

Facilitating Reflection

A Manual for Leaders and Educators

Written and Compiled by
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About Reflection

"Reflection" is a vital component of service-learning. This manual was designed for educators and leaders of service groups who have an interest and a commitment to provide reflection opportunities for students and community partners alike. College professors, K-12 teachers, community organization leaders, and leaders of service organizations have all found, "Facilitating Reflection: A Manual for Leaders and Educators," a useful supplement to their work.

This manual was written during the summer of 1995. The primary author, Julie Reed, was interning at the [Georgetown University Volunteer and Public Service Center](#) at the time. I had asked her to pull together a compendium of reflection activities that would be useful for educators and leaders of service groups. None of the ideas represented in this manual are original. We borrowed examples from a variety of sources, which you will find in the "[Acknowledgements](#)" section at the end of the manual.

Special thanks go out to Sharon Morgenthaler, and the Georgetown University Office of Volunteer and Public Service, for their permission to finally post this manual on the Internet. Any comments about the manual should be sent to:

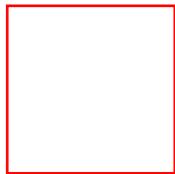
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A Student's Thoughts on Facilitating Reflection

As a student leader, a future educator and a member of my community interested in community service and service learning, I found this manual to be a helpful guide to understanding and implementing reflection. Reflection is possibly the most important part of service and definitely essential to any type of Service-Learning. The information here helped me think about what role I want reflection to play in my life but also it gave me the tools to integrate meaningful reflection into the work I do with others. This tool of reflection is like a gift that I am now able to present to all people I work with. I have learned the value of it and how to apply it. Reflection is a treasure that I now possess and will value for time to come.

- **Sierra Melcher**, 2000-2001 Director of University of Vermont Citizen Awareness and Training for Students (**CATS**)



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Understanding Reflection

What is reflection?

Most people who are involved in community service and service learning programs are familiar with the term "reflection." In fact, we are all familiar with reflection... Every time we look in the mirror. The term "reflection" is derived from the Latin term *reflectere* -- meaning "to bend back." A mirror does precisely this, bend back the light, making visible what is apparent to others, but a mystery to us -- namely, what our faces look like.

In service learning, we look to develop processes that allow the people doing service to bend the metaphorical light of their experiences back onto their minds -- to make careful considerations about what their experience were all about: what did they see, who did they meet, why is there a need for such services in the first place, etc. The act of reflection, therefore, becomes crucial to their education. It serves as the bridge between experiences and learning.

Reflection is more than "touchy-feely."

Many students, staff and faculty in university and college settings think of reflection only in terms of "touchy-feely" group discussions. Consequently, they resist opportunities to reflect on the nature of their service work. This, aversion stems from what appears to be a barrier to talking about one's feelings, thoughts, and emotions. However, reflection need not be limited to the release of emotional energy, the sharing of feelings, or attempts to "feel good" about the service performed. Rather, reflection is decidedly educational. It is simply an opportunity through which one can learn from experience. Reflection can take numerous forms, and touch on an endless variety of issues. It

further learning and inspires, provocative thought and action. Most of all, it can benefit the individual and the community.

Why learn from experience?

Most of what we know about the world and our place in it is derived from learning through our experiences. Certainly we learn a great deal from formal education -- from lectures and books. But are we merely memorizing and absorbing the facts and figures, or are we experiencing them? Do we not engage in an internal dialogue with the subject matter and, as one student claims, "experience a book"? Aren't we, in fact, reflecting on the subject matter? Answering "yes" to these questions allows us to recognize that we are, learning all the time. When related to service, the opportunity to reflect on experience is crucial. As David Sawyer of Berea College explained, "Service action does not automatically become service attitude. The depth of reflection determines the, quality of the attitude, and the quality of the action." This reflection module encourages us not to take these learning opportunities for granted.

What is it that we take for granted?

Questioning what we, take for granted involves more than thinking about how privileged we might be compared to others in a diverse community. We need to look at the mundane world around us. Donald Schon, in his widely read book entitled, The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action (1983), calls for professionals to better understand their actions by thinking about their actions. This is hardly news, since we do it all the time. What is different, and out of the ordinary, is getting into the habit of thinking about our thinking. Schon suggests several properties related to thinking:

1. There are actions, recognitions, and judgements, which we know how to carry out spontaneously; we do not have to think about them prior to or during their performance.
2. We are often unaware of having to learn to do these things; we simply find ourselves doing them.
3. In some cases, we were once aware of the understandings which were subsequently internalized in our feeling for the stuff of action. In other cases, we may never have been aware of them. In both cases, however, we are usually unable to describe the knowing which our action reveals.

(Schon 1984: 54)

Schon argues that "as practice becomes more repetitive and routine...the practitioner may miss important opportunities to think about what he is doing... [H]e learns, as often happens, to be selectively inattentive to phenomena that do not; fit the, categories of his, knowing-in-action, then he may offer from boredom or 'burn-out' and afflict [the people around him] with the consequences of his narrowness and rigidity." (Schon 1984:61)

Why should I be attentive to my thinking?

Do you want your service to be a part of your education? Do you want to serve well? Do you want the organization or club you work with to be effective? Do you want your work to mean something? Do you want to learn, improve, and grow? If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, you have provided yourself with good reasons to make reflecting into a habit.

How can I be more, conscious of "doing no harm."

Studies have been done about why college students do community or public service work. Most often students cite altruism, "the selfless concern for the welfare of others," as the reason. They feel that the work they do promotes the welfare of those they are serving, be they newly immigrated children needing to learn English, homeless people needing meals, or a campus needing educational programs about diverse cultures. However, we must question whether even these altruistic people can and should determine what is best for others. Many of us believe that we determine our own "best" interests; why should the people with and for whom we serve be any different? Reflection provides an opportunity for people who are serving to open their hearts and minds to the experiences of others, to acknowledge their wisdom and understand their resources strengths and needs, and to develop action plans that involve partnership with communities, and prevent doing harm.

It is often difficult to imagine that an act of benevolence can actually end up having negative consequences. But this question must be constantly asked if we are considering community members as equal partners in a service learning experience. Raising the specter of negative consequences forces us to look at the underlying reasons for the social conditions that gave rise to the need for service in the first place. Such attention to the root cause of social problems, thus becomes a critical element to successful reflection. Examining these causes in light of service experiences merges education and action in unique ways.

But how can reflection appeal to my self-interests?

The self-interests of people who serve are also met when these people reflect on how their service work has had an impact on their own lives and learning. These impacts involve one's growth and understanding in areas such as:

- career exploration
- social change/justice
- civic responsibility
- leadership development
- intellectual pursuit
- spiritual fulfillment
- professional development
- political consciousness

More often than not, this kind of self-learning is taken for granted. We tend to pay attention to it on specific occasions. Questions of career exploration only arise when life after college is contemplated. Spiritual fulfillment may only be a concern during periods of worship. Civic responsibilities may only come to mind when and if we vote. The kinds of structured reflection outlined in this module are designed to link one's service experiences to personal, as well as community, development.

The first section of this manual will introduce reflection leaders to the proper technique for effective facilitation. Although facilitation is not a new concept, and is used in a variety of situations, many individuals are unclear about it. Facilitation skill is especially important for reflection pertaining to service experiences, as a wide range of opinions and emotions can be expressed, and many of the topics of discussion are controversial. The facilitation section of the manual also includes samples of challenging situations for facilitator and describes appropriate responses.

Once facilitators have this fundamental understanding of facilitated reflection, they can begin to plan the reflection activities for their group. The second section of this, manual outlines the steps to take, and things to consider, in developing reflection sessions.

The most basic form of structured externalized reflection is the "reflection circle." The, manual's third section explains this form of reflection and provides the reader with a selection of sample questions that can be used to initiate reflection. This type of

reflection is not immediately appropriate for all groups, however, so the fourth section describes a variety of other reflection activities for groups.

Understanding that reflection can take many, many forms and that good facilitators are those that promote creative reflection activities, the final section of the manual includes brief descriptions of alternative forms of reflection that need not take place with a group present. Most of these ideas are popular in the classroom, and have been adapted to service experiences that are independent of academic courses. Samples include journals, portfolios, and presentations.

