Pragmatism, Pedagogy, and Community Service Learning

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In this paper I explore Goodwin Liu's proposal to ground the pedagogy of service-learning in the epistemology of pragmatism from the perspective of a reflective practitioner. I review Liu's epistemology and his claim that from within it three features common to service-learning – community, diversity, and engagement – become pedagogical virtues. I then describe an international community service learning program and use it to illustrate the role that these virtues might play. I then argue that Liu's proposal needs to be amended in two ways: he needs to use his pragmatism to rethink the connection between epistemology and pedagogy, and he needs to acknowledge the normative implications of his approach by aligning pragmatism with critical approaches to community service learning.

In "Knowledge, Foundations, and Discourse: Philosophical Support for Service-Learning," Goodwin Liu (1995) proposes that we ground the pedagogy of service-learning in the epistemology of pragmatism. His article is largely theoretical, however, developing pragmatism as an alternative to the traditional representational model of epistemology and only briefly exploring the implications for community service learning. Noting this limitation, he claims that he had "gone only halfway starting from one end" (p. 16), and invites others with more practical experience to assess the relevance of his alternative epistemology. In this paper I accept Liu's invitation, exploring his proposal from the standpoint of a reflective practitioner, a philosopher, and pragmatist who has developed and taught international community service learning programs. Over the past decade I have led or co-led eight educational programs in Costa Rica ranging from 1-week alternative spring break experiences to 8-week study abroad programs involving intensive language instruction and immersion, ethics coursework, and community service learning.[1] These programs have provided a significant base of practical experience with which to explore the implications of Liu's pragmatic framework for community service learning.

Because I view this as an exercise in reflective practice, I will tack back and forth between theory and practice. In the first section I review Liu's epistemological framework of pragmatism and its implications for the pedagogy of community service learning, paying particular attention to his proposal that we adopt community, engagement, and diversity as pedagogical virtues. In the second section I describe a study abroad program that incorporates community service learning, using it to illustrate how these

virtues might manifest themselves in practice. In the final two sections I critique Liu's framework in light of both philosophical reflection and my experience with the international community service learning program. The goal is to better understand both the benefits and limitations of adopting pragmatism as a pedagogical framework for community service learning. While I am sympathetic to his proposal to adopt pragmatism, I argue that his proposal needs to be amended in at least two respects. In the third section I argue that Liu needs to use his pragmatism to reconceptualize the relationship between epistemology and pedagogy. More specifically, because he presents pragmatism as an alternative epistemology and makes pedagogy dependent upon epistemology, he unnecessarily limits the way in which community, diversity, and engagement might be realized as pedagogical virtues. In the fourth section I argue that Liu needs to more fully develop the normative implications of pragmatism and explicitly align his pragmatic epistemology with a "critical" approach to community service learning (Mitchell, 2008) that entails a social justice goal.

Theory: Liu's Pragmatic Epistemology and the Pedagogy of Community Service Learning

A number of other authors in this and other journals have noted the connections between pragmatism and community service learning (Crabtree, 2008; Deans, 1999; Esquith, 2000; Green, 2000; Hatcher, 1997; Hatcher & Erasmus, 2008; Lisman, 2000; Saltmarsh, 1996; Tucker, 1999), and others have argued that the increased attention being given to values, service, community, and citizenship in American liberal edu-

cation is evidence of the influence of a shift toward pragmatism in higher education (Kimball & Orrill, 1995). What makes Liu's work unique is the combination of two important claims: (a) that pedagogy must depend on epistemology, and (b) that we need a paradigm shift in the epistemological frame of reference away from the representationalism that currently undergirds higher education toward pragmatism.

Liu argues that traditional academia operates within a representational epistemological framework inherited from Western post-Enlightenment philosophy, but largely traceable back to René Descartes. This framework is based on the twin pillars of foundationalism and dualism. Foundationalism is seen in the various attempts to find and articulate "the epistemological bedrock from which we can make a claim to knowledge with absolute certitude" (p. 6). The aspiration is to construct a system of certain knowledge from these foundations using established rules of inference to justify new claims to knowledge. Dualism is seen in the separation of the knower from the objects of knowledge. Liu traces this back to Descartes' separation of mind and body, which privileges the mind – the "I" that thinks or knows – over the body – the external world that is to be known. This dualism generates the problem of skepticism. Within this representational framework the problem of knowledge becomes the problem of knowing whether our inner representations accurately represent, mirror, or correspond to objects in the external world. "How," Liu asks, "is knowledge of the outer, external world possible when our only certain knowledge is of our inner ideas and sensations?" (p. 6).

