Social Theories and Service Learning: Towards Building an Integrated Service-Learning Sociological Framework

Mark Anthony D. Abenir[1,2] and Carol Ma Hok Ka[3]

[1]*Development Studies Program, Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines*

[2]*Research Center for Social Sciences and Education, University of Santo Tomas-Manila, Philippines*

[3]*Singapore University of Social Sciences, Singapore*

ABSTRACT

This theoretical paper anchors service learning (S-L) in three broad sociological theories. From there, discussions on the actual implementation of S-L based on these theories are explained to build an integrated S-L sociological framework. Four S-L modalities of community engagement are identified—namely transactional, transitional, transformational, and transcendental—with their corresponding respective levels of community participation—namely consultative tokenism, placation, partnerships, and citizen control. The application of such a coherent framework is discussed in the context of contemporary service-learning practices and community impact.

Keywords: community engagement, community participation, functionalism, conflict and critical perspectives, symbolic interactionism, empowerment, service learning

Service learning (S-L) is increasingly used as a pedagogical practice in many higher education institutions across the globe. This is because many studies have shown that S-L has been proven to create positive learning experiences for students, and it is seen to be an effective tool for teachers to teach and create impacts to communities that are being served (Becker & Paul, 2015; Hok-ka et al., 2016; Ma & Chan, 2013). Aside from this, borrowing from the concepts of Westheimer and Kahne (2004), S-L is widely used to educate students about either participatory or justice-oriented citizenship that is geared towards building a democratic society, at least in the context of countries under a democratic form of government. However, as Hollander, Lapping, Rice, and Cruz (2017) have emphasized, S-L has always been challenged by whether its purpose is for justice-seeking or just helping to ameliorate economic and social challenges, or even both.

Further, in the extant literature, S-L is informed by a variety of theoretical foundations and pedagogical value systems with varying degrees of intention to find a balance for S-L to equally benefit the students, faculty, and community partners involved (Flecky, 2011; Permaul, 2009). In the theoretical discussions, S-L often has been linked to different learning theories, such as applied learning and experiential learning theory. There have also been discussions on the different types of S-L, such as charity-based, community-based, and critical service learning (CSL), but there have been few attempts to link S-L to its sociological foundations. For example, the work of Hironimus-Wendt and Lovell-Troy (1999) grounded S-L in the critical tradition of sociology and the importance of the use of the sociological imagination as pioneered by Charles Wright Mills. Stoecker (2016), on the other hand, discussed S-L in the light of the sociological theories of structural func-

tionalism and conflict theory. However, the authors feel the need to further ground and update the discussion on how the different types of S-L are anchored in the three broad classical frames of sociological theories, namely structural functionalism, conflict and critical perspectives, and symbolic interactionism.

Also, since S-L is situated in the wider public service or mission of higher educational institutions, there has been a greater emphasis over the years on building mutually beneficial and reciprocal partnerships in the community engagement efforts of universities (Peters, 2017). Because of this, this paper looks into the modalities of community engagement as expounded in the works of Bowen, Newenham-Kahindi, and Herremans (2010), Streetman (2015), and Wong (2008), in order to understand the varying degrees of mutually beneficial and reciprocal partnerships that take place in S-L. Such modalities of community engagement, in ascending order, are transactional, transitional, transformational, and transcendental.

Finally, as S-L implementation has also been widely informed by the science of community planning and organizing, as demonstrated by the life works and experiences of Hollander et al. (2017), there is a need to have an ample discussion in bridging S-L with the escalating levels of community participation as the authors borrow selected concepts from the pioneering work of Arnstein (1969) in the context of community planning and empowerment. These selected escalating levels of community participation pertain to consultative tokenism, placation, partnerships, and citizen control. Thus, this paper argues that aside from tracing the sociological roots of S-L, it is also important to link S-L with the modalities of community engagement and the levels of community participation to further contextualize the contemporary practice of S-L and better understand its impact to communities involved in the S-L process. In doing so, this paper builds an integrated S-L sociological framework to help improve the practice of S-L as it has become institutionalized across many higher education institutions today.

In this regard, this paper elucidates first the foundational sociological theories of S-L and its resulting typologies. Then, it proceeds to explain extensively the integrated S-L sociological framework where the modalities of community engagement and levels of community participation are also discussed. The paper concludes with a summary and synthesis of the entire discussion and points out recommendations for future studies and application.

The Foundational Sociological Theories of Service Learning and Resulting Typologies

Three broad sociological theories help clarify the understanding of S-L as a learning pedagogy and as a form of community engagement. They are structural functionalism, conflict and critical perspectives, and symbolic interactionism. These sociological theories contribute to shaping different typologies of S-L, namely charity-based service learning, critical service learning (CSL), and community-based service learning (CBSL). Charity-based S-L is hinged upon structural functionalism, CSL is anchored upon conflict and critical perspectives, and lastly, CBSL is grounded upon symbolic interactionism. Each of the aforementioned sociological theories and their resulting S-L typologies is explained in the succeeding paragraphs.