Individuals and groups will determine which form of reflection will be most meaningful for them. Across the many types of reflection taking place, and its infinite outcomes, we hope reflection becomes a habit of being for people engaged in service. The connection of theory and practice thought and action, can educate and transform.

...reflection is so critical; there can be no higher growth for individuals or for society without it. Reflection is the very process of human evolution itself.

-- David Sawyer, director of [Students for Appalachia](#) at [Berea College](#)



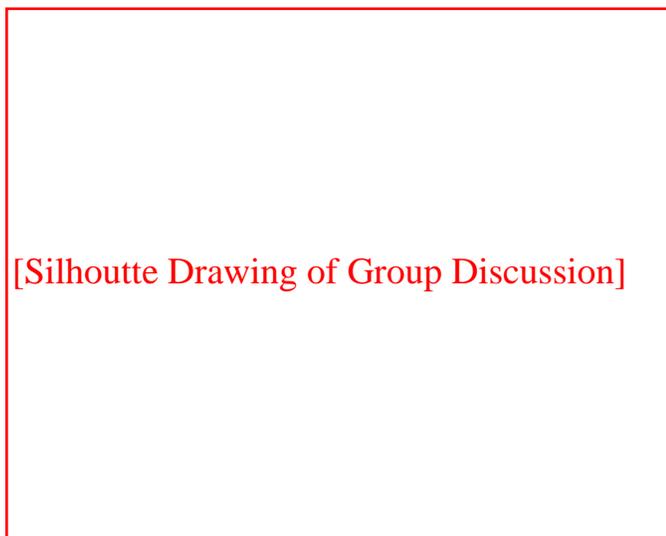
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Facilitating Reflection

What is Facilitation?



The Difference between leading and facilitating

Understanding facilitation begins with an awareness of the *difference between facilitating and leading*. It has been said that leadership is something you do to a group, while facilitation is something you do *with* a group.

Although many leaders can (and should) be effective facilitators, the facilitator differs from a leader in that the former is cognizant about the use of power, authority, or control and places limitations on uses of it. A facilitator should be "a neutral mediator whose job is to provide information and accommodate the exchange of dialogue among ... participants" (from Catalyst).

Facilitators assist groups as they work together toward achieving group goals, and in most instances *do not interject their own personal opinions or agenda*. By expressing their opinions to the group, facilitators risk discouraging others with differing opinions from speaking. They remain alert to group dynamics and encourage challenging reflection while maintaining respect and safety within the group. Although facilitators may help guide a discussion, they also recognize and *foster the groups own ability to lead itself*. Thus unlike authoritative leaders, good facilitators relinquish control to the group and promote open, democratic dialogue among group members.

Effective reflection requires that facilitators demonstrate an open-minded attitude, communicate appropriately, manage group dynamics, incorporate diversity, and provide closure. Developing skill in each of these areas involves learning and becoming comfortable with numerous facilitation practices. An explanation of practices pertaining to each area follows. Also refer to the "Activities" section of this manual for ideas about promoting certain behaviors in the group.

Attitude

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world: indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.
-- Margaret Mead, Anthropologist



[Margaret Mead
Photograph]

* **Be honest:** Effective facilitation requires that the facilitator be honest with him/herself and with the group. This includes being honest about the limits of one's own abilities and knowledge. If the facilitator doesn't know the answer to the group's questions, s/he should admit it and work on finding the answer. Honest facilitators gain the trust of the group and model the importance of honesty from all participants. However, facilitators should be careful not to stray from preventing a neutral stance while maintaining honesty.

* **Managing dual roles:** There is some disagreement among expert facilitators as to whether a facilitator should always maintain a neutral stance, particularly if the facilitator

is, an active member of the group and a decision making is taking place. A skilled facilitator will calculate the potential impact of his or her interjections into the group and determine if it will result in a misuse of power. Sometimes, a skilled facilitator will state that s/he wants to suspend his or her role as facilitator for the sake of making an opinion or perspective heard. These instances should be handled with extreme caution and some forethought.

* **The facilitator is not an expert:** Facilitators must keep in mind that their role in the reflection is to moderate and guide communication, not make personal contributions to it, or push their own agenda. By controlling the group, facilitators threaten the open sharing of thoughts and feelings, and may close themselves off from the group's feedback. Instead facilitators should remain flexible and responsive to the group, and encourage evaluation of the, process. The facilitator's neutrality throughout the process is crucial. An effective way for facilitators to avoid voicing their personal opinion is to reflect question back to the group. For example, when asked whether s/he supports the death penalty, a facilitator may say "The death penalty is, a controversial topic. What do you think are the main issues for and against it?" By responding in this way the facilitator has remained neutral and encouraged further reflection by the group.

* **Everyone can learn:** Facilitators should view reflection as a learning opportunity and should communicate this attitude to the group. This means that facilitators themselves remain open to learning from others, and that everyone's contributions are treated as credible and educational. This serves to validate group members and helps to avoid arguments between them.

Other qualities of an open-minded attitude include:

- Somewhat informal
- Be empathetic
- Maintain a sense of humor
- Stay interested in group discussion
- Be, real, direct, and genuine

Communication



If I do not speak in a language that can be understood there is little chance for a dialogue.

-- bell hooks, Writer and Educator

* **Set ground rules:** Ground rules establish a foundation upon which the group's communication will occur. They help to create a safe environment in which participants can communicate openly, without fear of being criticized by others. Ground rules that have been arrived at by all members are the most useful and can be repeated if tension rises during reflection. Sample ground rules follow.

- Be honest
- Listen, even if you disagree
- Avoid prejudicial comments
- Criticize the idea, not the person
- Pass if you're not comfortable
- Use "I" statements
- Don't interrupt
- Be brief
- Everything is confidential
- Agree to disagree

* **Use "vibes watchers":** In order to monitor ground rules the facilitator may choose to identify one or more "vibes watchers". The vibes watcher observes the reflection and takes note of group dynamics that are potentially problematic (for example, one person dominating the discussion, a participant's ideas being attacked, etc.). S/he can interrupt the discussion if the situation is particularly problematic, and explain, in a non-accusatory tone, what s/he observed. The facilitator can decide if all participants should be encouraged to voice such concerns during the session. At the conclusion of the session the facilitator should ask for a report from the vibes watcher, so that future sessions may be improved. Participants should not be forced to be vibes watchers, but should volunteer. Ideally, all members of the group will become sensitive to group dynamics, and, in a sense, monitor themselves.

* **Promote "active listening"**: Staying quiet and considering others remarks can be challenging when controversial topics are discussed, but is crucial to respectful communication. Facilitators should discourage participants from professing their opinions without considering and responding to others' comments. Instead, facilitators should model communication in the form of a dialogue, in which participants listen and respond to each other. The type of communication used (whether "polite conversation" is favored over informal or slang conversation) can vary, and should be determined according to such factors as the group's cultural background, familiarity with each other, goals for reflection, etc.

* **Encourage participation by all**: Facilitators should clearly communicate that reflection is an egalitarian process in which everyone has a right to speak, or to choose not to speak. Group members who have not spoken should be encouraged to do so, if they wish. This can be accomplished by creating a space for more introverted group members to speak. This can be accomplished by stating something like, "Let's give an opportunity to hear from some people who haven't spoken yet..."

* **Use "stacking"**: In order to promote full participation, the facilitator should guide the allocation of speaking time by "stacking" (or "queuing"). This involves the facilitator identifying and placing in some order those individuals who wish to speak. One example of this technique is to list the names of the four people who have raised their hands, invite them to speak in order, and then indicate that you will recognize others who wish to speak after the four people have finished. Another technique is to simply give a nod to a person who wants to speak, acknowledging that they have been noticed and will be called upon soon. Additional strategies for inclusion can be found in the "Activities" section of this manual.

Other practices for effective communication include:

DO:

- use open-ended questions (not "Should the welfare system be reformed?", but "What aspects of the welfare system would you change?")
- ask for specifics and examples
- paraphrase and summarize ("So what you're concerned about is who defines what's best for the se communities?")
- acknowledge contributions
- redirect questions to group ("Rehabilitation may not be occurring in our prisons, should that be the goal of the criminal justice system?")
- be creative
- take some risks by posing provocative questions

DON'T:

- refute people's ideas
 - put people on the spot
 - downplay thoughts, feelings
 - force people to speak
-

Group Dynamics

Each of us guards a gate of change that can only be unlocked from the inside. We cannot open the gate of another, either by argument or by emotional appeal.

