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Planning Civic Engagement in Transportation
Mapping Routes to Our Roots: Student

CHAPTER 15

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Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives
Community College Service-Learning at the American
to transportation needs at an end-of-semester symposium. The symposium included group posters, dinner, and select student speeches. Audience members included community group members, planners, academics, transit providers, and government and business leaders. This process was refined and repeated with three Public Speaking classes in the spring 2011 semester. Since Group Communication had a low enrollment that semester, the course was canceled.

**Theoretical Bases for PICEP2**

Various literatures helped to shape the PICEP2. Since the FTA was looking for whether certain kinds of innovative methods of public participation would be effective, I drew upon theories of service-learning and participatory action research within communication studies, ethnographies of communication and group deliberation, and public participation and transportation sources. Through this review of the theoretical bases for the project, I will demonstrate how service-learning can be a form of action research, and how theoretically informed design can craft a project that meets (and exceeds) legal mandates for public involvement.

**Participatory Action Research and Service-Learning**

PICEP2 emerged out of a need for improved public participation in policy planning and a need for engaged student learning. Students involved as co-researchers and as members of the community groups with which they met, amplified community group voices and connected those who had been labeled as “hard-to-reach” with those who need to reach them. This type of pedagogy, which is “translational” (Frey 2009, 205) or “makes a difference” (Kahl Jr. 2010, 298), affects how professors present material, how knowledge of communication practices become present to students, and how improved communication becomes manifest within a community.

Communication is not only the outcome of learning an individual skill (through which one’s competence in society can be measured) but is also central to the process of learning, and key to constructing engaged participation in a civil society. If individuals make meaning of themselves and society through communicative processes, then participation is itself defined in and through communication without communication, participation in society would be impossible. (Cooks, Scharrer, and Castaneda Paraces 2004, 44)

Service-learning is one such example of such this type of pedagogy: students learn about communication while engaging in communication in service to their communities. They apply what they learned to real-world situations and needs.

Service-learning is often coupled with participatory action research. Scheuneman and Berg (2004) link service-learning and participatory action research in the following way:

*Action research as service-learning is an activist oriented participatory approach to addressing social problems that utilizes ethnographic research methods...*
Conclusion

The findings of this study suggest that community college students who participate in service learning programs are more likely to develop a sense of civic engagement and a sense of responsibility for their communities. This is consistent with previous research that has shown the positive impact of community service on student development and civic engagement. The results of this study also support the idea that community service can be a powerful tool for promoting social change and improving the lives of others. The findings of this study have important implications for community college administrators, faculty, and staff who are interested in promoting civic engagement and social responsibility among students. The study also highlights the importance of incorporating community service into the curriculum and promoting it as an important part of the college experience. Finally, the findings of this study suggest that community colleges have a unique opportunity to contribute to the development of a more engaged and responsible citizenry. The results of this study support the idea that community service can be an effective way to promote social change and improve the lives of others.
It is important to remember that the perception of the world is subjective and can vary greatly. Each individual's perspective shapes how they interpret and react to their environment. This subjectivity can lead to differences in understanding and opinions, highlighting the need for open dialogue and empathy in communication. By acknowledging and respecting diverse viewpoints, we can foster a more inclusive and harmonious society. It is essential to stay curious and open-minded, recognizing that there are multiple paths to understanding and that each perspective has value. Through active listening, empathy, and a willingness to learn from others, we can grow as individuals and strengthen our connections with one another.

In the context of education, the importance of fostering a growth mindset is evident. A growth mindset encourages students to embrace challenges, see mistakes as opportunities for learning, and persist in the face of setbacks. By fostering this mindset, educators can help students develop resilience and a strong sense of identity. In doing so, they empower students to be active agents in their own success, equipped with the skills and mindset to navigate the complexities of the modern world.

In summary, the ability to communicate effectively is a key component of personal and professional success. It is crucial to cultivate an environment that values open dialogue, empathy, and a growth mindset. By focusing on listening, understanding, and mutual respect, we can build stronger connections and create a more inclusive society where everyone feels heard and valued.
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