Structural Functionalism

Structural functionalism is a macro-sociological theory that looks at society or a community as consisting of different but related parts, each of which works together to promote solidarity and stability (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2017). These parts refer to the different social institutions that have specific functions that address the solidarity and stability needs of society. For example, health institutions address health promotion, prevention, cure, and rehabilitation needs of society with the ultimate purpose of ensuring that people in society are not decimated by diseases and live longer and/or healthier lives. If health institutions completely cease to perform their functions, the rest of existing

social institutions would somehow incorporate the functions that used to be provided by health institutions or even new social institutions are formed to address the situation to continue to make the society work (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2017). Thus, a common metaphor for functionalism is the human body, with its different organs serving specific purposes, but working for a full-functioning human system (Parsons, 1961).

When one applies structural functionalism in the context of S-L, one can see that S-L has a specific function in a society or a community. The function of S-L is to make a school and its academic services more directly relevant to the immediate needs of its surrounding communities (Thompson & Hood, 2016). The other function is that since students learn and reflect best from first-hand experiences (Giles & Eyler, 1994), community service is used as the experiential basis for reflective learning. In this way, S-L provides an avenue for students to render relevant service to their communities as a means to enrich their academic learning, promote their personal growth, and help hone their civic responsibilities.

In addition, S-L has another important function for educational institutions when it comes to their faculty members. Through S-L, faculty members become more sensitive to social issues and develop passion in addressing social problems (Vogel & Seifer, 2011), and at the same time, they can advance their engaged or civic/public scholarship (Moore & Ward, 2010; Sherman, 2013). Engaged scholarship, according to Boyer (1996), denotes an orientation where faculty members direct their energies not solely towards an academic community, or the life of the mind, but also towards pressing public issues and shared civic and ethical problems. Thus, through S-L, faculty members acquire greater credibility and foundation to teaching as they can apply their discipline's theories to promote civic and social responsibility and help shape their moral values and responsibilities as an educator (O'Meara & Niehaus, 2009).

When it comes to the community, it can be construed that S-L serves an important function in helping communities find external partners who can help address their concerns or needs. Community members can recognize the benefits of S-L through intercultural exchanges, economic advantages, transfer of knowledge, and productivity, but they might not be fully aware of what S-L is as used in an academic setting (Harrington, 2014). Thus, there might be negative aspects of S-L in terms of community division, the creation of more work for community members, and the visits or projects working with different batches of S-L groups.

An S-L hinged on a structural-functionalist perspective is what Morton (1995) calls *charity-based* where S-L is a spiritually based service that bears witness to the dignity of other persons, an unconditional giving, and an acceptance that desired changes we want to happen in the lives of other people is outside of our time and space. By this, Morton means that unconditional love should be at the core of doing S-L and one must expect that the fruits of doing S-L may not be seen in one's lifetime, hence, there must be a spiritual commitment that sustaining S-L would lead someday to a just world. However, an S-L anchored on structural functionalism has its own inherent limitation since instead of addressing the root causes of social problems, it has the tendency to maintain the status quo, merely adapts and copes with social injustices, and justifies the function of inequality to maintain equilibrium and harmony in society (Neuman, 2011; Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2017). This is why Morton also acknowledges that charity-based S-L has been corrupted, that is, it has come to mean the well-off doing services to the poor when they feel like it and according to their own terms. This has led charity-based S-L to focus on naming the deficits of those served and it has created a long-term dependency of those served on those with the resources (Morton, 1995). This is supported by Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2000) where they argue that charity-based S-L operates within a paternalistic and unidirectional framework where the community is seen as an adopted entity that needs help and there is a one-way transfer of knowledge, expertise, and service from universities to communities, characterizing a service that is "doing for" rather than "doing

with." This type of S-L not only reinforces stereotypes of communities as helpless and in need of external others but also further perpetuates dominant power relations embedded in unequal partnerships between the "service providers" and "service receivers" (Weerts & Sandmann, 2008). Such a relationship is a hierarchy between the superior and inferior, where the superior has the resources and capacity while the inferior other does not (Baker-Boosamra et al., 2006). This has led Donaldson and Daughtery (2011) to argue that the charity model of S-L does not challenge, but rather reinforces the idea of academics as experts and continues to place them within a position of power to transform communities and their experiences within the S-L context. To avoid this aggravating negative impact, Harrington (2014) suggests that it is important for communities to have a continuity and sustainability of S-L projects, which is coupled with popularized community dissemination of research findings drawn out from the S-L experience.

Conflict and Critical Perspectives

On the other hand, conflict and critical perspectives provide an alternative macro-sociological view of society. In conflict theory, societies or communities are viewed to be made up of generally two groups of people: On one end are the powerful oppressors, and on the other end, the often powerless oppressed (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2017). Those in power hold onto power and oppress others by spreading lies, myths, or even the use of violence whenever necessary (Neuman, 2011). Because of this view of reality where inequality defines human relations, critical theory steps in to argue that there is a constant need to understand the underlying factors and dynamics of power relations between the oppressor and the oppressed. This is important so it can be used to find ways to free human beings from enslavement and manipulation and achieve social justice (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2017). Thus, the critical theory looks deep into the issues of inequality in communities through understanding the layers of social injustices and dichotomies that exist within society. They would uncover the myths

perpetrated by those in power, scrutinize facts and figures to expose inequalities, and seek social justice.