In contrast, the epistemological framework of pragmatism rejects representationalism and its pillars of foundationalism and dualism. Drawing on the work of pragmatists Richard Rorty and Cornell West, Liu argues that ideas are not representations of reality, but tools for coping with it. "[P]ragmatism," he writes, "centers our epistemic concerns not on how well knowledge claims can circumvent skepticism but on how well they 'work' in particular contexts for particular people with particular purposes" (p. 12). Within this framework the problem of knowledge becomes not one of accurately *representing reality*, but of *justifying claims* to know something in a particular context.

Understanding the problem of knowledge as one of justification rather than representation has several implications. First, it means that knowledge is understood as a product of discourse. It is not "discovered," but rather "created" through a conversation in which persons make and justify claims. "What counts as knowledge" Liu writes, "is understood as a function of conversation and its standards of justification" (p. 9). Second, the standards to which participants appeal are not external standards grounded on an ultimate foundation, but revisable standards based on shared norms internal to the conversation itself. Third, because knowledge is the product of a conversation with internal standards, knowledge itself is always contextual and provisional. Finally, when knowledge is understood as the product of conversation, the goals of inquiry themselves change. As an epistemological framework, Liu claims, "pragmatism shifts our epistemological aspiration from finding objective truth to sustaining a meaningful conversation" (p. 12).[2]

According to Liu, adopting the epistemological framework of pragmatism has important pedagogical implications for teaching and learning. In particular, three features associated with service learning – community, diversity, and engagement – become pedagogical virtues. Though he does not explain precisely what he means by pedagogical virtues, it is clear in this context that Liu is referring to desirable attributes of educational programs or institutions rather than attributes or excellences of individual teachers. In other words, his pedagogical virtues are institutional, rather than individual virtues. In this he seems to be referring to community, diversity, and engagement as virtues in much the same way Rawls (1971) referred to justice as "the first virtue of social institutions" (Rawls, 1971, p. 3).[3]

Community becomes an important virtue because it serves as a bulwark against a free-fall toward relativism that is often imagined to be the inevitable result of abandoning the certitude of foundationalism. Relativism is constrained because conversation does not happen alone but in community. "Individuals in isolation are not entitled to legitimize knowledge; that function is reserved for *communities* in which truth claims are continually tested and contested in the context of discourse" (p. 14, emphasis in the original). Referencing a personal correspondence with Benjamin Barber, Liu uses the metaphor of a valley to suggest how the virtue of community addresses the slippery slope of relativism. Rather than thinking of the slope as a mountain with absolutism at the top and rampant relativism at the bottom, the metaphor encourages us to see the slope as the sides of a valley. Epistemologically the valley represents not so much the bottom of the slope, but the middle ground between the surrounding peaks of absolutism and relativism. "Philosophically, we locate this middle by understanding knowledge in the context of conversation, and pedagogically, we find it by putting teaching and learning in the context of community" (p. 14).

While community is essential for discourse, the composition of the community and the way the interaction is managed determines the quality of the discourse. More specifically, diversity among the participants strengthens the legitimacy of truth claims by increasing the probability that a range of voices and

interpretations will be heard. Moreover, it leads to "creative conflict" that generates new discourse, and thus new knowledge. In this way, diversity becomes a "bulwark against dogmatism" (p. 14). However, while it is a precondition of learning, diversity alone is insufficient. The diversity must be effectively managed so that participants in the conversation do not merely talk past one another. This means that they must attempt to listen and understand the alternative views and perspectives that the voices express.

Finally, engagement becomes a virtue because it provides a "counterweight" to dualism. According to Liu, the dualism of representational epistemology engenders a spectator theory of knowledge that separates perception from reality. This separation is, in part, an attempt to remove elements of subjectivity from the production of knowledge. However, from this separation, he argues, "it is a short stretch to separation of student and subject, campus and community, education and the real world" (p. 15). In contrast, pragmatism replaces the notion of knowers as disinterested spectators of the world with the notion of knowers as agents acting in the world. As a result, knowledge is understood as "concrete, purposive, and contextual" (p. 15). Ideas are not representations of the world, but tools for coping or making our way in it. This calls for a pedagogy "that is distinctively relational – a way of teaching and learning that narrows the gap between abstraction and circumstance, between theory and practice, between knowing and doing, between the knower and the known" (p. 15).

