysed. Two code books were created after an initial search for patterns and themes by the first two authors. We used both pre-defined categories and themes and patterns that emerged from the text (Guthrie, Yongvanich, & Ricceri, 2004). Themes were further refined by the first two authors, reflecting the emerging focus on the themes of different types of learning and service to others, as well as nestings of community connections. A sieve category-set of multiple levels and nestings of community connections was then applied to our data. Coded text length ranged from one sentence to one paragraph. Multiple codes were overlaid when multiple themes were found in a given passage. In the second stage of coding, the third author independently coded three of the focus group transcripts. There was initial agreement on 73% of the coding, thus demonstrating a degree of intercoder reliability (Weber, 1990). However, due to remaining ambiguity and discrepancy, the first and third author discussed the coding until mutual agreement was reached. The specific meta-themes and final coding themes are listed in Appendix C.

FINDINGS

Learning Service Through CBSL

Students described how the CBSL projects helped them to learn in different ways by connecting with the community. The first way is learning "for" the community. As one student in a focus group summarized, "It was a good way to bring ethics to the community." Based on students' comments, this learning was carried out through stewardship, delivery, application, and reinforcement. Students also described how service learning helped them to learn "with" community. Many students referred to the experiential aspects of the projects. For example, one student described "...a unique experience to be able to expand on your learning and understanding of a subject from outside of the classroom" (FG). Another student described "interact[ing] with others who we normally wouldn't" (RE). Several students also described experientially co-learning with community members. Table 1 summarizes the themes and provides examples of student quotes related to learning "for" and "with" community. Abbreviations for data sources are: FG = focus group, I = interview, and RE = reflection exercises.

TABLE 1
LEARNING FOR AND WITH COMMUNITY

Primary focus	Secondary focus	Examples
Learning for community	Stewardship	“It felt like I was giving back something to the world as I believe that I am a citizen of the world. As a citizen of the world I owe a duty of care to all the citizens.” (RE)
	Delivery	“After the great presentation, a lot of the kids seemed interested in helping Jacob out and we referred them to his website as the best way to directly support Wadeng Wings of Hope. I had a good time going to [community school].” (RE)
	Application	“Taking what you’ve learned in the classroom and applying it elsewhere, outside, makes a huge difference.” (FG)
	Reinforcement	“The service learning project really was a great way to feel a sense of social responsibility and will help us keep social responsibility in our minds as we go further in our careers.” (RE)
Learning with Community	Experiential Co-learning	“I’ve heard this sort of thing before, but being the one explaining this to someone else let it sink in a bit more and I think I’ve gained a greater appreciation... (RE)

However, students overwhelmingly focused most of their comments related to learning on the learning that took place “through” community. Again, there were experiential aspects of this learning, but students primarily focused on the transformative (e.g., “Changing me for the better”) and consciousness-raising aspects of learning through community, both from a perspective of self-awareness and from a perspective of other-awareness. Several students also referred to learning the value of service through the life stories and leader role-modeling of various community members they encountered during their projects. This is described further in the next section. Table 2 summarizes the themes and provides examples of student quotes related to learning through community connections.

TABLE 2
LEARNING THROUGH COMMUNITY

Primary focus	Secondary focus	Examples
Learning through community	Experiential	“I got to meet a lot of people. Some were from Germany, some China, a few from different African countries...I got to connect through the project to the global community.” (I) “It was really neat that we actually got to do something and not just talk about doing something. It was not like a case analysis at all. (RE)

		<p>“You’re learning through community.” (I)</p> <p>“Um, I think that by doing the project it did open up our eyes more to, uh, what’s actually going on in the world.” (FG).</p>
	Transformational	<p>“It was a rainy Sunday and honestly I just wanted to lie around and watch football with my friends. When I arrived at the church there was already a huddle of hungry people around the door, not the huddle I was originally planning to see on a Sunday afternoon, but it made me feel good to help these people, a lot better than I would have felt at home watching overpaid millionaires toss a football around.” (RE)</p> <p>“I feel that my beliefs and assumptions have changed towards these people.” (RE)</p> <p>“My volunteerism as a whole increased itself like outside of the school.” (I)</p>
	Consciousness raising - Self-aware	<p>“I learned a lot about myself.” (FG)</p> <p>“It personally opened my eyes to the importance of doing this kind of work in the community. (RE)</p> <p>“I have become more aware of how small efforts from different organizations can help such a large group of people.” (RE)</p>
	Consciousness raising - Other-aware	<p>“The [drop-in] center is something that I was not aware that we had in the city...It helped me realize how many are living without homes.” (RE)</p> <p>“The Sunday supper is not just a place where people come for a meal. The people who go are there for the community that they feel.” (RE)</p> <p>“It provided the chance to see things from someone else’s perspective and even create empathy for others less fortunate.” (RE)</p>
	Community role models	<p>“Just looking at someone smiling and that person has an extra pair [of pants] or jacket.’ I’m like wow, I wish I could do that, you know.” (I)</p> <p>“To hear what [NGO leader] went through at the age of seven was tragic. No one should have to go through the things that he did especially at that young of age.” (FG)</p> <p>“[Nun], who runs the center, thinks of no one but others and does everything that she can to help and improve the quality of life for these less fortunate people.” (RE)</p>