Given the above explanation, in the context of conflict and critical perspectives, S-L embraces an emancipative nature that seeks social justice to address problems that beset a community. As Freire (1968) argues in his critical pedagogy, the primary function of education is to empower the powerless and transform those conditions that perpetuate human injustice and inequity. This means that it is important for S-L to be used as a problem-solving education where students are allowed to question unequal or unjust conditions in a community, scrutinize its root causes, dialogue with community members to seek solutions to the unfavorable situation, collaboratively work with the community in implementing the agreed solution, and evaluate as a collective what worked and did not work to serve as a guide for future actions. In this way, students realize through their collective actions with the community that they can contribute directly to shaping the destiny and future of their immediate surroundings. This type of S-L is what Mitchell (2008) coins as *critical service learning* (CSL), or *liberating service learning* (LSL) as termed by Stoecker (2016). As Mitchell (2008) explains, CSL emphasizes these three tenets: (1) working towards redistribution of power, (2) building authentic relationships, and (3) having a social change orientation where the students are focused on learning how to most effectively empower communities. Stoecker (2016), on the other hand, goes further by saying that LSL should focus on evaluating the community outcomes of the service rendered by the students, boldly proclaiming that the learning of students about the community service they rendered is a secondary consideration.

However, Butin (2006, 2015) argues that S-L based on conflict and critical perspectives makes it an ideologically driven practice that demands structural change and social justice. He also points out that such S-L bears the burden of being the social justice standard-bearer, which is an impossible task since the causal linkage between S-L and

societal betterment cannot be proven. This limitation is supported by Latta et al. (2018) where they acknowledged that the CSL of Mitchell (2008) may never actually accomplish the end goal of systemic social change; however, what can be done is instead of doing CSL, one must focus on approaching CSL. By this Latta et al. (2018) mean acquiring knowledge by interrogating one's positionality to advance closer to Mitchell's three tenets of CSL. They also highlight the fact that CSL has the seeming inability to produce the desired change since it is bound within the timeframe of the school curriculum, thus, leading to the completion only of short-term service projects. Thus, Latta et al. (2018) argue that one must be committed in the slow drip of change that CSL contributes and have faith that through CSL, a steady stream of college graduates who have the skills and the desire to make a difference in the world is unleashed.

But the approaching CSL of Latta et al. (2018) might not be enough, as Santiago-Ortiz (2019) argues that there is a need to decolonize CSL. By this Santiago-Ortiz (2019) means that since the notion of service in CSL is based on prevailing damage-centered narratives that view communities as powerless and are unable to resist dehumanization, this puts the university in a context that creates a hierarchical relationship of domination and subordination. This means the university often inserts itself in a community as a form of settler-colonial power, finishes a short-term service project, and then leaves as if completing a neoliberal agenda of power, profit, and achievement (Brown, 2015; Raddon & Harrison, 2015). Santiago-Ortiz (2019) also claims that the colonialist nature of CSL makes the benefit of learning for the students based on the refracted lens of the experience of the "other" who needs to receive community service. Thus, Santiago-Ortiz (2019) points out, decolonizing CSL entails (a) the acknowledgment of the neoliberal and settler-colonial project in education, (b) incorporating anticolonial and decolonizing methodologies that counter and resist dominant narratives in CSL, and (c) a relational shift towards a more horizontal and solidarity-based community-university partnership.

Symbolic Interactionism

Lastly, symbolic interactionism focuses on a micro-sociological understanding of society, dealing with individual interactions of people living in societies or communities. This theory focuses on the language and symbols that help us give meaning to the experiences in our life. The premise in this theory is that we change the way we behave based on the meaning we create and continue to generate through our social interactions, thus, reality is socially constructed, or created by conversations, thoughts, and ideas (Blumer, 1986; Hustedde & Ganowicz, 2002). In brief, this means that people largely act on their perceptions and how people think about themselves and others is based on their social interactions. For example, when the term "disabled persons" is used to generally label persons who have functional limitations or impairments (caused by a physical, mental, cognitive, or a developmental condition), this has a significant bearing on the life conditions and trajectories of such persons since their disability is seen before they are seen as persons. Because of this, such persons are looked upon more as a recipient of care, cure, or protection, thus, they are often viewed as individuals who are economically unproductive and who can only make little or even no significant contribution to society (Griffo, 2014). But if we change the nomenclature into labeling such persons as a person with disability (PWD) coupled with sustained interactions with them, this helps us to appreciate and value the person first before his or her disability. By focusing on the person, we realize that what makes a person disabled is not some inherent trait of that person, but only the interaction between a trait of a person and the environment wherein that person lives (Silvers et al., 1999).

Using the lenses of symbolic interactionism, S-L embraces a constructivist approach to learning where students actively participate in real-world activities, apply what they already know, and actively learn new ways to solve problems in their surrounding

communities (Fosnot, 2013). In this way, S-L provides a myriad of meaningful interactions for students, wherein students actively gather and synthesize information they get from the community, debate with their fellow students on the best possible course of action until they arrive at a consensus, and consult and dialogue with community members to determine how their time can be most effectively used to help address the needs of the community. Thus, in the context of symbolic interactionism, S-L courses need to have an open-ended structure, which means the implementation of S-L could lead to different outcomes. This is important to understand since needs in communities vary in different points in time, hence, S-L projects of students must also vary based on these changing community needs. At the same time, every batch of students who take an S-L course have their unique understanding and interpretation of a certain community need or problem based on their specific collective interests, hence, S-L projects would also differ based on these varying collective interests of students and community members. What is important is that students should be allowed to find ways to actively learn, reflect, and succeed in more than one different way in solving real-world problems they find in their surrounding communities.