Practice: *Ethics in Tourism and Sustainable Development in Costa Rica*

Ethics in Tourism and Sustainable Development is sponsored by the Residential College in the Arts and Humanities (RCAH) at Michigan State University and has run five times since 2009, with groups ranging from 6-16 students. I co-lead this program with Vincent Delgado. The RCAH is a unique interdisciplinary arts and humanities program that emphasizes world languages and cultures, critical thinking, creativity, ethics, and civic engagement. The goal of this program is to help students not only deepen their academic understanding of arts and humanities, but also to learn the skills necessary to put that understanding into practice within communities. The study abroad program focuses on the ethics of development and the important role that tourism plays in Costa Rica's sustainable development strategy. With natural beauty, incredible biological diversity, a high rate of literacy, and a stable democracy, Costa Rica has become a popular destination for international tourists. Many large resorts have been built and tourism has grown into one of Costa Rica's leading economic sectors. While the country is famous for ecotourism, several forms of alternative tourism – including volunteer tourism, educational tourism, and community rural tourism – also have rapidly developed.

The 8-week program is divided into two 4-week segments. During the first segment the students live with families in the community of Santa Ana and take intensive Spanish classes taught by Costa Rican instructors at a local language school[4], as well as two courses taught by RCAH faculty. One is an ethics course focused on tourism and sustainable development. The other is a course exploring the principles, methods, and meaning of community engagement, and prepares students to work collaboratively in communities. Together the courses are designed to prepare students to engage with communities on projects related to sustainability and tourism.

At the end of the first 4-week period, we divide the group into smaller groups of 2-4 students and disperse them to small communities throughout the country to live with families and work with community partners on a variety of community rural tourism projects for the next 4 weeks. To date we have worked with 8 different communities at various stages in the development of tourism.[5] During this second 4-week period, my colleague and I visit each community to work with students and maintain relationships with community partners. Finally, at some point during this segment of the course, the students reunite at a single location for a few days to debrief and work on their final projects,[6] which consist of three overlapping essays: (a) describing the community and the project on which the student worked, (b) analyzing the projects using the core concepts of sustainable development, and (c) defining a question related to tourism or community engagement that might serve as the basis for further research.

While we did not develop *Ethics in Tourism and Sustainable Development* program with Liu's epistemological framework in mind, in fact community, diversity, and engagement have emerged as central features of the program. For this reason reflecting on the program provides an excellent opportunity to explore Liu's claim that they become pedagogical virtues in the context of community service learning.

The decision to design a program that included community service learning as well as language and cultural immersion dictated that community would be a central feature of the program from the outset. It also meant that the features of community and engagement would be tied closely together. We wanted students not only to live in their host communities, but to be part of those communities as well. While it would be hard to enumerate all the ways this has played out in the design and implementation of the

program, a few of the more prominent are worth mentioning here. First, we insist that students live with host families throughout their time in Costa Rica and that those host families have only one student living with each of them. Second, we place only 2-4 students in each community during the second half of the program when students are living in and working with communities. The communities in which our students live during this segment of the program are all small rural communities and most would not have the capacity to accommodate a larger number of students with a 1-student-per-household policy. Just as important, placing more than 4 students in any given community for this period of time would be quite disruptive; accommodating the students would, out of necessity, become the temporary focus of the community. The smaller number allows the community to continue its normal activity and integrate students more easily into the daily ebb and flow of community life. It also encourages students to develop strong relationships with their Costa Rican partners[7] rather than with just their classmates.

Student engagement is designed to help communities move forward with community rural tourism. Some of the work is consistent across communities. For instance, in most of the communities students teach English to improve the capacity of the community to serve international tourists. While teaching English was not part of our initial plan for the program, it quickly became apparent that this was a common need and that we could serve our communities better by preparing students to do it. Students also work on projects that vary significantly depending on the needs of the individual community. Some students develop websites and promotional materials while others help assess potential tourism projects from the perspective of North American tourists. Still others design signage, maintain trails and facilities, work in schools, and organize activities for youth.

Sharing information and being as transparent as possible greatly facilitates engagement. We hold a 1-day summit with students and community partners before making placements. This gives students the opportunity to learn about the communities, the type of challenges they face, and the projects students might be involved with if placed there; and it gives community partners an opportunity to get to know the students, understand their skills and interests, and assess their level of Spanish language competency. This summit not only prepares everyone involved, but it actually begins the engagement process. We also translate the instructions for the final assignment and share them with our community partners so that they know what type of questions students may be asking, why they are asking them, and what information they may be asked to provide. This gives community mem-

bers the opportunity to critically reflect with our students. While the students complete the assignment in English, we provide the communities with a summary of the student projects translated into Spanish.