All three data sources provided evidence of students describing the development of pro-social values and motivations related to their CBSL experiences.

“This was the first time where the effort I put into a project was rewarded by helping others instead of just helping my GPA. I found this very rewarding (FG).

“Like the people who are really into it, you see that everywhere, despite whether they’re being graded or not. It was going beyond just getting marks for some people.” (I)

“You can feel like you’re doing good; you’re not just doing it to do a project.” (FG)

“[The] project ...recognize the needs of others outside of [school]...It reminded me that I needed to do something that doesn’t benefit myself.” (RE)

Multiple Levels and Nestings of Community Connectedness

Multiple levels of community connectedness were evident in many students’ CBSL experiences. Examples of the different levels of community connections are illustrated in Table 3.

TABLE 3
LEVELS OF COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS IN CBSL PROJECTS

Level of Community Connection	Example
Connecting to global community	Making it like everyone in this world is no longer from different countries, speaks different languages, but only people from this one planet Earth.” (RE) “The world is composed of different beliefs, abilities, and aspirations. This is reflected on a micro level within the classroom.” (RE)
Connecting to local community	“This was a great way to learn about the others around us in our own community.” (RE) “It was a good way to bring ethics to the community.” (FG) “The Sunday supper is not just a place where people come for a meal. The people who go are there for the community that they feel.” (RE)
Connecting to business school/university community	“I just found that we find like kind of like a sense of home at [the university].” (FG) “I’m much more aware of the campus community.” (I) “We’re basically representing [university] so you had to make sure everything you did was at a professional level.” (FG)
Connecting to class and team community	“Within this group of students I formed kind of community.” (FG) “By the end of it all, I felt united with my classmates, and had the feeling that we had done something much greater than any one of us could do by ourselves.” (RE) “It [team] was a very close knit group.” (FG) “It was way easier to communicate with classmates after the project.” (FG)
Connecting to course learning	“I found the most thing that connected was in our proposal where we did have to list stakeholders and the people it affected...” (FG) “We spent many classes discussing how people such as shareholders and consumers – people who generally don’t have much influence individually – can come together to have a

	positive impact on something, whether it be management decisions of a company, pressuring government for more regulations, and so on. This was mirrored in the service-learning project..." (RE)
Connecting to social cause and transcendent purpose	"It [social cause] makes the problems I have today seem trivial and meaningless. It also reminds me that it is our responsibility to help people who don't have the luxuries that we have." [FG] "I felt like good about what we were doing. I didn't see it as a burden or like taking up my time. I was actually excited to invite people I knew to come and try and support the cause that they had no connection to and really that I had no connection to the cause, but by the end of it you know, I was happy to be trying to help and support their cause." (FG)
Multiple and nested community connections	"It's a good way to make students aware of the fact global issues can also be local ones." (I) "There was a connection on both levels, local and global, for us." (FG) "By caring about others, putting ourselves second, working together locally and globally, and helping those in need, are all qualities of global citizenship. It was a very rewarding experience and one that I will not forget." (RE)

Some of the students commented on connecting to global community through the nature of the project itself (e.g., "This project taught students that even the simplest of actions can have major consequences, even for people who live thousands of miles away"), whereas others mentioned connecting to the global community through the diverse, international make-up of the classroom community. Although there was not as much mention of connecting to business school and university communities, there were many positive references in the focus groups to connecting to the classroom and team communities through CBSL projects. As mentioned in the previous section, students described connections between course concepts and their projects, as well as the "hands-on" and "real-life" ethical learning that took place. Students connected learning objectives related to stakeholder management and social responsibility; however, there was also mention of connecting to concepts such as social justice and common good. Students also described nested levels of community connectedness and connecting to a transcendent purpose or social cause.