Further, an S-L dominated by symbolic interactionism is what Hammersley (2013) coins as *community-based service learning* (CBSL), which is rooted in partnerships of reciprocal exchange. This means that S-L should be concerned in nurturing reciprocity between the students and the community by fostering respect and collaboration (Hammersley, 2013). This also suggests that mutual or reciprocal learning between the students and the community is the key objective of S-L (Fox, 2002) since the sharing and exchange of ideas can lead to a level of cultural understanding that bridges cultural divides and provides a fertile ground for social change (Porter & Monard, 2001). Emphasis on mutual learning in S-L also helps in overcoming paternalistic and unidirectional tendencies of S-L projects that are often beset with problems of undeliverable project

outcomes (Woolf, 2005).

However, CBSL is not without its limitations based on the inherent weakness of symbolic interactionism. Symbolic inter-actionism often excludes outside influences of social structures and ignores social inequalities in power, privilege, and wealth based on race/ethnicity, gender, class, dis/ability and other social characteristics that cause tension and conflict in a society (Aksan et al., 2009). For example, in the study of understanding the structure of student learning networks in a CBSL clinical placement program, Held et al. (2019) discovered that students meaningfully learned about their clinical practice through their interactions with clinical supervisors, peers, community members, and other personnel with whom they engaged. However, Held et al. also found out that the students lacked the understanding of health marginalization of community members associated with the complex socioeconomic determinants of health. This is because interactions with the community are short-lived and students have inadequate personal experience of marginalization, which eventually contributed to their limited insights about health inequalities. This confirms the observations of Becker and Paul (2015) and also of Butin (2006) that students of S-L are often positioned as middle class, and are often White, sheltered, single, non-indebted, full-time, and childless students who may view S-L as a luxury they can afford. If students are not made aware of social justice-based approaches to S-L and are not conscious of their privileged positionalities in society, their interactions with the community may end up producing risks that do not bring tangible returns in the communities they serve. As Blouin and Perry (2009) point out, inadequately prepared students can result into harmful interactions such as (a) students can inflict emotional stress onto vulnerable communities or can become emotionally vulnerable themselves; (b) students who have only a few hours of experience with communities they are serving may wrongfully misrepresent their interest or even unjustly

critique them; (c) students might be unable or unwilling to carry out tasks that they feel are unpleasant, or may come in with ideas about what they want to do, and then become frustrated when they find out that what they want is not needed in the community; and (d) students may not be always personally invested in their work, which leads to their lack of interest in producing quality results since they are only trying to fulfill an academic requirement. Thus, for CBSL to effectively work, it must be able to incorporate the social justice tenets of CSL. Hondagneu-Sotelo and Raskoff (1994) also recommend that even though it is inevitable for S-L projects to have a limited timeframe, it is important to ask critical questions to students that they can move from the mundane to the abstract, give constructive feedback, and challenge their false perceptions and stereotypes.

The Integrated Service-Learning Sociological Framework

The three key schools of sociological thought discussed in the previous section gave us varied ways of understanding society and how it influences the design and conduct of the different types of S-L in communities. However, as Butin (2006) points out, S-L is an "amalgam of experiential education, action research, critical theory, progressive education, adult education, social justice education, constructivism, community-based research, multicultural education, and undergraduate research" (p. 490). This is why it is important to have an integrated service-learning sociological framework to en-capsulate this amalgamation. In addition, the actual implementation of S-L based on different sociological frames can lead to dif-ferent modalities of community engagement and levels of community participation. This results in four S-L modalities—namely transactional, transitional, transformational, and transcendental—with their corresponding respective levels of community participation - namely consultative tokenism, placation, partnerships, and citizen control. These are encapsulated in Figure 1 (page 60).

1. Transactional Modality and Consultative Tokenism

As seen in Figure 1, given the limitation of S-L anchored heavily on structural functionalism, such S-L is charity-based and operates under a transactional mode of community engagement. A transactional modality, borrowed from the concept of Bowen et al. (2010), means that the S-L project is usually one way; that is, tangible project deliverables mainly come from decisions made by students and faculty based on consultations with the community. Here, interaction with the community is occasional, service comes on a need per need basis or is seasonal, and the service providers, which are the students and faculty, have full control of the community engagement process (Morton, 1995). This is because, as Eby (1998) explains, S-L here is often organized to respond to the needs of an academic institution that sponsors it, the needs of students, the needs of an instructor, or the needs of a course. The needs of the community often come last. Although people in the community are consulted about the project, this is what Arnstein (1969) calls consultative tokenism as a level of community participation. The impact on the community under such a level of community participation is that people are seen to be just mere providers of information and beneficiaries of the development project without having ownership of the entire project and its outcomes (Arnstein, 1969). An example of S-L projects that fall into this mode are organizing food drives, providing academic tutorials, conducting mural paintings, building houses, cleaning up streets, and even peer counseling without making use of partici-patory strategies in its assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation (Bahng, 2015).