Diversity arises in many ways, some fully anticipated and predictable, others unanticipated and unpredictable. Placing U.S. students in Costa Rican communities almost assures cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity. However, there is also socio-economic, educational, and age diversity both within and between the communities. The students live in a largely urban community for the first four weeks and in relatively isolated rural communities for the second four weeks. Other forms of diversity are less expected. As they engage with community organizers, their host families, and other members of the community, students often encounter multiple and sometimes conflicting narratives about the community and the impact of tourism.

Diversity is also educationally valuable. It is perhaps easiest to see the virtue of diversity that results from living and studying in a different culture. In the context of a completely new culture even an everyday experience such as a trip to the market, a visit to the doctor's office, or a conversation with a host family over dinner can raise interesting cultural, ethical, and philosophical questions. Just as important, experiencing a new culture allows students to consider their own culture in fresh ways. Importantly, they often see features that they had previously thought were givens in all cultures as contingent features of their particular culture.[8] This "unfreezing" guards against dogmatism and promotes critical thinking.

While one must be careful not to draw too many conclusions from limited data, our experience illustrates how we might adopt community, diversity, and engagement as pedagogical virtues for community service learning. Indeed, much of what we have perceived as valuable in our program can be understood as the result of emphasizing community, diversity, and engagement. However, a closer critical look at Liu's proposal suggests that it should be amended in two important ways. First, Liu should reconceptualize the relationship between epistemology and pedagogy to realize the full pedagogical value of the virtues he recommends. Second, Liu needs to more fully develop the normative implications of pragmatism and explicitly align his pragmatic framework with a "critical" approach to community service learning (Mitchell, 2008) that entails a social justice goal.

Pragmatism, Epistemology, and Pedagogy

Liu's choice of pragmatists to invoke in order to defend a pedagogy of community service learning is both puzzling and ironic. It is puzzling that he does

not draw on John Dewey, who more than any other pragmatist is known for philosophy of education. It is ironic in that the two pragmatists he cites to present pragmatism as an alternative epistemology, Rorty and West, both take pragmatism as a rejection of epistemology-centered philosophy. In his seminal work, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Rorty draws on pragmatism to mount a devastating critique not only of representationalism but of the whole enterprise of epistemology (1979), and a persistent theme throughout subsequent essays is his claim that philosophers should give up doing epistemology altogether (1982, 1991). Invoking a similar theme, West titled his historical analysis of pragmatism, *The American Evasion of Philosophy: A Genealogy of Pragmatism*, to emphasize the point that many pragmatists sought to avoid doing epistemology, and that this led them to question and re-envision the profession of philosophy itself. According to West, "the evasion of epistemology-centered philosophy – from Emerson to Rorty – results in a conception of philosophy as a form of cultural criticism in which the meaning of America is put forward by intellectuals in response to distinct social and cultural crises" (1989, p. 5).

Nevertheless, while his choice of pragmatists is puzzling, Liu is not alone in suggesting that pragmatism may have something more positive to say about epistemology.[9] Indeed, many pragmatists – for example, C.F. Pierce, John Dewey, W. V. O. Quine, and Hilary Putnam – have taken up epistemological concerns from a distinct perspective (see, for example, Dewey, 1920, 1938; Dewey & Bentley, 1949; Peirce, 1955a, 1955b, 1955c; Putnam, 1987, 1990; Quine, 1980, 1982), and while it would be a misrepresentation to say that there is consensus on a precise epistemology, the contours of a general pragmatic perspective – anti-representationalism, anti-skepticism, instrumentalism, and fallibilism – are relatively well-defined. Liu's pragmatic framework fits comfortably within these contours.

Liu is explicit on his reasons for offering pragmatism as an epistemological framework for community service learning.

> I believe service-learning will continue to be viewed suspiciously in academia as long as we speak of it as an alternative pedagogy without clarifying the nature of its underlying epistemology. For the most part, we have been making arguments for a change in pedagogy without the support of arguments for a change in epistemology. The premise of this article is that education takes place within an epistemological frame: If we wish to rethink the way we teach and learn, then we need to rethink the way we know. (p. 5)

His argument, thus, rests on two important assumptions: (a) that pragmatism offers an adequate epistemology for community service learning and (b) that an epistemology is a prerequisite for a pedagogical philosophy. Liu's most direct critics have challenged at least one of these two assumptions (Richman, 1996; Tucker, 1999) and exploring their responses sheds light on the limitations of his strategy.