One particular project focused on awareness and fundraising with a local non-profit, Wadeng Wings of Hope, which has a cause of community and educational development in South Sudan. For this project, individual group projects were embedded within the overall cause. Jacob Deng, the founder of the non-profit and one of the "lost boys of Sudan" came into the classroom as a guest speaker to share his life story with the students before they began their projects (Wadeng, w.d.). Student groups in two classes then pitched their ideas for individual group projects. For example, one group worked on a project called "Walk for Deng with Wadeng" which resulted in a sponsored walk to raise funds and awareness of the cause in the community. Another group's project focused on "Wings for Wings of Hope" which included a campus pub wing night and live auction that raised \$1500. One of the students served as the auctioneer and other teammates recruited auction items from the local community. Another group held a community awareness raising birthday party for Jacob Deng's son's 7th birthday, as seven was the age Jacob was when he had to flee his home and family in South Sudan. Jacob and his son both spoke at this event that included people from all age groups in the community. Table 4 provides some examples of the different levels of community connections that students described for the Wadeng CBSL projects.

TABLE 4
LEVELS OF COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS IN
WADENG WINGS OF HOPE CBSL PROJECTS

Level of Community Connection	Exemplary Quotations
Connecting to global community, social cause, and transcendent purpose	<p>“...[W]e were learning about you know Africa and the history in that area...And I remember there was people from Africa [in class] that could make a real connection to this so it was good to see their perspective on it.” (FG)</p> <p>“When class first began in September, few of the students knew each other...Over the term both classes collectively learned about key ethical ideas and concepts and a real world example of making change for students in South Sudan through helping Wadeng Wings of Hope...” (RE)</p>
Connecting to local community	<p>We got there [local highschool] about quarter to 11 and talked to the kids (2 glasses of grade 12 students combined). We told the class about our activities we are holding next week and encouraged them to follow us on Facebook and Twitter. Jacob and his assistant got there at 11 and made a great presentation that had us and the kids on edge. It involved graphic and terrifying stories of his escape from his home country when he was younger. After the great presentation, a lot of the kids seemed interested in helping Jacob out and we referred them to his website as the best way to directly support Wadeng Wings of Hope. I had a good time going to [school].” (RE)</p>
Connecting to business school/ university community	<p>“I feel I do want to be a bit more involved with the school and even feel more connected with the community at [university].” (FG)</p> <p>“There’s people that I met and continue to see around campus and say hi to that you probably wouldn’t have gotten a chance to know outside of class.” (FG)</p>
Connecting to class and team community	<p>“I’m still in contact with the guys actually who I worked with. It’s kind of weird - I met them there – I forgot.” (I)</p> <p>“...like 30 or 40 students that all of the sudden you are connected with...” (FG)</p>
Connecting to course learning	<p>“...[T]his project meets the extended course objectives in many ways, such as stimulating moral imagination and deliberation, elicit[ing] individual and social responsibility.” (RE)</p>

The Wadeng CBSL projects particularly exemplified the idea of nested community connections. This is illustrated by one of the students interviewed; “As a class we were encouraging the university at large to participate in an event that would help a man from our city help his own community across the ocean.” (I) Additional exemplary examples of student descriptions of nested community connections are provided in Table 5 and described below.

TABLE 5
NESTED LEVELS OF COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS IN WADENG CBSL PROJECTS

<p>“We were able to, you know, reach into the community and to the people who had a connection with the school and you know they were really helpful and even the people within our class, you know some worked for [food services] and it was all kind of interconnected and everybody helped everybody and found the resources to make it happen.” (FG)</p> <p>“It can be about making a difference to a local charity, making a difference in the school lifestyle and community, making a difference in the area of Sudan where Wadeng Wings of Hope helps, everyone involved at the event, and so much more!” (RE)</p> <p>“As a class we were encouraging the university at large to participate in an event that would help a man from our city help his own community across the ocean.” (I)</p> <p>“Two classes filled with students from all around the world, and having them working as one. Because everyone in the class works together, playing a smaller version of globalization, where people from all around the world can communicate with each other and work together making it feel like there is no distance.” (RE)</p> <p>Making it like everyone in this world is no longer from different countries, speaks different languages, but only people from this one planet Earth.” (RE)</p>
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In the first example, the student illustrates how the students were nested within different communities connected to the university, namely the classroom community, the internal university community (food services, business school) and the external university community (alumni and friends). The second example exemplifies connectedness to a social cause and a transcendent purpose, illustrating the nesting of school community (lifestyle and event connected to CBSL on campus) within local community (NGO) within global community (cause in South Sudan). The last three examples highlight connecting to global community, transcendent purpose, and classmates. The last two quotes in particular illustrate classroom community embedded within global community and how the CBSL potentially helps students to raise awareness of these connections.