-- Marilyn Ferguson, Educator and Writer

* **Create a safe space:** The key to open and honest reflection is an environment in which participants feel safe and comfortable. In order for group members to express their thoughts and opinions they must feel that they can do so without fear of attack or condemnation. It is the facilitator's job to create such an environment, to monitor participant's comfort levels, and to take the necessary steps to maintain safety. This includes understanding and planning for individual differences in needs, abilities, fears, and apprehensions. Participants who feel safe are more likely to make honest and genuine contributions and to feel camaraderie and respect towards other group members.

* **Manage disagreements:** It has been said that "whatever resists will persist." Facilitators must be adept at recognizing tension building in the group, and respond to it immediately. Among the most useful strategies is to repeat the ground rules established by the group, including a reminder that criticism should pertain to ideas not to people. In addition, facilitators should not permit any disrespect or insults and should clarify misinformation. It is important that negative behavior be handled immediately so that participants do not get the impression that the behavior is condoned by the facilitator.

* **Promote equality:** As indicated, effective reflection is not designed around the leadership of one person. Equality of participants should be communicated and modeled by the facilitator. Again, the facilitator must be an alert observer, identifying signs of a developing hierarchy, or of divisive factions within the group. S/he should not permit arguing up against any group member(s), and should not take sides in any developing

debate. Such situations can be counteracted by recognizing all members, and encouraging their participation equally.

* **Be mindful of power, and who has it:** All groups have opinion leaders or people who most others look up to. Often, these opinion leaders will set the tone for a discussion, thereby limiting active involvement of the more reserved members. Identify who these opinion leaders are and if it appears as though their power and authority is dominating the discussion, ask them, politely, to entertain other opinions.

Other keys to managing group dynamics include:

- know the group
- keep the group on track
- don't avoid topics
- reflect responsibility back on group
- be prepared for disagreements
- encourage challenging issues

* **Build in diversity:** In order to appropriately handle diversity issues in reflection sessions, facilitators must begin by recognizing their own attitudes, stereotypes, and expectations and must open their minds to understanding the limits these prejudices place on their perspective. The facilitator will be the example to which the group looks, and should therefore model the values of multiculturalism. It is important that diversity be integrated throughout the reflection programming, rather than compartmentalized into special multicultural segments.

Monitoring communication for expressions of bias requires the facilitators attention and sensitivity. Facilitators should be aware that some language and behavior has questionable, different or offensive meaning to some people, and they should encourage them to share their perspectives and information. Specifically, facilitators should watch out for statements or situations that generalize groups, or that identify race, sex, age unnecessarily (for example, just as it is inappropriate to say "Bob Dole, White presidential candidate," it is also inappropriate to say "Colin Powell, Black political hopeful"). When qualifiers are used that reinforce stereotypes by suggesting exceptions to the rule, facilitators should ask for clarification. For example when a participant describes his/her experience working with a "respectable gay resident" of a shelter, the facilitator should ask the participant why he/she included the word "respectable." Is this a statement about gay people's respectability? About shelter residents? Is this based on his/her experience with specific populations of one shelter, or a generalization about all such people? Helping participants identify the assumptions inherent in their statements fosters greater understanding and sensitivity.

Most importantly, while expressions of prejudice should be interrupted, the person who spoke should not be publicly attacked. Placing guilt on the speaker is likely to increase the tension and stifle further exploration of the topic. The Building Bridges Coalition suggests the following appropriate ways to respond:

- *Express empathy and compassion.* (example: "You must have been disappointed about not getting the job you thought you were qualified for.")
- *Ask for more information.* (example: "Please tell me more about why you think a person in a wheel chair can't do that job?")
- *Paraphrase the feelings you hear expressed.* (example: "it sounds like you aren't conformable working around gay people.")
- *Give information* (new information may alter their attitude). (example: "Did you know that Ms. Jones has a college degree?")

It is important that responses to prejudice to be nonjudgmental and non-confrontation, and that you express genuine concern and interest.

* **Closure and Evaluation:** As a challenging and meaningful reflection session draws to an end, participants may feel that their intended objectives have not been met, that questions have not all been answered, or that a plan of action has not been finalized. Nonetheless, the group needs to recognize that progress has been made and that the process must continue. It is the job of the facilitator to initiate this sense of resolution, and to invite feedback so that the process may foster as it continues. Suggestions for accomplishing this include:

- Request a closing statement from each participant about what they learned, what they plan to do next, etc.
- Review the session with the group, recognizing participants; contributions and the necessity of further reflection.
- Provide participants with resources, such as written material and upcoming events, to encourage their continued involvement.
- Request written and verbal evaluations so that participants may voice those concerns and ideas that have been left unsaid, and so that facilitators may understand the strengths and weaknesses of their skills.

As with any skill, the ability to facilitate effectively will develop through experience, feedback, observation, and reflection. Using the tools described in this and future sections of this manual you are equipped to begin refining your facilitation skills.

Trouble Shooting for Facilitators

Given the non-authoritative and flexible nature of facilitation, it is not unusual for situations to arise that can compromise the effectiveness of the reflection. Facilitators need to stay alert to these possibilities, and be prepared to deal with them. Following are suggestions for handling such situations, (taken from Catalyst):

1. One Person Dominates the discussion or continually interrupts it.

Make it clear that you want input from everyone: "Can I hear from someone that hasn't spoken yet?" "I've noticed that no women have said anything about this issue. Would any of the women like to say something about this?"

Use activities that require everyone's participation, i.e., gathering questions and ideas. If a person consistently talks for long periods of time, without singling out that person specify that you would like everyone to be brief.

If someone continually interrupts, don't become defensive or ignore him or her, Instead, acknowledge the value of their input. Point out that in the interest of the group, interruptions should be kept to a minimum. Offer to speak to them at length at the break or after the session.

If someone keeps their hand in the air while others are talking, explain that when you hand is up for you mind is processing what you will say so that you are not listening to the person talking. Keep track of people who wish to speak by "stacking" (verbally list names of people who have raise their hands, indicating the order in which people will speak).

2. Several people refuse to talk or participate.

If some people refuse to participate in the large group, you might try dividing the group into pairs, threes, or fours. People who will not speak up in front of the full group will sometimes feel more comfortable sharing in a small group.

Distribute index cards and ask participants to respond to a question on the card. This is more comfortable for those who are shy in groups; you can shuffle the cards and have each person read someone else's response. In this way, everyone participates, but no one has to know who wrote what.

3. The group becomes distracted and loses its focuses.

In refocusing a group it sometimes means interrupting someone or interrupting a

two-way argument that is going nowhere. Although you may be hesitant about this, remind the participants of the original topic and put the tangent on hold, at least until the first topic is resolved.

- 4. An offensive comment (e.g., pertaining to race, gender, sexual orientation, etc.) from a participant evokes angry reaction or shocked silence from the group.**

If anyone makes an offensive comment, expect conflict. Your job is to control the processing of what happened and allow the workshop to continue. You can ask people to vent, but without argument. (refer to the previous section on diversity for specific suggestions.)

- 5. Someone asks you if you're prejudiced, against who, and tries to test you.** The best response is honesty. Acknowledging that you - like everyone else - have learned prejudice and are working against it, will establish respect and lack of pretense in the group.
- 6. Someone verbally attacks your leadership and completely throws you off.** Usually they are very upset and are to blame. **DO NOT TAKE THE ATTACK PERSONALLY.** Explain your rationale. Discuss it with the person privately during a break. If you actually erred, apologize and continue.
- 7. Someone presents inaccurate information or strays away from the focus of discussion.**

Allow participants to point this out and/or reject the comment. You should invite other participants to correct the misinformation; if they don't, correct it yourself. If you don't know the answer, acknowledge and commit to looking into it. Don't leave the group with any misinformation.

- 8. Group participant states: "It's all hopeless anyway; you can't change people's attitudes. Why even try?"**

Acknowledge their feelings. Point out the hopelessness, without buying into it yourself. Point out the hopefulness of the training itself, and that you have seen attitudes change and grow by doing this work. Don't get into a debate about whether the work makes a difference - you wouldn't be doing it if it didn't.