Kenneth Richman (1996) agrees with Liu that an adequate pedagogy must be supported by an epistemology, arguing that a method of teaching is a method of "increasing knowledge" and thus requires an "account of what knowledge is and how it is acquired and tested" (p. 5). He also seems willing to accept pragmatism as a legitimate community-based, non-foundationalist epistemology, but argues that it cannot be used to justify the pedagogy of community service learning, except in very limited circumstances. The reason for this is that to be plausible such epistemologies must limit the community of inquiry to the community of experts on the subject matter in question, e.g., scholarly or professional communities that share a common body of knowledge, training, methods, values, and traditions, all of which contribute to the rules for discourse that produce knowledge. However, he argues that in the context of community service learning in which the community of inquiry includes members of the community being served, this requirement is not met.

> Even if the pragmatist's dialogue-based model best captures the way claims achieve the status of knowledge in communities, the members of communities served by service-learning initiatives do not have a place in the dialogue about most subjects. They are simply not the communities whose conversations determine what is knowledge in these areas. (p. 9)

As a result, pragmatism can support a pedagogy of community service learning only in those cases in which the members of the community being served can be considered experts (e.g., on their own experiences, such as the difficulties they face in employment, health care, etc.) or on subjects on which there are no experts. This severely limits the range of courses that could be offered. There may be value in doing service in the community, but if the practice does not involve knowledge production by a community of experts it is not learning, and thus, not appropriately thought of as a pedagogy – i.e., a method of teaching – at all. The implication is that service is not part of the central mission of higher education.

While Robert Tucker (1999) is also critical of Liu's proposal, his critique comes from a very different direction. While he wants community service learning practitioners to adopt a pragmatic perspective, he rejects the claim made by both Liu and Richman that a pedagogy of community service learning must be

based in an epistemology. The pedagogy of community service learning is not justified by its epistemological foundation, he argues, but by the impact it has on students and communities. Assuming that a pedagogy must be grounded in an epistemology is "a most unpragmatic assumption. Service-learning will stand or fall on its merits. If our programs are effective, the fact that we share no systematic and agreed upon epistemology will be irrelevant" (p. 9). There are multiple goals that we may be trying to achieve through our programs, and most of them are not knowledge-centered. "Among our varied goals are the reinvigoration of civic education, the inculcation of social responsibility, the amelioration of injustice, and the integration of colleges and universities with the community in which they are located" (p. 12). With a nod toward Rorty and West, he argues that adopting a pragmatic perspective provides pedagogical support for community service learning not because it provides an epistemological foundation, but precisely because it encourages practitioners to avoid epistemology and get on with promoting these non-epistemological goals. More specifically, pragmatism encourages practitioners to adopt a respect for disciplinary diversity, innovative experimentalism, and progressive thought and action.

Despite Richman and Tucker's significant differences with Liu and each other, underlying both their critiques is a shared version of the dualism that Liu finds objectionable in representational epistemology. It is a dualism that separates knowing from doing, the known from the knower, thought from action, and facts from values. This dualism is implied in Richman's critique of Liu's proposal and ultimately of community service learning. To the extent that community service learning is about learning – which Richman understands as acquiring and testing knowledge – it is very limited; to the extent that it is about service, which he sees as doing rather than knowing, it is not part of the central mission of higher education. The effect is to marginalize community service learning. In his attempt to defend community service learning, Tucker also seems to implicitly accept a version of this dualism. He finds Liu's proposal misguided as a defense of community service learning programs because it depicts such programs as aimed at acquiring knowledge when they should be understood and valued as a means of accomplishing non-epistemological goals. In other words, their disagreement regarding the adequacy of a pragmatic pedagogy is less about epistemology than it is about the scope of practices to which the concept of pedagogy should be applied. It is about what we are to achieve in our work with students. Both Richman and Tucker assume that pedagogy is about educational practice, but they disagree about the scope and nature of education.

Despite his advocacy of pragmatism, Liu himself seems held hostage by both epistemology and dualism, and as a result fails to radically reconceptualize the relationship between epistemology and pedagogy. In contrast to representationalism, which depicts the knower as an impartial and disinterested spectator of the world, pragmatism sees the knower as a purposeful agent engaged in the world. What is known can never be fully separated from the purposes for which it is known; facts cannot be fully separated from values; knowing cannot be fully separated from doing. Thus, it is not possible to draw a clear distinction between the traditional epistemological goals that Richman identifies as the proper subjects of pedagogical concern and the broad social and political aims that Tucker identifies as the goals of community service learning. Each implicates the other. Unfortunately, because Liu presents pragmatism as an epistemological framework and argues that pedagogy depends on epistemology, he does not fully acknowledge this or grasp the pedagogical implications. Shifting the aims of epistemology only slightly from finding objective truth to providing justification, and couching justification in terms of discourse, confines his notion of pedagogy to the realm of making and justifying knowledge claims. He either needs to acknowledge that pragmatism calls for an even more radical redefinition of epistemology or that pedagogy must encompass much more than addressing knowledge claims.