Many students in their reflection exercises described a simultaneous sense of connectedness to a transcendent social cause and to their classmates as a result of the Wadeng CBSL experience. The idea of interlocked community connections is portrayed in the following excerpts from two students’ reflections:

We acted as one, kind of like the murmuration of starlings in the video we watched... ‘A person becomes a person through other persons,’ as the African proverb goes. That night, with all the students around from all around the world, you could just feel in the air the level of care and pride there was that we had made something of that level come together. (RE)

This project was a fun way to become more connected to the other students in the class, our professor, a great cause, and really ourselves. (RE)

The idea of small, individual efforts and contributions having “significant”, “major”, “huge”, and “incredible” impacts was also emphasized. Language such as “ripple effects” and “every little bit counts” were also quite common. In one international student’s reflection we found a lovely metaphorical description of “the huge building made by tiny bricks.” (RE)

In this particular example, many students appeared to connect to the cause through the life story of Jacob Deng. Because Jacob was an alumnus of the business program at this school, students had another obvious link to Jacob and his leadership in the community. One student commented: “To hear what Jacob went through at the age of seven was tragic. No one should have to go through the things that he did especially at that young of age.” (FG)

There was evidence of transformational learning as a result of the Wadeng CBSL experiences. The following two students describe the transformational aspects as follows:

When I think about it like this all I can think is how we talked about an association of individuals versus a community of persons. We definitely started out as an association of individuals when we started this class. But now that we’ve worked together and succeeded in our goal with this project I definitely think we are a community of people. It was a great experience to be part of the transformation for sure (RE). Perhaps the biggest takeaway was the realization of what it means to be a global citizen and the euphoric feeling of taking the first step in a life long journey to becoming one... (RE)

Some students appeared to particularly challenge some of their assumptions around pro-self versus pro-social values and motivations following this project. Consider the following two excerpts from student reflections:

In most projects I have been a part of at [University], the formula was basically the same... Rinse and repeat for next class – beep boop – we are report writing robots. The service-learning project is different. The grading aspect was so far removed from the conversation we forgot it was there. The project was dynamic. We were working together towards a common goal instead of competing with each other. (RE)
My main take away from this project was that going to school isn’t all about getting good grades or meeting people or partying all over town; sometimes it is about the bigger picture. It can be about making a difference to a local charity, making a difference in the school lifestyle and community, making a difference in the area of Sudan where Wadeng Wings of Hope helps, everyone involved at the event, and so much more! Those are the more important things. (RE)

An excerpt from an international student’s reflection suggests a conscious shift in perspective from self to other. “[The SLP] show me the different value of the world that I never touch before about people are not just living for themselves but living for the other people.” (RE)

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The difficult task is to teach moral courage, the capacity to act in new and life-bearing ways...[B]ut to sustain connection, conviction and courage, we need each other. We need community (Daloz Parks, 1990: 364-365).

We found evidence of student references to “bigger picture”, “serving others”, and “common good”, thus transcending instrumental learning goals related to career, competencies, and competition. Much of the service-learning literature focuses on the “learning for community” aspects of service-learning or applying newly learned skills and knowledge in a model of delivery and/or stewardship. Service-learning is primarily viewed as a mutually beneficial exchange between university and community. However, our findings emphasize the role of students learning “through community” to increase their self-awareness and other-awareness through transformational experiences or in the words of our students, “reaching into the community”, “showing me the different value of the world that I never touch[ed] before”, and “about

people not just living for themselves but living for the other people.” We found evidence of CBSL sensitizing students to tensions between pro-self and pro-social attitudes, values, and motivations. As Baran et al. (2011) proposed, CBSL helps students to develop a philosophy of service, or the “learning service” of service-learning.

We acknowledge that this seems somewhat intuitive and that many of these ideas are grounded in previous literature on service-learning (e.g., Karakas and Kavas, 2009). However, in a recent *Academy of Management Learning & Education* editorial, Carolyn Egri (2013) emphasized the relevance of context in management education scholarship and practice. We provide some additional insights and implications for management educators with regards to learning the value of service through multiple and nested community connections in student service-learning projects.