2. Transitional Modality and Placation

On the other hand, S-L anchored in symbolic interactionism is community-based service learning (CBSL) and operates under a transitional mode of community engagement. A transitional modality, borrowed from the concept of Bowen et al. (2010), means that the

Figure 1. *Integrated Service-Learning Sociological Framework* (return to text)
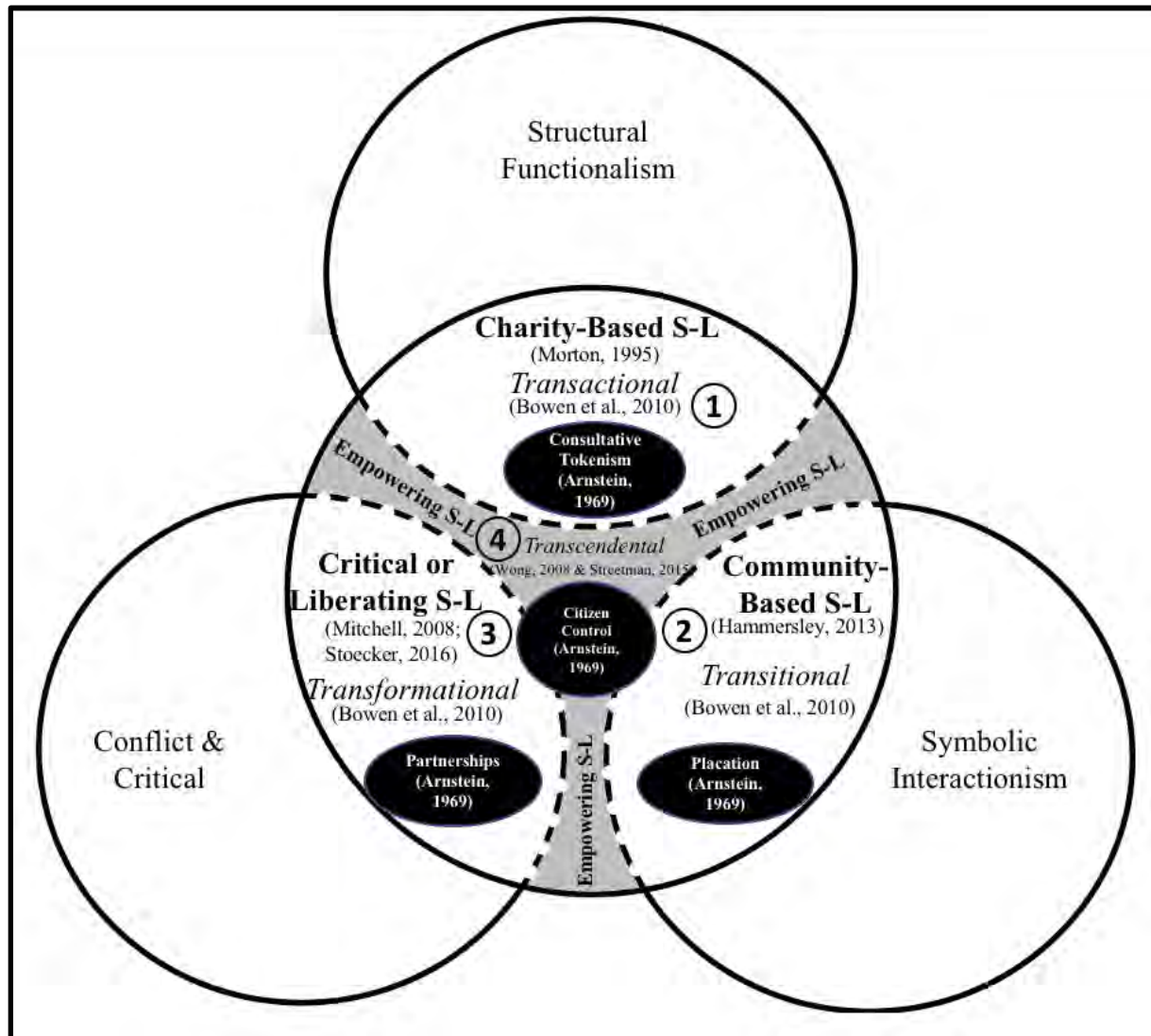
S-L project is two way; that is, tangible project deliverables are brought about by the process of consultation and collaboration between the students and the community. Repeated engagements between the students, faculty, and the community occur due to the infusion of consultation and collaboration mechanisms in organizing and implementing S-L projects, but resources mainly come from the students and faculty who are still in full control of the community engagement process. Although community involvement in collaborating with students and faculty in S-L project implementation is seen as a

priority, still the community are mainly expected to be involved in the implementation of the S-L project as volunteer workforce, while final decision making of the entire S-L project management is still primarily dependent upon the academic institution which sponsors it, the needs of the students, the needs of the instructor, or the needs of the course. In terms of community participation, this is what Arnstein (1969) calls the phenomenon of *placation*. The impact on the community under such level of community participation is that people from the community begin to

have some degree of influence in the development project by being part of its planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. But their presence serves as token participation since the value of their contribution is subject to the judgment by the students and faculty who decide whether the community's contributions are helpful or not. Examples of S-L projects under this mode are those that make use of placement of students in communities to render structured and predetermined services, such as is done with health science students who have a community rotation as part of their required industry immersion experience.