An example of how pragmatism might be used to expand the notion of pedagogy can be seen in the work Saltmarsh and Hartley have done on what they call "democratic engagement" (Saltmarsh & Hartley, 2011). The contrast they draw between "civic engagement" and that of "democratic engagement" closely mirrors the distinction Liu makes between traditional, representational epistemology and pragmatic epistemology. What is important to note is that Saltmarsh and Hartley describe these two frameworks in terms of both contrasting aims and contrasting epistemologies. Civic engagement, they argue, is a type of apolitical engagement that aims at "[k]nowledge generation and dissemination through community involvement," whereas democratic engagement "facilitates an inclusive, collaborative, and deliberative democracy," and aims at "[c]ommunity change that results from the cocreation of knowledge." The epistemology of civic engagement is "[p]ositivist, scientific, technocratic," emphasizes the primacy of academic knowledge, and makes a distinction between "knowledge producers and knowledge consumers." In contrast, the epistemology of democratic engagement is "[r]elational, localized, contextual," and emphasizes the "[s]hared authority for knowledge creation" and the "cocreation of knowledge" (p. 22). Saltmarsh and Hartley's democ-

ratic engagement reflects a pragmatic approach that resists the distinction between knowing and doing, and promotes the idea that *what* we know and *how* we know cannot be divorced from *why* we know – that is, the aims of inquiry. This suggests a more inclusive or expansive notion of pedagogy.

One advantage of adopting a more expansive notion of pedagogy is that it would allow us to more fully realize the pedagogical virtues that Liu espouses. Freed from the traditional understanding of knowledge production, the fuller value of the virtues of community service learning becomes more evident. Most of the students in our study abroad program clearly value community, engagement, and diversity. Indeed, many choose to participate in this particular program specifically because it affords rich opportunities for cultural immersion and community engagement. However, it is not clear that students perceive them as *pedagogical* virtues. It would be more accurate to say that they understand them more as moral values that express something about what type of traveler they want to be, what types of experiences they want to have, and their desire to have a positive impact on the world. Because pragmatism blurs the distinction between fact and value, it also blurs this distinction between pedagogical and moral virtues.

Consider the virtue of community. In class, students learn that the academic discourse on sustainable development invokes notions such as economic, cultural, and environmental sustainability. They explore questions such as, "What does it mean to distribute the economic benefits of tourism fairly and how is that related to long-term economic sustainability?" "What is cultural sustainability, and how might tourism either promote or hinder it?" "What environmental challenges do different forms of tourism create?" Living and working in their communities, students test these concepts by asking these questions not about communities in the abstract, but about one community in particular. They come to understand these questions as problems encountered by people they know, and learn that potential solutions must be viewed in light of both moral and practical implications that are difficult, if not impossible, to disentangle. Finally, they also find that while there might not be clear answers, within the context of their particular community there are limits to what will count as acceptable responses.

Engagement is educationally valuable to both our students and communities, particularly if it is contrasted with observation. For students, the emphasis on engagement can remind them that they are not simply to learn about communities, but to learn *from* and *with* them. They also learn that what they can contribute is not limited to what they know. For communities, the very presence of students can provide

the impetus to focus on community issues related to tourism. Our community partners consistently report that while the actual work that students do is helpful, the most important contributions students make result from the questions they ask and the conversations they initiate. When students ask, for instance, about the economic, cultural, and environmental impacts of tourism on the community, community members are led to think carefully about the impacts of their tourism practices and to articulate their goals and concerns. Moreover, we often hear that as they engage with students in these conversations, community members engage with one another and in the process identify shared goals and concerns.

While the expected diversity that students encounter has the educational benefits mentioned previously, the value of the less anticipated and often unpredictable diversity that they encounter while living and working in their communities is more difficult to perceive because it is often experienced in the context of conflict. Despite our warnings, students are often surprised when they encounter conflicting understandings of their host community, goals of its tourism efforts, accounts of its history, and visions for its future. These differences are often embedded in personal, social, and political conflicts within the community. Being witness to this conflict creates a great deal of anxiety for students who frequently perceive the conflict as "noise" that prevents them from getting to "the real" truth rather than "creative conflict" that helps them construct a fuller truth. Nevertheless, despite their discomfort, an awareness of conflict engenders a healthy skepticism toward first impressions and simple storylines, and helps them begin to piece together a more complex and nuanced narrative that helps them understand the community more deeply.