Multiple Levels and Nestings of Community Connectedness

Philosophy, sociology, and deep ecology, among other fields, describe how we exist in a web of relationships, some that are interconnected and some that are nested within one another. Some scholars have specifically discussed the relevance of multilevel nesting arrangements of organizational phenomenon (Egri, 2013). For example, Hitt, Beamish, Jackson, and Mathieu’s (2007) organizational model nests individuals within groups within organizational subunits within organizations within interorganizational networks within macrolevel environments. Our findings suggest that community connectedness in service-learning can be seen as a multilevel nested arrangement. Individual learning is nested within team community that is nested within classroom community that is nested within business school community that is nested within university community that is nested within local community that is nested within global community and a transcendent purpose. We begin to address Lightstone’s (2014) call to find ways to better bring together “...the world of academe, and the concentric circles of communities around the University.” Although the university campus represents a community in and of itself, exposure to life stories and experiences of community members helps students to have a “names-and-faces” approach (McVea & Freeman, 2005: 57) to responsible management, ethical leadership, and global citizenship. In this way, students are able to experience a deepening of empathy and compassion to others in their various communities. Related to this, Boswell (1990) found that business people who encountered marginalized people in society were more sensitive to social responsibilities. The CBSL experiences described by the students as involving nested levels of community connectedness seemed at times to resemble Csikszentmihalyi’s concept of “flow” or Maslow’s “peak experience”, ideas of being intensely and wholly involved and motivated by the activity, and to enable eureka moments related to “small actions hav[ing] surprisingly large consequences” (Weick, 2000: 225). Recall the student who compared the potential self-transcending and community-connectedness aspects of the CBSL experience to a murmuration of starlings. Figure 1 summarizes the CBSL nested community connections.

We propose that the contexts and community connections at each of these levels will influence the success of CBSL from the perspective of student transformational learning, consciousness raising, and ethical leadership and civic responsibility. We acknowledge that in some cases the learning will jump levels with regards to consciousness raising outcomes. For example, students in team and classroom communities referred to their connectedness to global community through the diverse multicultural background of the students in their team or class.

Although some universities have a centre or department devoted to service-learning, other schools have little to no institutional support, and coordination and implementation of course service-learning is left to individual faculty members. Table 6 indicates some of the ways that we believe instructors can foster community connections at each level, or better foster the capacity for community connectedness at all levels.