3. Transformational Modality and Partnership

Further, S-L anchored in conflict and critical perspectives are liberating, or more popularly known as critical service learning (CSL), and operate under a transformational mode of community engagement. A transformational modality, borrowed from the concept of Bowen et al. (2010), means that the S-L project is two way, just like transitional, but it is highly characterized by active dialogue and critical reflectivity brought about by the process of involvement and active participation between the students and the community. Here, there is joint learning and value-generation involved, and there is a prioritization of community leadership in the decision-making process. Thus, control over the community engagement process is shared by the students, faculty, and the community resulting in mutual trust based on sustained personal relationships and shared under-standing. Further, community assets are fully integrated into the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of S-L projects. In terms of community participation, this is what Arnstein (1969) calls *partnership*. The impact on the community under such a level of community participation is that stakeholders, who are internal and external to the community, have direct involvement in the decision-making process and in implementing the decision about agreed-

upon development projects. The internal and external stakeholders, through two-way communication, have a clear role and set of responsibilities and powers to achieve a shared common goal (Arnstein, 1969). In the context of S-L, the internal stakeholders are the members of the community while the external stakeholders are the students and instructor of the course. Examples of S-L projects under this mode involve community building and organizing work, advocacy campaigns, and/ or political activist work, such as facilitating community protest, public demonstrations, and boycotts (Bahng, 2015; Stoecker et al., 2009).

4. Transcendental Modality and Citizen Control

Lastly, as shown in Figure 1, a new type of S-L emerges from the amalgamation of S-L anchored on the three sociological theories that maximize experiential and reflective learning, critical and emancipatory learning, and constructive and reciprocal learning. Such amalgamation produces an *empowering service learning*, which means that the students, faculty, and community in the S-L experience can learn from each other in terms of knowledge and skills, enhance their respective capacities to make purposive choices, and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes based on civic responsibility, the pursuit of social justice, and commitment to reciprocity. This is made possible since empowering S-L operates under a transcendental mode of community engagement. Borrowed from the concepts of Streetman (2015) and Wong (2008), transcendental modality is an advanced form of transformational modality. This modality is anchored upon higher ideals of compassion (suffering for others and suffering with others) and pro-social attitudes where students, faculty, and the community see themselves as change agents (Wong, 2008). Further, Streetman (2015) explains that this modality has three features: (a) intellectual transcendence where students, faculty, and the community accept each other and exchange ideas freely without bias or

prejudice; (b) moral transcendence where students, faculty, and the community choose to act unselfishly for the benefit of each other's legitimate views and claims; and (c) spiritual transcendence where compassion evokes choice for the altruistic benefit of one another.

In the level of community participation, empowering S-L falls into what Arnstein (1969) calls *citizen control*. The impact on the community under such a level of community participation is that people in the community have more control in initiating a development project, and wherein the S-L project by the students and the faculty come into the picture to complement or help fulfill its completion. But for empowering S-L projects to happen, the university where the students and faculty belong to must commit to a solidarity-based university-community partnership. This means that ideally, the vision of a higher education community engagement for a democratic future should include voices from both the university and the community as argued by Calderon (2017). Such partnership can occur when the university (through its designated central office and community engagement professionals, faculty members, and students who work together) and the community (through their core group or a community organization) are the ones who find solutions to critical problems together—creating and implementing visionary practices, problem solving, and implementing solutions (Calderon, 2017). The agreed upon solutions, which are communicated by the university to its students and faculty members, serve as the basis for the design and implementation of S-L projects with the immediate community partners concerned.

Aside from the conduct of reflection and evaluation sessions of S-L projects among the concerned students, faculty, and the community partner, the university must conduct an annual gathering of community partners to reflect on and evaluate yearly implemented S-L projects in a participatory manner. This serves as an important foundation for the planning of S-L projects

for the next school year. This process is continuous until the university and the concerned community have achieved their agreed upon solutions and both have agreed it is time to engage with other partners and lessen the intensity of collaboratively working together. Thus, it can be inferred through this process, an empowering S-L fulfills the continuity and sustainability of S-L projects as recommended by Harrington (2014), the decolonization of CSL as advocated by Santiago-Ortiz (2019), and the importance of challenging and processing the experience of not only the students (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Raskoff, 1994), but also that of faculty members, community partners, and the university, through their community engagement professionals. But it will remain to be seen if empowering S-L can contribute to the elusive goal of having a causal link between S-L and societal betterment. However, what is important is that students, faculty members, community partners, and the university maintain their solidarity to work towards the altruistic benefit of one another, and in unison, address social injustices that affect their lives.

The Progression and Desired Level of S-L Types in the Integrated S-L Sociological Framework

In addition, it is important to emphasize that the numbers in the framework as shown in Figure 1 can indicate progression. This connotes that the different types of S-L with their modalities of community engagement and levels of community participation progress in developmental stages. This means S-L projects can begin as (1) Charity-based, with a transactional modality and a consultative tokenism level of community participation. For example, this happens usually for starter S-L projects that address immediate needs of people in communities negatively affected by natural or anthropogenic causes of calamities, such as fire, earthquakes, storms, severe hunger, and violent conflicts. At this stage, internal and external stakeholders measure each other's commitments, sincerity, and