Justice as a Pedagogical Virtue

The claim that pragmatism refuses to separate normative from epistemological aims thus suggests that we cannot fully distinguish between moral and epistemological virtues, and that a more expansive notion of pedagogy is required. I have tried to argue that adopting this more expansive notion of pedagogy would help us realize the pedagogical value of community, engagement, and diversity in community service learning programs. In this final section I want to argue that fully acknowledging the normative implications of pragmatism should lead Liu toward adding justice to his list of pedagogical virtues. This is relevant to the ongoing debates about two contrasting approaches to community service learning. To illustrate why this is particularly important, I provide an example from the program.

While thus far I have spoken as if each of the communities with which we work is a singular entity, in one location we essentially work with two communities, what I will call Community A and Community B for the sake of anonymity. The two communities are located along the same river and connected by a rough unpaved road, with Community A located several kilometers downstream from community B. The distance between the two, however, is more than physical. Members of Community A have greater access to financial, educational, and political resources. There is a large coffee company, both an elementary and high school, and a paved road connecting the town to other towns and cities. A bus route to the town makes it possible for people to travel and work in the capital city of San Jose an hour away. Several members of the community are fairly well connected politically and, as a result, have been able to access regional, national, and international resources. In contrast, Community B is accessible only by the rough unpaved road and is more socially isolated. There is a small elementary school, but to attend high school, students must walk approximately 30-45 minutes down the mountain to Community A. While some members of the community are traditional landowners, many are what might be called squatters with more tenuous property rights. Compared to Community A, members of Community B have little political voice at the regional, much less national or international, levels.

The community organization with which we officially work is comprised primarily of members of Community A. With the help of international funding, the organization started a significant community rural tourism project several years ago. To protect the watershed, they purchased a large parcel of wooded land upriver, on the other side of community B, to operate as a forest reserve. In addition to the reserve, they built a small eco-lodge and visitor center to host tourists and provide environmental education for local schools and religious groups. While our students work under the supervision of this organization from Community A, they often live with families in Community B because of the proximity of those families to the eco-lodge and reserve.

One result of this arrangement is that students hear quite contrasting narratives about the project. Members of Community A depict the project as a model example of sustainable development, one that uses income from tourism to support both environmental protection and local economic development. Moreover, they argue that it has benefited Community B in tangible ways. The road, while still rough and unpaved, has been improved, a bridge connecting two parts of the community has been constructed, and children have been provided with better educational opportunities. The organization has also procured funding to relocate several homes that are built right next to the river and pose an environmental threat to the watershed. However, members of Community B tell a much different story. Their story is one of appropriated land, unfulfilled promises of economic development and employment, and coerced displacement from homes in the name of promoting tourism. To get to know the communities in which they live and work, students need to sort through these stories and weave together a fuller narrative. They also must carefully negotiate the social environment so as not to alienate either group. It is not the most comfortable of situations for the students.

The details of this story are unique, but its general contours are not uncommon. The frequency with which students encounter and are forced to navigate conflict suggests that at the very least Liu needs to expand his proposal by providing a fuller account of how the structures of power and privilege within communities distort the discourse within which justification is supposed to take place. In fairness, he seems to recognize this as an issue. Drawing on Barber's work on political knowledge, he states that a truth claim is legitimate only if it reflects a "consensus arising out of an undominated discourse" (Barber, 1993, pp. 213-214 as cited in Liu, 1995, p. 15). However, when Liu writes of the need to manage diversity so that it deepens knowledge, he emphasizes only that we must understand discourse as a "combination of speaking and listening" and omits any discussion of how we must attend to questions of power in order to understand when discourse is being dominated. This is insufficient. I want to argue that grounding community service learning in a pragmatic pedagogy strongly suggests a "critical" approach to community service learning, and that this requires adding justice as a fourth pedagogical virtue.

Mitchell (2008) contrasts the "traditional" approach to community service learning with the "critical" approach. While both approaches emphasize individual change and student development, "critical service-learning pedagogy balances the student outcomes with an emphasis on social change" (p. 53). Whereas the traditional approach is apolitical, the critical approach to community service learning has an explicit aim of promoting social justice and is, thus, political in a broad sense. She argues that the three primary elements of the critical approach are (a) working to redistribute power amongst all participants, (b) developing authentic relationships, and (c) working from a social change perspective. This contrast between traditional and critical approaches closely parallels Saltmarsh and Hartley's contrast between civic and democratic engagement discussed in the previous section, as well as the contrast Deans

(1999) draws between the educational philosophies of John Dewey and Paulo Freire.