FIGURE 1
CBSL NESTED COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

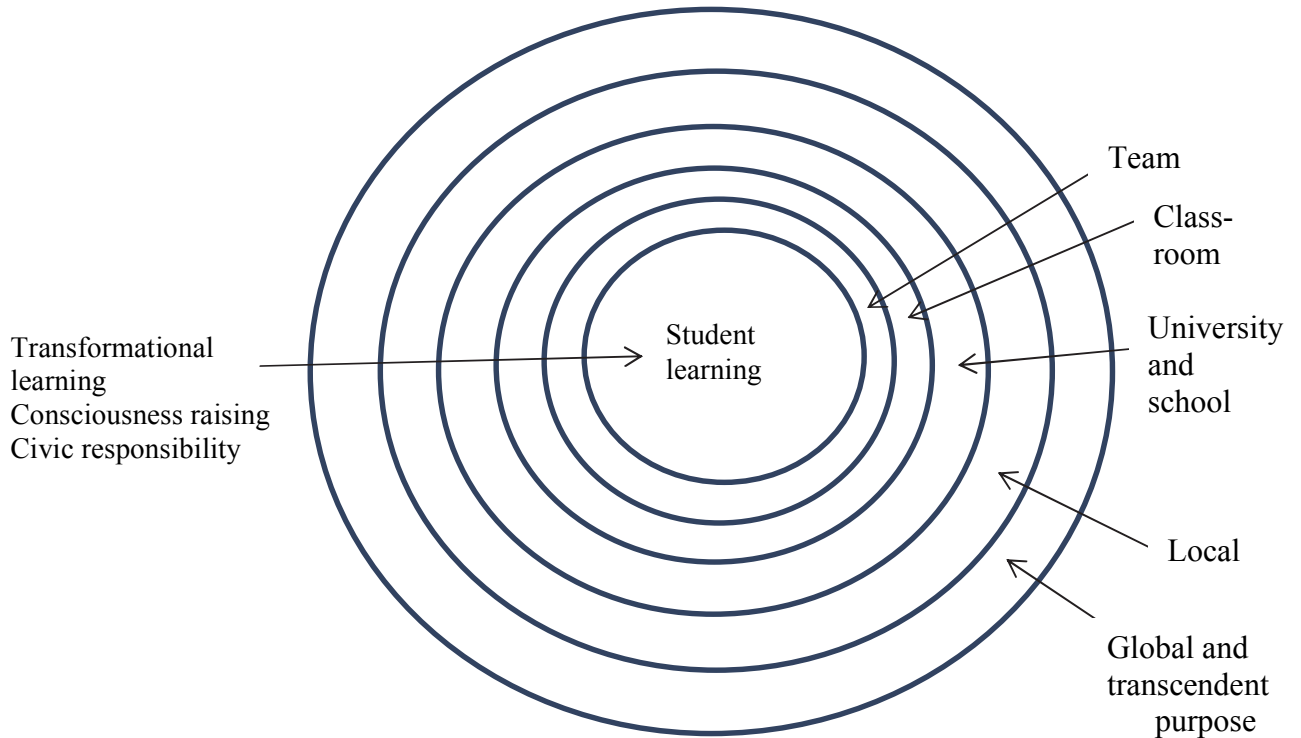


TABLE 6
IMPLICATIONS FOR FOSTERING COMMUNITY CONNECTEDNESS IN CBSL

Individual Learning

1. Instil a sense of responsibility for individual student learning
2. Ensure all students are exposed to pro-social versus pro-self benefits of CBSL
3. Integrate self-reflection exercises into course and project (instructor and students) (in preparing for CBSL, during CBSL, and post CBSL, Boud et al., 1985)
4. Involve all students in design of CBSL projects

Team Community

1. Make permanent diverse groups
2. Ensure sharing of roles and leadership
3. Hold regular check-in with teams
4. Set group norms at beginning of semester

Classroom Community

1. Foster internal class community through developing a course values statement or code of ethics
2. Set explicit guiding principles and expectations for CBSL at beginning of semester
3. Provide detailed communication related to all aspects of CBSL projects
4. Consider nesting individual group projects within one common classroom CBSL goal or cause
5. Keep projects manageable and balanced with regards to workload and time commitment

Business School and University Community

1. Explicitly connect CBSL to university and school missions and values
2. Explicitly connect CBSL to program learning goals
3. Consider holding focus groups on the experience after course is completed
4. Find ways to include alumni in CBSL

Local Community

1. Bring in guest speakers from the community that connect to the CBSL project
2. Have students speak in local high schools or other venues as part of their CBSL project
3. Have students present to the community organizations once project is complete
4. Create opportunities for community members and organizations to participate in student learning
5. Build community awareness of university programs and services
6. Provide opportunities for collaboration between faculty and community

Global Community and Transcendent Purpose

1. Consider a project working with global NGO or local NGO with global cause
2. Integrate course globalization topics into project (e.g., connect global inequity and injustice to service-learning at a local shelter)
3. Find ways to help students learn about and appreciate different cultures and better understand countries' challenges, both current and historic
4. Integrate transformational learning and critical self-reflection throughout the CBSL

We note that there could be differences in perceptions of the value of CBSL among different student populations. For example, some international students could have different perceptions and attitudes related to experiential learning depending upon their previous educational experiences as well as cultural

backgrounds. We know from previous research that perceptions of key concepts such as community and civic engagement can vary significantly between student populations (Cress et al., 2010). However, we strongly believe that an increasingly diverse and internationalized student body can significantly enhance the transformational learning and consciousness raising that can take place through CBSL. Service-learning initiatives have been demonstrated to prompt domestic participants to question some of their underlying values and assumptions, especially around the individualism and consumerism so predominant in the developed world (Bamber & Hankin, 2011). CBSL provides an opportunity for both domestic and international students to develop a greater appreciation and understanding of cultural differences (McCarthy et al., 2005; Dipadova-Stocks, 2005), and to be respectful of different cultural norms and values (Ryan & Viete, 2009). Although this was not a particular focus of our study, there would be benefit in additional empirical study of CBSL and perceptions of community connections among international students.

This would also have implications for spending sufficient time at the outset of CBSL projects as well as during the project's duration to establish common understanding of terms and benefits of service-learning (Cress et al., 2010). It is important to discuss the pro-self, extrinsic, career-related outcomes (specific skill development, evaluation, networking opportunities, fundraising); the process aspects (reflection, learning, feelings of community and solidarity); and the character formation aspects (personal growth and development, leadership, habit forming activities) of participating in the project. The instructor can also emphasize the links between the CBSL projects and university mission statements and program learning goals related to critical thinking, problem solving, leadership development, and civic responsibility.