- 9. You find yourself disliking a participant.**

Remember that you are a human being and entitled to your own personal likes and dislikes. However, you must also keep in mind that as a facilitator, your neutrality is essential to the success of a workshop. Acknowledge your feelings to yourself, and move on.

It is helpful to practice responding to challenging situations by role playing them with others. As you gain experience as a facilitator you will discover additional responses to these and other situations and will develop your own style.



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Getting Started

In order to be most effective facilitators should be purposeful in planning the reflection component of the service experience. The following factors should be considered:

1. **Setting Goals:** Reflection has many possible outcomes, including increased awareness of social issues, values clarification, and even program evaluation. Before initiating reflection the facilitator must consider which outcomes are possible and desirable. Reflection goals will be related to the group's goals, and possibly to the type of service in which students are participating. In addition, goals should be considered for participants as well as for the group as a whole. The goals can be broad, rather than specific, allowing for their further development throughout reflection. The facilitator should be flexible, recognizing that reflection evolves and goals may change.
2. **Knowing Your Audience:** Consider who will be participating in the reflection. Are they new to service? If not, what is the extent of their previous experience? How long have they been at college? What academic subjects are they most interested in? What strengths do they bring to the reflection sessions? What might be potential tension points? Be prepared to encourage each individual's participation and to recognize their contributions. Choose activities and approaches that foster this.
3. **Making Time:** The reflection component should be built into the service experience, rather than being an "extra" or "add-on" activity. The program or course's literature should indicate this and it should be clearly articulated to service participants. The amount of time allotted for reflection will depend, in part, on the issues that are being addressed (for example, racism) and the intensity of the service experience (for example, alternative spring break programs should schedule daily reflection sessions). Make certain that participants are aware of the time responsibilities for reflection and that the sessions are schedule at convenient

times for participants.

4. **Choosing a Method:** The form of reflection that you choose will depend not only on the goals and issue previously identified, but also on the location and time for the session and the number for people involved. Sample methods include pot luck dinners, journals, discussions, and group activities. Outside speakers can also be useful, but should not exceed 50% of the total reflection time (Morton, 1989). While this manual will focus on discussion and group activities, the last section will list additional forms of reflection.

When choosing methods for reflection be certain to keep the following points in mind:

- Be creative and include a variety of activities. Reflection should be appropriate for different learning styles, and should be enjoyable for the participants.
 - Choose activities in which participants will be comfortable expressing themselves and will feel safe doing so. Group activities should also promote cohesion while allowing for diverse opinions. This is accomplished not only by the activity that is chosen, but by the way in which that activity is facilitated.
5. **Resources:** Facilitators should identify other resources pertaining to service and reflection that can provide information and support. This may include people on campus, in the community and in national service organizations, as well as relevant materials such as literature, research, and activity guides.
 6. **Skills:** Reflection programming is only as successful as its facilitation. Facilitators, whether students, staff, or faculty, should be trained in proper facilitation techniques in order to create an atmosphere that is safe yet challenging, and in which all participants can be involved. Facilitators should be knowledgeable of group dynamics and able to respond appropriately to conflicts during reflection. In addition, facilitators should be familiar with the experience on which the reflection is based and with the issues being addressed. Facilitators can call upon other resources if their knowledge of the issues is limited.
 7. **Evaluation:** The reflection process should be evaluated by participants periodically throughout its duration, and at its conclusion. This allows facilitators to understand what is most beneficial about the reflection sessions and to make modifications when necessary. In addition, by evaluating the reflection sessions, students consider what they have learned through reflection, thereby enhancing the value of reflection.

Other points to remember:

* **Demonstrate the importance of reflection:** Emphasize the value of reflection by making it a regularly schedule part of the service experience. Make sure that everyone participates, including group leaders and others who were in attendance (faculty, available community members, etc.) in situations in which facilitators should not engage in the reflection (for example, when they are guiding the discussion), they should reflect in some other way, such as by journaling. The importance of reflection can also be demonstrated by including it in literature and presentations about the group's activities.

* **Capitalize on "teachable moments":** Be prepared to facilitate reflection when situations arise involving significant issues or experiences (for example, death of a shelter resident). This involves training in facilitation and familiarity with the resources available on a variety of topics. Naturally it helps the facilitator to have experience the situation, or to otherwise be accessible to the group in order to learn about it. Facilitators should maintain contact with service participants and try to take part in their informal gatherings.



 Next Section: **Reflection Circle**

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The Reflection Circle

Creativity requires the freedom to consider the "unthinkable" alternatives, to doubt the worth of cherished practices.

-- John Gardner, Leadership Writer

[John C. Gardner Photograph]

Simply put, reflection involves getting people talking about their experiences. Good facilitation can assure this occurs in a safe and democratic way. The most basic form this reflection takes is the reflection circle. In this forum the tools of good facilitation are used and questions are raised that start participants thinking about their experiences and their learning. The strengths of the reflection circle mirror those of good facilitation, and include providing space in which

- each participant has a right and an opportunity to speak
- every idea has value and can contribute to learning
- individual contributions are recognized
- participants are responsible for their own learning

Reflection participants should be seated in a circle, with the facilitator(s) seated along with them. Facilitators should not be separated out by standing up or speaking at a podium. A reflection question is posed by the facilitator and participants are encouraged to respond. Good facilitation is crucial to effective full group participation. Questions

can be flexible and flow from the developing discussion, or can incorporate slightly more structure following a particular theme identified for the reflection session. Similarly, questions can be as broad as "Why are you involved in this service experience?" or more specific like: "Based on your work in an AIDS hospice, what are your thoughts on health care reform?" Following is a list of sample questions for a reflection circle. Additional questions can be found in the "Activities" section of this manual.

Reflection Questions

Why do you do service? for self-interest or altruism?

Describe the people you met at the service site.

Name three things that stuck in your mind about the service experience.

Describe the atmosphere of the service site.

Describe some of your interactions.

Why do you think (activity described in previous questions) happened?

How were you different when you left the service location compared to when you entered?

What did the "body language" of the people tell you?

How did the people's responses make you feel?

How did the services site make you feel? (compared to other identifiable places)

What brings people to the service site (both people seeking service and the volunteers)?

Are "strangers" welcomed at the service site? Why or why not?

How are you similar/different to the others (others in your service group? others seeking services? etc.)?

In what ways did being different help/hinder the group?

What have you learned about yourself?

If you were on of the people receiving services, what would you think of yourself?

How does this experience compare to others you've had?

What connections do you see between this experience and what you've learned in you college courses?

How was your service contributed to your growth in any of these areas: civic responsibility, political consciousness, professional development, spiritual fulfillment, social understanding, intellectual pursuit?

What have you learned about a particular community or societal issue?

How did this experience challenge your assumptions and stereotypes?

Do you think these people (or situations) are unique? Why or why not?

What public policies are involved and what are their implications? How can they be improved?

Who determines what's best for the community?

Describe what a typical day might be like for someone who uses the services of the organization you worked with.

How would you do this differently if you were in charge?

What was the best/worst/most challenging thing that happened?

Did you feel like a part of the community you were working in?

How do you define community?

Describe an internal or external conflict that has surfaced for you during your service work. Explain the factors that contribute to it and how you might resolve or cope with the conflict.

Discuss a social problem that you have come in contact with during your service work. What do you think are the root causes of this problem? Explain how your service may or may not contribute to its alleviation.

What could this group do to address the problems we saw at the service site?

What could each participant do on his/her own?

How can society better deal with the problem?

How can this experience apply to other situations in your life?

How can your solutions apply to other situations in your life?

How can your solutions apply other problem(s) of other groups?

How can society be more compassionate/informed/involved regarding this community?

What is the difference between generosity, charity, justice, and social change?

Where do we go from here? What's the next step?



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Activities

There is no happiness if the things we believe in are different than the things we do.

-- Albert Camus, Philosopher, Writer



Although the **Reflection Circle** is a basic structure for reflection, not all groups or group members are comfortable or interested in speaking up in this environment right away. Being creative and using a variety of activities helps to gain the participants' interest and can foster comfort and familiarity in the group. A mixture of approaches can also address a range of learning and communication styles. Some activities break the group into smaller units, allowing participants to become comfortable speaking in a less intimidating environment. Others spark discussion through the use of quotes, visualization and role plays. Group activities thus offer a framework for reflection, and encourage participants to begin thinking critically about their experiences. Through exposure to a variety of viewpoints, participants develop their understanding of the issues and improve their ability to reflect without relying on structured exercises. A selection of group activities follows.