I am not arguing that adopting a pragmatic epistemology logically entails adopting a critical approach to community service learning. This would be too strong of a claim. Indeed, many authors have noted the troubled relationship between conflict, power, and knowledge in pragmatism (Collins, 2012; Decker, 2012; Esquith, 2000; Garnar, 2006; Hildreth, 2009; Johnson, 2001; May, 2011; Ron, 2008). I am arguing that without an account of how power can distort the discourse in which justification of truth claims takes place, an account that can be found in Mitchell's critical approach to community service learning or Saltmarsh and Hartley's democratic engagement, the value of Liu's pragmatic approach will not be realized. Such a move would, I believe, require adding justice to his list of pedagogical virtues.

Conclusion

In this paper I have tried to respond to Goodwin Liu's invitation to assess the relevance of his pragmatic epistemology to a pedagogy of community service learning from the perspective of a reflective practitioner. These reflections are largely supportive of his proposal. However, I also argue that a deeper understanding of pragmatism should lead him to reconceptualize the relationship between epistemology and pedagogy and to more explicitly consider the normative implications of a pragmatic framework for the pedagogy of community service learning. In the spirit of community, diversity, and engagement, I, as with Liu, invite others to add their voices to the conversation in hopes of arriving at even better justified conclusions.

Notes

[1] I use the term "community service learning" here inclusively to refer to a range of community-based learning experiences. While we use the terms "community engagement" or "civic engagement" in our programs, these terms are somewhat problematic in that they are also used to denote a certain type of citizenship that is independent of, but often the goal of, service-learning (Adler & Goggin, 2005; Prentice & Robinson, 2007).

[2] It is hard not to see the parallel between Liu's call for a shift toward pragmatic epistemology and Kimball's (1995) discussion of the rise of pragmatism in American liberal education. Kimball summaries the basic features of pragmatism as follows:

1. that belief and meaning, even truth itself, are fallible and revisable;

2. that an experimental method of inquiry obtains in all science and reflective thought;

3. that belief, meaning, and truth depend on the context and the intersubjective judgment of the community in which they are formed;

4. that experience is the dynamic interaction of organism and environment, resulting in a close interrelationship between thought and action;

5. that the purpose of resolving doubts or solving problems is intrinsic to all thought and inquiry; and

6. that all inquiry and thought are evaluative, and judgments about fact are no different from judgments about value.

[3] For more on the nature of institutional virtues see Fricker, 2010.

[4] CONVERSA, see http://www.conversa.com/ for more information.

[5] The communities are El Yüe (located in the southeast near Puerto Viejo); Nacientes Palmichal and Palmichal (located one hour southwest of the capital of San Jose); Cedral de Mirimar (in the Montes de Oro in the province of Puntarenas); Santo Rosa/Cartagena (located on the eastern coastal plain one hour from Guapiles); Tres Rios (located on the southwest coast near Ojochal); and Canitas and San Luis (both located in the Monteverde region).

[6] We have experimented with doing this both at the end of the four weeks and at the midpoint. It seems to work best at the midpoint.

[7] We have adopted the SOFAR model of community engagement partnerships (see Bringle, Clayton, & Price, 2009; Bringle & Hatcher, 2002).

[8] Philosopher A. C. Grayling captured this phenomenon well when he wrote, "It is well said that they know nothing of their homelands who know only their homelands, which implies that to travel is to learn." (Grayling, 2011, p. 47).

[9] William James noted that pragmatism was used to address a wide range of issues, arguing that it "stands for no particular results," that it "has no dogmas, and no doctrines save its method" (James, 1975, p. 32). He goes on to compare it to a corridor in a hotel leading to many different rooms. The occupants of the rooms may have different agendas, but they share the same corridor – i.e., pragmatism "Innumerable chambers open out of it. In one you may find a man writing an atheistic volume; in the next someone on his knees praying for faith and strength; in a third a chemist investigating a body's properties; in a fourth a system of idealistic metaphysics is being excogitated; in a fifth the impossibility of metaphysics is being shown. But they all own the corridor, and all must pass through it if they want a practical way of getting into or out of their respective rooms" (p. 32). Seen in this light, Rorty and West's anti-epistemological pragmatism occupies only a limited number of rooms. Indeed, West admits that his reading of pragmatism is selective, reflecting his interests in social and political matters. It is, he writes, "an explicitly political interpretation without, I hope, being pejoratively ideological" (West, 1989, p. 6).

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