CBSL in our context happens at a 3rd year level and several students expressed that they had never done any volunteer work prior to the service-learning. As our findings confirm prior research that indicates an increase in commitment to volunteerism and community engagement as a result of participating in service-learning (e.g., Hanson & Moore, 2014), there might be increased benefits to both students and the wider community if service-learning is integrated early in programs so that students are community-engaged earlier on.

If we broaden our definitions of community and community engagement, there are many ways to embed community engagement and embeddedness into CBSL and the student learning experience. The structure of the Wadeng Wings of Hope project illustrates one way to bring multiple nested community connections to CBSL. The concept of multiple levels of nested connectedness and our suggestions for fostering nested community connections in CBSL could also apply to other pedagogical approaches in management education, for example with regards to consulting, internship, and exchange experiences. We encourage all management educators to consider the context of the interconnected and nested communities that they teach and learn within.

Future research that considers spiritual connections to CBSL would be fruitful as well (e.g., Park, Helm, Kipley, & Hancock, 2009). Parker Palmer (2007) emphasized the spiritual yearning within all of us for connectedness with the other. Most of the world's spiritual and religious traditions see people finding meaning through serving others and contributing to the betterment of humanity. There have been reports of students increasingly being interested in finding meaning and a better sense of balance between self-interest and the interest of others through their business education experiences (e.g., More & Todarello, 2013). How do we rediscover the purpose of higher education of forming men and women "for others" (Kolvenbach, 2000)? Palmer (2007, p. 95) suggested that, "As we reweave our tattered civic fabric, educational institutions are among our most important looms."

A related area of research would be the study of Aboriginal ways of knowing that focus on the traditions of embeddedness in the experience, and a community versus self-focus approach. Much of Indigenous knowledge and spirituality focuses on interconnectedness, cooperation, the collective and our responsibilities all being integral to learning. "Taking schooling out into the bush" enriches the knowledge of both students and teachers (Battiste, 2000: 201). Being on the land over time facilitates bringing one into relation with the land and its rhythms, leading to the growth of dignity, the sense of the common good, and solidarity with the land and its vast inhabitants (Whiteman & Cooper, 2011).

A systems-based, interconnected and nested understanding of the communities that students encounter in a CBSL experience can help students to understand accountability related to the individual impacts of their decisions on communities as well as future communities. If we adopt strong models of sustainability, in which economy is nested within society which is nested within the natural environment (e.g., Adams, 2006), then our nesting of CBSL should also include the natural environment as our primordial community. Rands (2009), for one, has drawn a connection between service-learning and creating opportunities for students to engage in environmental awareness-raising.

Limitations and Conclusion

Although our research was exploratory, we need to acknowledge the limitations to our study. First, the focus groups and interviews consisted of 64 students out of several hundred students taking the business ethics course over the sampled time-period. These students self-selected to become involved in the focus groups and interviews. Social desirability biases could be present in student reflections as well. Contexts varied by class make-up, including instructor and student demographic characteristics, as well as by projects. However, we believe the triangulation of several rich qualitative data sources over several semesters, as well as each of our personal teaching and learning experiences, and individual self-reflection, all help to validate our interpretation of the findings.

According to Palmer (2007), a culture of disconnection undermines university teaching and learning. CBSL provides one pedagogical approach that can help to reclaim the concepts of connectedness, service, and community in management education. Although many aspects of management education currently emphasize community connections, the emphasis is often on “linking in” and other aspects related to networking individual and industry connections in pursuit of self-interested outcomes. The CBSL impact on students’ self knowledge and opportunities for reflective and critical thinking can help facilitate the transcendence of self- and firm-centeredness by sensitizing students to the tensions between self and social values and motivations and in turn better build “capacity for community connectedness” (Palmer, 2007: xi). We believe that many of our students have experienced the contagious power and value of community engagement and service in CBSL, especially in those projects that exemplify nested levels of community connectedness.

We certainly do not pretend that one ethics course and one community-oriented service-learning project in a business program that typically emphasizes pro-self values and motivations will necessarily be able to develop transformational leaders and global citizens. Related to this, the task of broadening and balancing management education cannot continue to fall on the teachers of business ethics if we want to develop what Waddock & Lozano (2013: 267) have referred to as “leaders with heart and soul”. There is a need for an authentic and coherent institutional and program level commitment to integrating transcendental and transformational goals into business curriculum and programs.