Reflection Starters: Basic

Discussions

A single question is often the simplest way to start a group talking. The questions listed in the previous "Reflection Circle" section are basic to reflection and address a range of aspects of the service experience. Facilitators should review that list and consider incorporating some of these or similar questions into the group's reflection sessions. A well-known structure for reflection questions is described below, as well additional basic reflection starters. Alternative discussion activities can be derived from the role plays, quotes, and group exercises in this manual.

What?/So What?/Now What?

This structure for reflection questions is perhaps the most widely known and used. It is a basic way to promote discussion that begins with reviewing the details of the experience and moves toward critical thinking, problem solving, and creating and action plan.

What?:

- descriptive
- facts, what happened, with whom
- substance of group interaction

So what?:

- shift from descriptive to interpretive
- meaning of experience for each participant
- feelings involved, lessons learned
- why?

Now what?:

- contextual-- seeing this situation's place in the big picture
- applying lessons learned/insights gained to new situations
- setting future goals, creating an action plan

Concentric Circles (from David Sawyer)

The group is divided in two, with half of them forming a tight circle in the center of the

room. The remaining people then pair up with someone in the circle. The facilitator then poses a question for each pair to answer in a few minutes. Then, either the inner or outer circle is asked to rotate "x" spaces to the right or left. Another question is asked for the new pair to discuss. This activity can go on for as long as desired, giving people the chance to have one on one discussions with many different people in the group. The following are examples of questions that the facilitator may ask:

- What social or environmental problem touches you most right now and why?
- What's wrong with formal classroom education?
- What do today's undergraduates want from their teachers?
- What do you like most about service-learning?
- What did you learn about _____?
- Talk about a time when someone really supported you.
- Who did you meet during your service work that touched you deeply?
- Describe a high point/low point in your service work and explain why.
- Discuss an underlying social issue(s) your service work addressed.

Open-Ended Questions (from "Students Trained in Advocacy and Community Service" (STACS))

Although not a formal training technique, it is important that facilitators be proactively by using open-ended questions that allow for creativity to surface. Open-ended questions may sound like "How might this look different?" and "What would our program look like if a bomb were dropped and we had to start from scratch?"

Sentence Stems (from University of Maryland, Community Service Programs)

Sentence Stems can be useful in helping participants begin to think about their expectations for the experience [or their perceptions after concluding the experience].

Example:

- "Today I hope..."
- "I am most anxious about..."
- "I expected community members to be..."

How Do You Define Service? (from Koln &

Hamilton)

People define service in many different ways. Discussion about these different definitions can be very interesting and eye-opening. This exercise is also important to reveal the diversity of ideas within the group, and to underscore the importance of recognizing differing perspectives. The sample definitions that follow can be presented one at a time through the course of the discussion or can be offered all at once and then ranked by each participant, according to their personal philosophy of service (for example, assigning a "1" to "voting" because the participant believes it best represents service).

- Joining the armed services
- Providing dinner once a week at a homeless shelter
- Talking with a friend
- Chaining yourself to an old growth tree as loggers enter the forest
- Leaving your car at home and biking to work every day
- Giving \$50 to the United Way
- Walking a frail person across a busy street
- Writing a letter to a congressperson about the dangers of nuclear proliferation
- Giving blood
- Tutoring a migrant worker
- Adopting an eight year old boy
- Quitting your job to move to a monastery and meditate for a year
- Working as a state legislator
- Voting

Free Associations (from STACS)

The best facilitators are those who do not consider themselves to possess the "expertise" but work cooperatively with the expertise and experiences of the participants. A Free Association is a simple technique that quickly draws on, and captures, the true expertise of the group. This method of facilitating simply asks the participants to freely associate answers to certain questions. For example: "Generate twenty solutions to apathy on campus;" "List/brainstorm what is empowerment;" and "what do we know about Marxism?" All of these questions used in a Free Association will enable the facilitator to quickly chart responses from the group and gain a sense of the levels of sophistication and the "teachers" hidden with the group. (see also [Hoshim Brainstorming](#).)

Hoshim Brainstorming (from STACS)

This technique is a variation of the Free Association technique. However, the Hoshim Technique asks participants to list answers, solutions, ideas, or opinions on "Post-it notes" or other stickies. For example, a facilitator that is leading a conflict resolution workshop may ask for participants to generate ten responses to low conflict, medium conflict, and high conflict issues on Post-It notes. Similar to a free association, the Post-It notes are then placed on the wall. The entire group then has a large gallery exhibit walk-through of all the notes in which they can review the responses to conflict. The Hoshim Technique tends to be an effective tool for assisting groups that are not open to discussion or are stuck on a particular issue.

Note: additional topics for discussion can be obtained by contacting the Georgetown University Volunteer and Public Service Center. (202)687-3703; vps@guvax.georgetown.edu

Role Plays

Using role plays with groups can be an active and interesting way to get students involved in reflection. Role plays involve students identifying a problem situation and assuming the identities of those persons affected by the problem in order to act out potential solutions. A major benefit to this kind of activity is that it asks participants to try to understand the experiences of others. For example, a role play about a parent who does not want her child disciplined by a volunteer tutor requires that a participant assume the role of the parent and try to understand the reasons for her feelings.

Role plays are also beneficial in that they actively engage participants in a problem-solving. Participants are challenged to develop potential solutions to the identified problem and then try out their comfort level in implementing the solution. In the process participants can realize the strengths and weaknesses of the proposed solutions, and may discover new facets of the problem. Equally important, participants learn more about their own strengths and weaknesses in handling such situations and can receive feedback from other group members in order to improve their knowledge and skills.

Role plays can involve as many or as few people as the situation warrants but should allow several participants to observe so that they may offer additional ideas and insights from the seemingly neutral point-of-view of an "outside."

The facilitator should consider starting the exercise with a simplified version of the problem and can then add complexity as the role play progresses. Complexity can be

achieved by offering more background information (for example, the tutored child has a history of aggression), or adding facts (for example, the parent will stop bringing his/her child for tutoring unless the tutor agrees not to discipline the child). Participants should be encouraged to contribute to this problem generation as well as to the development of the solutions. Whenever possible, scenarios should come from real events encountered in participants' service experiences.

The set up:

Sometimes role playing exercises are implemented at the spur of the moment, suggested by the facilitator or someone else in the group as a creative means of exploring a particular problem or issue. In other instances, the facilitator will think about a role play ahead of time. A scenario might be written down and distributed to all group members. Certain roles may be defined ahead of time and shared with only a few members who will be acting the role play out. In any case, encourage creativity and spontaneity. There is no right or wrong way to perform a role play, as long as mutual respect is maintained.

Who starts:

Generally, each group will have a few extroverts who can be called upon to begin a role play. Another possibility is inviting people who are most familiar with a given situation to begin the exercise.

How long should the role play last?

Enough time should be given for the actors to explore the various intricacies of the situation. If it feels as if the role play has degraded into something or silly or irrelevant to the discussion, the facilitator can step in and call the role play off. If it appears as though the actors are stuck in a given situation, a more interactive approach is suggested,-- see the next paragraph.

Tapping the should technique:

One technique to involve observers is to instruct them to intervene in the role play to offer their ideas by tapping the shoulder of the person whose role they wish to play. For example, if a participant has a different idea for how a tutor might respond, s/he should tap the shoulder of the person playing the tutor, replace them in that role, and then act out their idea.

Follow-up debriefing:

The facilitator must make sure that the entire group is aware that the role play has ended. The rules of reflection that we have already touched on should be maintained. Sometimes, in the spirit of the moment, the participants can cross boundaries of acceptability. In some situations, one person may be playing the heavy or devil's advocate, much to the disdain of the group. It should be stressed that the actors have left their roles

and are now themselves. Sometimes as the debriefing unfolds, and other dilemma is encountered. The facilitator can suggest another scenario to role play to explore the issues.

Quotes Exercise

Quotes can be a useful way to initiate reflection because there is an ample supply of them, they are often brief yet inspiring, and they can sometimes be interpreted in multiple ways. Facilitators need not limit quotes to those that represent the popular view or the view supported by the group, but can offer a mixture of quotes that represent several viewpoints, or one that has multiple interpretations. Participants should be challenged to consider the other meanings the quotes may have to different individuals. Participants can also be invited to share personal quotes, taken from their own journal entries or their other written work.