work ethics. If there is a good match and the partnership is seen to be successful and evokes a feeling of positive mutual understanding, then it can result in repeated engagements that may lead to a (2) community-based S-L with a transitional modality and a placation level of community participation. At this point, sustained meaningful interactions occur among students, faculty, and the community resulting in reciprocal learning and further fostering of mutual respect and collaboration. Such meaningful interactions bridge cultural divides and provide a fertile ground for CBSL to evolve into a CSL, given that there is a strong social justice orientation among the students, faculty, the university, and the concerned community partner. When a (3) CSL is achieved, then the modality becomes transformational and the level of community participation could now be called a partnership. As previously explained, S-L at this juncture has a social change orientation and embraces an emancipative nature that seeks social justice to address problems that beset a community. Here, achieving positive community outcomes are prioritized over student learning outcomes and the advancement of faculty civic scholarship. Eventually, being well versed in the practice of CSL, coupled with university institutional support, leads to an (4) empowering S-L that operates under a transcendental modality with a citizen control level of community participation. At this highest phase, pro-social attitudes of students, faculty, the community, and the university become highly developed and they now begin to see themselves as change agents who can choose to act for the altruistic benefit of one another. However, this progression can only be achieved following the research recommendation of Myers-Lipton (1998) that significant outcomes and future commitments towards civic responsibilities are more likely to result from long-term, intensive involvement in S-L projects, which spans across several semesters. Thus, it is advised that a university create an S-L pathway where specified S-L courses are threaded in each

year as the students are able to progress from their first year until they graduate from college. In this way, there is a greater assurance that when students graduate from college, they have the necessary skills and the desire to pursue social justice and make substantive changes in their respective communities or work areas anchored in achieving the greater common good.

However, it is also possible that the S-L types with their modalities of community engagement and levels of community participation can either evolve or devolve depending on the readiness and maturity of the students, faculty, community, and the university involved to instigate active participation and build long-lasting empowering relationships. It is also possible that one can begin immediately with desired levels of S-L types, such as CBSL or CSL, depending upon the level of organizational strength of the community partner and on the level of social justice awareness and degree of commitment to reciprocity of the faculty, students, and the university involved in the S-L process. What is important is that one must be aware of the demands involved in each S-L type. Nevertheless, whether the integrated S-L sociological framework is seen as a progression or as a guidepost to help discern the desired level of S-L, the authors recommend to keep the empowering S-L as the end goal in mind. This is because such S-L, as explained earlier, is anchored on a solidarity-based university-community partnership where intellectual, moral, and spiritual transcendence among S-L stakeholders (students, faculty, community partners, and the university) take place. Specifically, its intellectual and moral transcendence resonate well with the partnerships of reciprocal exchange of CBSL and the three tenets of CSL as laid down by Mitchell (2008). Finally, its spiritual transcendence, where compassion evokes choice for the altruistic benefit of one another, reverberates well with Morton's (1995) version of charity-based S-L where the needs of the poor, the vulnerable, and the disadvantaged are addressed based on unconditional love anchored on the inherent

right and dignity of human beings. Also, Morton (1995) suggests that S-L practitioners should detach themselves from the frantic frustration of expecting results which they may never witness in their lifetime. Instead, one must focus on sustaining efforts that would eventually lead to the creation of a just world. This version of charity-based S-L is also what the authors believe are commonly shared between CSL and CBSL.

A word of caution though: The structures and systems in higher educational institutions are inherently conservative, which may impede the development of solidarity-based university-community partnerships that are needed for an empowering S-L to take place. This means that, as Scobey (2017) points out, colleges and universities often remain primarily as structures of power that become bastions of defensive privilege, a haven for arrogant expertise, and the willingness to collude with those in power to maintain its tradition of separateness and autonomy that reinforce histories of elitism and exclusion. In addition, many higher educational institutions have been captured by the neoliberal agenda, as Calderon (2017) and Philion (2017) note that economic policies and social values of colleges and universities have heavily focused on supporting the needs of the market. This for them has focused the energy of higher educational institutions to produce knowledge for the intellectual commodity of markets. It has also influenced colleges and universities to view their students as competitive market units that should be trained to become workers that are subservient to a managerial banking system. Such neoliberal agenda does not bode well to the development of solidarity-based university-community partnerships geared towards the achievement of social justice. The only way to balance off the conservative nature of higher educational institutions and counter the hold that neoliberalism has on them is to continue putting the public mission of colleges and universities at the fore. This can be done through the constant linking of the nobler values and goals of higher

education to the protection of human dignity and the pursuit of social justice, the continued implementation, evaluation, and innovation of S-L, and collective meaningful celebration of the successes of S-L, no matter how big or small.

CONCLUSION

This theoretical paper has developed an integrated S-L sociological framework. It is the first clear framework that can trace the roots of the recognized types of S-L, which are charity-based, community-based, and critical or liberating, based on the sociological theories of structural-functionalism, symbolic interactionism, and conflict and critical perspectives, respectively. It has also mapped out how the implementation of these different types of S-L can lead to different forms of community impact based on their respective modalities of community engagement (transactional, transitional, transformational, and transcendental) and levels of community participation (consultative tokenism, placation, partnerships, and citizen control). The authors put forward that an empowering S-L, with a transcendental modality of community engagement and a citizen control level of community participation, is the desired S-L type. This is because an empowering S-L maximizes the use of experiential and reflective learning in charity-based S-L, critical and emancipatory learning in CSL, and constructive and reciprocal learning in CBSL. It also aims to safeguard the continuity and sustainability of S-L projects, the decolonization of CSL, and the importance of challenging and processing the experience of various stakeholders involved in the S-L process.