In conclusion, we propose that service-learning projects with deep and nested community connections can engender transformative learning, consciousness raising, ethical leadership, and a sense of civic responsibility among student participants. In our study, students directly and deeply connecting to the broader external community through CBSL experiences appeared to speak about community connectedness, a greater degree of self-reflection, and, in some cases, personal transformation. Through CBSL, students are able to become more conscious of the people they encounter in various communities and their corresponding life stories, in service to the local or wider community. An understanding of community connectedness and nestedness becomes increasingly important in the context of global climate change and other social and environmental 21st century crises. Twenty-first century community-engaged learning should not be driven primarily by career goals, competitiveness, and commercial interests; but rather by rediscovering the learning of service and the value of serving the other in the multiple nested communities that we live within.

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APPENDIX A

DEMOGRAPHICS

Focus Groups – Fall 2013/Winter 2014

Total students	Domestic	International
2	2	0
12	8	4
9	6	3
15	7	8
11	3	8
7	6	0

Gender ratio 3M:2F

Interviews – Winter 2014, Winter 2015

Total students	Domestic	International	Gender
8	7	1	5M, 3F

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Student Focus Group / Interview Questions (Excerpts from Flannery & Pragman, 2008)

- One by one please introduce yourselves. Tell us your name, major and year. *Moderator models this behaviour.* Where are you from? How long have you lived in Halifax?
- What does the term service learning mean to you?
 - Allow some discussion and then follow-up with definition (Kendall, 1990).
- Can you tell me about a recent service learning project that you were involved with?
- How do you perceive the service learning project as paralleling and applying to the "real world"?
- Did you see opportunities to apply theory and concepts learned in class to this service-learning project? Explain.
- How do you feel that working together on this service-learning project helped you to develop your teamwork skills? Leadership skills? Critical thinking skills?
- Did you feel that you gained professional confidence by being engaged in the service learning project? Can you give an example of this?
- Did you include your work on the SLP on your resume?
- How do you feel connected to the [School of Business] or [University] as a result of your involvement in this SLP?
- How do you feel connected to the local community as a result of your involvement in this SLP?
- How do you feel connected to the global community as a result of your involvement in this SLP?

Service-Learning Project (SLP) Activity Write-up and Reflection

As part of the Service Learning Project, you are required to submit a 1-page write-up about your team's activity and your specific contribution to the overall effort. You are also required to discuss your activity in the context of the course and the content we have been discussing. These individual write-ups are to be single spaced, 12 point type, and submitted in class on November 27.

In terms of content, I'm looking for the following:

Part A: Start with a brief 1 paragraph description of your team's activity. Discuss how it met the SLP objective of combining classroom learning with service to the community.

Part B: In 1-2 paragraphs outline your specific contribution to your team's project. For example what role did you play in each of the following three phases: 1) the development of your team's initial pitch 2) the development of the group project plan and division of activities into four more or less equal parts and 3) the actual execution of the group's event.

Part C: In 2-3 paragraphs, reflect on the BComm Program Learning Goals, the Course Objectives, and course content. Briefly discuss how you see your SLP connects to either a BComm Program Learning Goals, or one of the 3480 Course Objectives AND specific ethics/CSR/sustainability knowledge. Make two comments about specific skills, knowledge or insights that you gained from taking part in this activity.

APPENDIX C

META-THEMES AND CODE BOOKS

Code Book I – Learning through Community

Themes	Codes
Learning for community	Stewardship
	Delivery
	Application
	Reinforcement
Learning with community	Experiential co-learning
Learning through community	Experiential
	Transformation
	Consciousness raising - Self-aware
	Consciousness raising - Other-aware
	Community role models
Pro-social attitudes and values	Pro-social attitudes and values

Code Book II – Multiple and Nested Community Connections

Multiple and nested community connections
Connecting to global community
Connecting to social cause
Connecting to transcendent purpose and social responsibility
Connecting to local community
Connecting to business school/university community
Connecting to classroom community
Connecting to team community
Connecting to pro-social business ethics learning outcomes
Self reflection and self awareness
Transformative thinking
Experiential learning
Engagement in learning
Other awareness
Diversity and multicultural awareness
Relationship building and solidarity
Small efforts leading to big impacts
Pro-social values, attitudes, and motivations
Pro-self values, attitudes, and motivations
Life stories
Commitment to volunteerism in community