Facilitators may want to make the reading of quotes a group activity by filling a hat with strips of paper containing different quotes. Each participant draws a strip of paper and reads the quote to him/herself. Participants take turns reading their quote out loud, explaining what they think it means, and discussing how it might pertain to the service project at hand.

The [following quotes](#) can be used in this manner.

Group Exercises

The following exercises range in style and substance, with some being more serious and complex than others, and some geared toward issues, while other focus on group dynamics. Facilitators are encouraged to transform simple icebreakers to more reflective activities by adding substance to the questions being

asked. For example, instead of having participants state their hometown and favorite color, ask them to explain why they serve and to identify a pressing concern in the community. Additional activities that are appropriate as "ice breakers" have been identified as such in italicized text.

"Gotcha" (from Chesborough & Hill)

The facilitator or participant starts to tell the story of the day. When the speaker omits a detail, someone else in the group says "gotcha" and continues. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers, rather it is a way to promote sharing of details and feelings, and to point out differences in experiences and interpretations.

The Landing (from Jennifer Sawyer)

This exercise takes 45 minutes - 1 hour for a group of 25. The Landing [can be used as] the **first group activity of a session** and helps folks feel solidly grounded for the upcoming experience. It includes a visualization of people bringing their full energy and attention from wherever they have come from. People are then asked to think of what it is they are carrying with them. It can be a gift or a burden, something they would like to share with the group to help them feel more present. The setting should be quiet (maybe some relaxing music) and softly lit. Sitting on the floor in a circle around a couple of lighted candles gives the ambiance of being around a campfire.

- Facilitator introduces the Landing, asking people to close their eyes and visualize all of their energy catching up with them and "landing" in their bodies here for this event. The tone set here by the facilitator is important. Some people tend to be uncomfortable in this setting so you may need to set people at ease with some reassurance that the value of this exercise will become apparent to them shortly.
- Facilitator asks people to consider what it is they are carrying with them what they are bringing. Do they carry a gift or a burden or maybe both. Have a moment of silence then ask people to speak their names and share their gifts and burdens with the group. This can be done as people are moved to speak rather than going around the circle. Remind folks to be aware of the time, keeping their comments to one or two minutes so that every one can speak.

- It is good to leave some space between comments, but you may need to encourage people to "keep the pace going."
- Facilitator thanks group for their courage and openness and makes appropriate closing comments: "Hope you feel that you have landed" etc.

Stand and Declare (from David Sawyer)

The facilitator makes a statement to the group, to which members can strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree. Groups form around each of the four responses to the statement, showing the group's "differences." Members from each opinion group are asked to explain their stance, fleshing out the many facets of the issue. People must listen carefully, and can change positions if they change perspectives. This activity helps everyone learn to disagree without being disagreeable, but must be carefully facilitated. Questions are intentionally stated to allow for personal interpretation and to limit responses to one of the four categories. Several group members will want to take some sort of an intermediate stance, but should be encouraged to choose the stance about which they feel the strongest, or which is their instinctive response. Part of processing this activity can then be discussion how it felt to be so limited, to be categorized.

Questions should proceed from lower risk statements to higher risk, more controversial statements. Sample statements include:

- Service learning is transforming higher education
- Service isn't really service if people get paid.
- Direct service is mostly charity work and does little to promote social justice.
- Public education does a good job of preparing young people for the future.
- The goal of service-learning programs is the development of the student (or the transformation of the community).
- Service makes a lasting impact, on the participants/community.

Alternative to Stand and Declare (from Students Trained in Advocacy and Community Service)

Different groups are asked to stand in front of the rest of the participants. For example, all **Latino/a** individuals stand in front of the room. The group then answers four questions:

- What is wonderful about being **Latino/a**?
- What term do you never want to be called again?
- How can the participants that are listening be helpful to **Latino/a** people?

- Do you feel heard?

After the group in front of the other participants answers the questions, another, group is selected to gather together and answer the questions. This exercise is affirming and provides an opportunity for individuals to draw on their own experiences, their own stories, etc. This tends to be a good exercise for building common ground and bonding groups.

Pair and Share (from David Sawyer)

Good as an introductory exercise or as a reflection tool to help students "think out loud" about some aspect of their service or classroom experience. Participants pair with one or two others to share ideas on a specified topic. Helpful way to encourage participation from individuals who are not comfortable addressing the larger group.

Affinity Groups (from David Sawyer)

This is a good example of a traditional icebreaker activity that can incorporate substantive service issues and lead in to full reflection.

The facilitator announces a topic and instructs participants to form a group with those individuals with a similar response to the topic. This activity helps to get a visual picture of who makes up a group, and to accentuate similarities and differences within one group. Topics can begin with "low risk" issues and proceed to higher risk. For example:

- Grouped according to favorite color (how does it relate to service?)
- Grouped by favorite art form: poem, song, dance, sculpture, painting (and why?)
- Diversity groups (race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, class, age, etc.)
- Grouped according to reason for serving.
- Grouped according to perceived purpose of their service program.

Fish Bowls (from STACS)

Fish Bowls provide an opportunity for a select group of participants to openly discuss an issue, video, problem, or strategy in an open manner. Simply select volunteers to sit in a tight circle in the middle of the room. The facilitator may choose to have only men, only people of color, etc. in the Fish Bowl. Provide two or three questions for Fish Bowl participants to discuss. The goal is for those observing to keep quiet and notice, comment, or observe different perspectives. The value of a Fish Bowl is that certain

groups relate in different ways when uninterrupted. Men sometimes approach conversations in a different manner than women. Much awareness can be raised by simply hearing what other groups have to say on particular topics. As a general rule, the facilitator should allow equal time for each Fish Bowl group. For example, if African-Americans are given ten minutes in the Fish Bowl, then Asian-Americans should also be given ten minutes. If the facilitator allows one group more time than others, conflict may arise. In order to process the Fish Bowls, simply allow for all to discuss openly, at the end of all Fish Bowls, any group's observation (also see [Frierian Fish Bowl](#)).

Frierian Fish Bowl (from STACS)

Often, for many reasons, certain individuals will feel uncomfortable voicing their opinion in a group environment. One mechanism for gaining full-group participation is to have all participants write their respective responses to issues on a piece of paper (do not include names). The issues, or pieces of paper, are then placed in a hat in the middle of a circle. For example, the facilitator asks that everyone explain (on paper) "why are there so many homeless people in this city?" Answers may range from, "people do not want work because they are lazy" to "there exists a government conspiracy and homeless funding is often misused." These are typical statements that are controversial but tend to not be voiced openly. Thus, the Frierian method gets all opinions down on paper.

Once opinions have been recorded on paper and placed in a hat, pass the hat among the group. Everyone must respond with their interpretation of the written response and then voice their personal reaction to the paper.

Dark/Light (from Chesbrough & Hill)

After the event, have all the participants sit in a circle with lit candles. The facilitator shares a dark part (or feeling) of (about) the experience and blows out his/her candle. The next person shares until the room is dark. The facilitator lights his/her candle and shares a happy moment of the experience (or something that they would like to improve over a period of time). S/he lights the candle of the person sitting next to him/her with his/her candle. Slowly the room becomes light. (An intense sharing--lots of analogies can be made with dark and light.) Questions to promote discussion: Are you the candle, which emits light, or the mirror, which reflects the light of others?)

Three Minute Speeches (from David Sawyer)

Wonderful opening exercise that helps people find their inner motivations for the work

they do and learn to express them to others. This exercise is an even more in depth way to build a sense of community and shared vision in service programs, retreats, or trainings. Allowing four minutes per person will give you a fairly realistic time frame. It is best not to tell people about this exercise too far in advance. This adds somewhat to the drama and risk involved. Sometime between an hour and thirty minutes before Three Minute Speeches folks are told about the exercise and asked to ponder upon a specific question. One very good question is "What is the deep core reason you do the work you do?" Tell folks they can tell a story from some part of their lives, about a particular person whose influence figures greatly, or any other reasons that they are involved in the service field. You may want to craft to other appropriate questions. People should be encouraged to extend themselves and to let others know some of the deeper reasons for their dedication to helping others. The setting that works best is somewhat solemn and formal with a table for people to stand behind while they speak. Good lighting is essential, a table lamp off to one side works well. (Specific instructions follow.)

- Facilitator gives announcement of activity sometime prior to the time to begin.
- Just before the speeches let people know that there will be a timekeeper who will give them a "one-minute warning" by holding one finger in the air. Speaker can select a timekeeper or there can be one or two volunteer time keepers.
- The seating should be in rows and there should be one less chair than speakers. Explain that this means that the current speaker cannot sit down until someone else comes forward to speak.
- Responses can be quite profound. Facilitator should provide appropriate closing.

Guided Imagery (from University of Maryland Community Service Programs)

This exercise can help participants get in touch with their expectations, assumptions, and even fears about the service experience. It can also be used to help participants imagine the lives of those with whom they serve. Participants get comfortable, close their eyes if they wish, and listen to a narration. Get creative and write a narrative leading participants through the day.

Example: "Today you are going to serve meals to people who are homeless. Picture yourself arriving at the shelter. What do you see? What do you smell? What do you hear?"

Building Solutions (from Chesbrough & Hill)

In a small group, form a circle. Ask one member of the group to identify a problem that

s/he feels needs action and resolution. The next member in the group is then to pose a solution through action. Each subsequent member is then asked to build on this solution until the group feels it has reached a consensus on how the problem can be solved. This can be altered in a number of ways using the same process of group reflection and sharing. Consensus may or may not be a part of the process.

The facilitator can also pose questions such as "If these solutions exists, why have thy not been implemented? Would the people affected by this problem agree with these solutions? Who might not agree?," etc.

The Strong Circle (from City Year, cited by David Sawyer)

This exercise is a relatively quick way to check in with a group at the beginning or end of a meeting and gives a sense of connectedness. It resembles the huddle in team sports and creates a feeling of solidarity and team effort.

- A Strong Circle is announced.
- The group stands in a tight circle, shoulder to shoulder, everyone in the circle and no one outside the circle.
- A pertinent question may be to put the group asking for a one word answer: "Tell us in one word how your service project went...what you thought of the retreat...how your semester is going..." etc.
- People speak their answers in turn, around the strong circle.
- Any appropriate closing comments are added.

Lifestories (from Dorothy Stoneman, cited by David Sawyer)

This exercise is designed to help a small group of individuals get to know something significant about each other in a very short time. People rarely get a change to talk about themselves without interruption, (and without advice or judgement) since in normal conversation we tend to go back and forth. It is a true gift when someone gives you a piece of their life story, and a gift to the speaker for others to hear that story with interest and attention. This is an effective ongoing exercise for an organization when the small groups are changed each time.

- Facilitator makes sure chairs are in a tight circle or other close arrangement. Remind folks of the instruction.

- Each person speaks without interruption for 5 minutes on "a piece of your personal history that will really help others get to know you."
- You can talk about your cultural or familial or religious roots, or speak about people or things that have shaped you in significant ways.
- Speaker chooses a timekeeper (should be rotating) that will give him/her a one minute warning and gently remind them of the time if needed.
- Two people in the group volunteer to give that person an affirmation, something they really like about that person, when the speaker is finished (one minute apiece). Facilitator may need to remind group members to let everyone share in giving these affirmations.

Block Arrangement Exercise (from Wilmes, Scott, & Rice)

Two participants sit back to back. One participant creates a design with a set of blocks. They are then asked to describe their design to the other participants so that s/he can draw a picture of it. The drawer cannot ask any questions. Process what assumptions the designer/describer made about what the drawer would understand. What assumptions did the drawer make about what the describer meant? How did it feel to have communication limited? How does this relate to the assumptions we make each day about people or situations?

Who Am I? (from Wilmes, Scott & Rice, created by Juan Moreno)

Tell participants you would like them to respond in writing to 10 questions. Then ask them 10 consecutive times to respond to the question "Who am I?" At the end of the "quiz", ask them to cross off 3 of the items, then 3 more. Process what types of responses they wrote for their identity (acknowledging that some may have hidden identities that they may not wish to share). How did it feel to cross items off? What types of responses were crossed off first/last (e.g. most negative, less important, etc.)? What did you learn about how you see yourself?

The Ball Game (from Wilmes, Scott & Rice, created by Juan Moreno)

Participants are asked to form a circle. The facilitator has a ball and a stop watch. Participants are told the rules to this game: the game begins and ends with the facilitator; each person must touch the ball only once; you must remember the order of who has the ball before you and who you give the ball to; these are the only rules of the game. The facilitator throws the ball to someone in the group who then throws it to someone else, etc., until the last person throws it back to you, the facilitator. The facilitator or timer tells the group how long the process took. (Participants were not previously informed it would be timed.) Instruct the group to cut their time in half. Repeat the process until the group cuts their time down to 3 seconds. Typically it will take the group several tries to refine their strategies (e.g., standing next to people who pass them the ball, asking the facilitator to play an active role in moving the ball). The facilitator should not answer questions except to say there are only the four rules that s/he gave at the beginning of the game. Process how the group could complete the task in 3 seconds when it took ____ minutes the first time. What helped you reach the goal? What hindered you? How did you look at the problem in new ways? What does this tell us about human nature? Did anyone suggest you do it in less time than the facilitator suggested? Who or why not? This activity takes approximately 20 minutes for group of about 25 people.

Describe, Interpret, Evaluate (from Wilmes, Scott & Rice created by Lillian Roybal Rose)

Select pictures from magazines (helpful to select on that may draw stereotypes with captions that would counteract stereotypes) to hand around the room. Captions should be removed or concealed. Ask participants to individually examine the pictures and "describe what they see." As a group, ask participants to describe what they saw. The facilitator should tabulate responses in three columns at the front (as a description, interpretation, or evaluation) without explanation to the participants. Process the exercise by describing what the facilitator was recording, distinguishing between description, interpretation and evaluation. Discuss the role of assumptions and stereotyping in the exercise. How did the group description exaggerate or modify individual perceptions? End by sharing the caption from the picture. Variation: ask several participants to be blindfolded and paired with partners who describe the pictures to them. Ask for descriptions from the blindfolded participants first in the processing. Did getting the information second hand contribute to distortion? Why or why not?

Force Field Analysis (from STACS)

In every organization, work environment, family, or community, there exists a natural tendency (a force field) which acts to keep the situation from changing. A force field

represent posers that are proposing change and those that are working towards change. In essence, those forces want to keep the issue at an equilibrium.

A simple Force Field Analysis lists pros and cons on a chart. For example, forces that are keeping children in poverty may be: lack of education, inadequate health care, poor nutrition, violence in homes. On the other side of the Force Field are forces that are helping to get people out of poverty: social workers, loving fathers, school nutrition programs, etc. Chart both on the wall and discuss what issues the group is capable of changing. How can the group break the forces that are working towards equilibrium?

A Force Field Analysis (pro and con chart) can be used for any problem. Examples included: What forces are keeping you interested in this training? What forces are keeping our service program from expanding? What forces are preventing women from being leaders in our program? Once the pros and cons are charted, the dynamics and tension in groups often begin to dissipate. This is an excellent tool for getting groups to think about strategies for making small and large commitments to change (also see [Web Charts](#)).

Web Charts (from STACS)

This brainstorming tool can be used by facilitators when groups are "stuck" and see no options. Simply place the "issue" or "problem" in the center of the chart and all of the obstacles in "bubbles" outside of the central issue. This is a different strategy for looking at pros and cons and force fields (see [Force Field Analysis](#)).

Readings

Providing participants with readings about the issues they will be addressing can stimulate thinking and discussion, much like [Quotes](#). Readings can include a mixture of viewpoints, including some that may be controversial or challenge participants to consider alternative ideas. Participants should be encouraged to connect the content of the readings to their service experiences, and to bring in other reading that they believe to be relevant. Such material includes relevant literature (philosophy, fiction, policies), newspaper articles, service provider pamphlets, poems, and student reflection essays. Samples of some of these can be obtained from the Georgetown University Volunteer and Public Service Center.



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Additional Forms of Reflection

Most of this module has focused on reflection in the form of group discussions and related activities. Discussion, such as that occurring in the "Reflection Circle," is among the most common forms of reflection because it is useful in a variety of circumstances and environments. However, as service-learning has grown on college campuses, many other effective forms for reflection have been developed and used. Activities for the classroom are gaining the most attention, and, in some cases, can be applied outside of the classroom as well. The following reflection methods can be used in or out of the formal classroom environment. For additional information on reflection, please consult the bibliography that follows this section.

Journals

Journals are a common element of service-learning courses and are also sometimes used outside the classroom by students participating in service organizations. In fact, journals are sometimes completed by both the student who is serving and the community member who is "being served." Journals are a written form of reflection in which students consider their service experience in light of specific issues, such as those contained in course content. Students can examine their thoughts and experiences through journals, and further the learning they have done in relation to the service. Unfortunately journals are sometimes misused as simple logs of events, thereby missing the reflective component inherent in thinking critically about experiences.

Before instructing students to complete journals, one must consider the learning objective that the journal is intended to meet. Journals can focus on self-understanding, can consist of information that will be used in another reflective activity such as a research paper, or can be the material on which a dialogue with others is based. Among the types of journals that can be used outside of the classroom are personal journals ("stream of consciousness" writing about the experience), critical incident journals (analysis of a specified even according to prompts such as "What conflicts did you face during the event? What are possible root causes for the societal issues you observed?"), and three part journals (one section is a description of the event, one is an interpretation, and one is an application to future events).

Service participants should be encouraged to write in journals whenever they feel motivated to do so, and should be specifically asked to do so several times throughout the semester, and especially following particularly meaningful events, both positive and negative. For example, students should be encouraged to write in their journals during an overnight stay in a shelter, after a successful tutoring session, or in response to the death of a community member. These journal entries can later be reviewed privately and/or shared during a group reflection circle.

Reflective Essays

Slightly more formalized journal entries are called reflective essays. This form of reflection focuses on designated issues and is completed at specified times during the service experience. While these are more commonly used in the classroom, specific situations outside of the classroom may warrant their use as well. For example, as student organizations complete their year or leadership cycle, members can be asked to write a reflective essay about the organization's service. These essays can form the basis of organizational discussions about missions, goals, and areas for improvement (as well as areas of merit). In addition, these essays may be helpful for new members of the organization to envision the experiences they will encounter. Reflective essays that address campus issues, or that can serve to inform and motivate students to serve, may be submitted to the campus newspaper as educational or public relations material.

Service Contracts and Logs

Students engaged in service individually, in connection with a class, or as a group can devise "contracts" or statements of objectives outlining their goals for the service work and identifying the tasks they intend to complete. Such a document can provide a

mission and structure for service participants, as well as a measure against which they can evaluate their efforts. The creation of a service contract and the subsequent outcomes of the service effort may initiate important reflective discussion among the group. In order to track efforts and outcomes participants can be encouraged to maintain service "logs". Service logs summarize the service activities as they occur and can be used in combination with the service contracts to identify progress toward the goals and obstacles to further progress. In addition, service logs are a helpful resource for reminding participants of significant events in the service experience. Facilitators may use these events as starting points for reflection.

E-Mail Discussion Groups

The creation of an electronic mailing list-serve allows service participants to form a discussion group to discuss their experiences. Participants can post questions to the group, suggest readings, or ask for feedback on issues they are facing at their service site.

Organization leaders, staff, or faculty members can also request summaries of service activities via e-mail, and can serve as moderators of the discussions. A digest of these email discussions can also be compiled and made available to participants.

Service Learning Portfolios

Portfolios are gaining popularity in a variety of aspects of college education as a means for students to demonstrate the knowledge and abilities they have acquired during a designated period of time (e.g., undergraduate years) or from a specific activity (e.g., participation in service). Portfolio contents can include administrative documents pertaining to the processes involved in the given project, as well as evidence of the project's outcomes, and the participant's evaluation of the learning experience. These items not only serve as interesting historical markers and information resources, but they also provide the group with topics for reflection in preparation for future service endeavors. Service learning portfolios may include: a service contract and logs, journals, program operations information, relevant academic work, media coverage (including articles in the campus newspaper), evaluations by community members, organizational brochure, plan for action research or other future projects, etc. Service learning portfolios are commonly used when service is connected to an academic course, and graded.

Presentations

Sharing the service experience with others can take a variety of forms, all of which require the participants to reflect on which aspects of their service are most significant, who they want/need to involve in their work, and how to present the information effectively. Participants may speak to a class or residence hall floor, represent the service effort on a panel discussion, write about it for the campus newspaper, advocate for service programs before the student government or university administration, or create visual promotional materials such as a video, photo exhibit or bulletin board. Completing similar projects for a community service provider is also a useful way to learn more about organization with whom one serves.

Photo Reflections

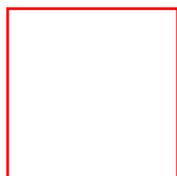
Many organizations and programs compile pictorial accounts of their work to share among participants as well as with the general public. These pictures can become tools for reflection when participants are asked to write reflective captions for the pictures. Doing this can transform this purely social "pizza and picture party" into an opportunity for meaningful reflection.

Additional Resources for reflection include:

Bringle, R.G., & Hatcher, J.A. (1996) Reflection activities for the college classroom. Paper presented at the National Gathering, June 21, 19996.

Goldsmith, S. (1995). Journal reflection.

Kendall, et. Al. (1990). Combining Service and Learning: A resource book for community and public service.



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In addition to information supplied by the University of Maryland, numerous other resources were consulted and cited in this manual. Service participants interested in additional information on reflection are encouraged to contact these people and organizations.

The Pennsylvania Campus Compact supplied us with their 1995 training manual [Students Trained in Advocacy and Community Service](#) (STACS). This publication was tremendously helpful and many portions of it have been reproduced in this manual.

David Sawyer is the director of [Students for Appalachia](#) at [Berea College](#) in Berea, Kentucky. He has written and presented on the top of reflection across the country. The exercises attributed to him in this manual have been obtained from his literature, as well as the reflection sessions he facilitated at the second annual National Gathering, held in Indianapolis, Indiana on June 20-23, 1996.

We were also fortunate to have access to "The Training Toolbox: A Guide to Service-Learning Training" produced by the [Maryland Student Service Alliance](#) in 1994. This is a useful resource for designing workshops about service-learning and includes numerous resource materials.

Jennifer Gilligan, Manager of Youth and Education Outreach at the [Points of Light](#)

Foundation, generously supplied us with literature pertaining to reflection including Catalyst: a Workbook for Trainers by the Points of Light Foundation, COOL, and **Youth Service America**.

Numerous exercises were also adapted from a 1993 presentation at the annual conference for the American College Personnel Association. Martha Baer Wilmes, Angela Scott, and Kathleen Rice presented "Shifting Frames of Reference: A Prelude to Understanding" which included variety of useful materials to challenge students' thinking and perspectives.

Donald Schon's book The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Thinking Action (Basic Books, Inc., 1983) provides the foundation for our belief in reflection as a necessary habit for service practitioners.

The exercises attributed to Ron Chesbrough & Ellen Hill are taken from "Reflection: Ideas and Thoughts on Community Service and Reflection," which was supplied to us by the **University of Maryland Community Service Programs**.

Julie Hatcher and Robert Bringle, Ph.D. are the administrators for the **Office of Service Learning at Indiana University - Purdue University at Indianapolis** (IUPUI). They have published numerous articles about promoting service learning to faculty and developing reflection activities for the classroom. They are an excellent source of information about integrating service learning into the college curriculum.

The **Eisenhower Leadership Program** at **Gettysburg College** created the "Gettysburg Leadership Model: A Leadership Development Course for College Students." This training manual is an interesting resource for additional materials on topics such as "followership", "ethics", and "positional leadership".

I wish to also thank Colleen Maher, Program Coordinator at the VPS Center, and the student leaders of the Freshman Orientation to Community Service (FOCI) program. During a leadership retreat with these students I had the opportunity to try out the techniques and exercise promoted in this manual. The feedback received during that retreat was useful in the final revisions of the manual and the students' reflection on service justified the effort.

The publishing of this manual to the web was the work of **Aaron Hawley (text)**, at the time, an undergraduate student at the University of Vermont. Each page of the manual was digitally scanned and saved as (ASCII) text. The web pages were coded in a text

editor, following the [HTML 4.01](#) specification. The page design attempted to have a high degree of usability for people with disabilities, through the use of [Cascading Style Sheets](#) and [accessible web design](#) methods and techniques.



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