Thus, it can be said that empowering S-L addresses the inherent weaknesses of the previously known S-L types to achieve desired outcomes of civic responsibility and scholarship, the pursuit of social justice, and commitment to reciprocity. It must be noted that the realization of an empowering S-L can only occur within a solidarity-based university-community partnership that may face impediments due to the conservative nature of

higher educational institutions, coupled with the hold that neoliberalism has on them. Nevertheless, when the public missions of colleges and universities continue to be stressed, the progression from charity-based S-L to empowering S-L can be made possible. This can be done if a university creates an S-L pathway in which S-L courses are threaded out from the first year until students graduate in college so a steady stream of graduates, with the skills and the desire to make a difference in their respective communities or areas of work, are unleashed. It is also possible to begin immediately with the desired stages of S-L depending upon the level of organizational strength of community partners and on the level of social justice awareness and degree of reciprocity commitment of the faculty, students, and the university involved in the S-L process.

However, the existence of an empowering S-L must be substantiated by empirical evidence to which this paper, due to limited space, is not able to address. Thus, the next step is to test out the applicability of this new S-L typology and provide case studies to draw out learnings to discover its advantages and disadvantages, and whether it can address issues of racism and other forms of biases raised in the S-L literature. Nevertheless, this theoretical paper could contribute to a better frame and guide the practice of S-L for the benefit of students, faculty members, community partners, and universities involved in the entire S-L experience.

REFERENCES

Aksan, N., Kısac, B., Aydın, M., & Demirbuken, S. (2009). Symbolic interaction theory. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *1*(1), 902–904.

Arnstein, S. R. (1969). A ladder of citizen participation. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, *35*(4), 216–224.

Bahng, G. (2015). Using community partnerships to create critical service-learning: The case of Mar Vista Gardens. *Journal of Public Affairs Education*, *21*(1), 55–70.

Baker-Boosamra, M., Guevara, J. A., & Balfour, D. L. (2006). From service to solidarity: Evaluation and recommendations for international service-learning. *Journal of Public Affairs Education*, *12*(4), 479–500.

Becker, S., & Paul, C. (2015). "It didn't seem like race mattered": Exploring the implications of service-learning pedagogy for reproducing or challenging color-blind racism. *Teaching Sociology*, *43*(3), 184–200.

Blouin, D. D., & Perry, E. M. P. (2009). Whom does service-learning really serve? Community-based organizations' perspectives on service-learning. *Teaching Sociology*, *37*(2), 120–135.

Blumer, H. (1986). *Symbolic interactionism: Perspective and method*. University of California Press.

Bowen, F., Newenham-Kahindi, A., & Herremans, I. (2010). When suits meets roots: The antecedents and consequences of community engagement strategy. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *95*(2), 297–318.

Boyer, E. L. (1996). The scholarship of engagement. *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, *49*(7), 11–20.

Brown, W. (2015). *Undoing the demos: Neoliberalism's stealth revolution*. ZONE BOOKS.

Butin, D. W. (2006). The limits of service-learning in higher education. *The Review of Higher Education*, *29*(4), 473–498.

Butin, D. W. (2015). Dreaming of justice: Critical service-learning and the need to wake up. *Theory Into Practice*, *54*(1), 5–10.

Calderon, J. Z. (2017). Transformative community engagement: Democratic trend for the future. In C. Dolgon, T. D. Mitchell, & T. K. Eatman (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of service learning and community engagement* (pp. 500–510). Cambridge University Press.

Donaldson, L. P., & Daughtery, L. (2011). Introducing asset-based models of social justice into service-learning: A social work approach. *Journal of Community Practice, 19*(1), 80–99.

Eby, J. W. (1998). *Why service-learning is bad*. Villanova University. https://www1.villanova.edu/content/dam/villanova/artsci/servicelearning/WhyServiceLearningIsBad.pdf

Flecky, K. (2011). Foundations of service-learning. In K. Flecky & L. Gitlow (Eds.), *Service- learning in occupational therapy* (pp. 1–12). Jones and Bartlett Publishers.

Fosnot, C. T. (2013). *Constructivism: Theory, perspectives, and practice,* (2nd ed.). Teachers College Press.

Fox, D. (2002). Service-learning and self-reflexivity in rural Jamaica. *Practicing Anthropology, 24*(2), 2–7.

Freire, P. (1968). *Pedagogy of the oppressed: 50th anniversary edition*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Giles, D., & Eyler, J. (1994). The theoretical roots of service-learning in John Dewey: Toward a theory of service-learning. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, 1*(1), 7–85.

Griffo, G. (2014). Models of disability, ideas of justice, and the challenge of full participation. *Modern Italy, 19*(2), 147–159.

Hammersley, L. (2013). Community-based service-learning: Partnerships of reciprocal exchange? *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education, 14*(3), 171–184.

Harrington, K. L. (2014). *The impacts of service-learning on communities: Perspectives from the people*

[Masteral Thesis]. University of Georgia.

Held, F. P., Roberts, C., Daly, M., & Brunero, C. (2019). Learning relationships in community-based service-learning: A social network analysis. *BMC Medical Education, 19*(1), 113.

Hironimus-Wendt, R. J., & Lovell-Troy, L. (1999). Grounding service-learning in social theory. *Teaching Sociology, 27*(4), 360–372.

Hok-ka, C. M., Wing-fung, C. C., & Cheung-ming, A. C. (2016). The long-term impact of service-learning on graduates' civic engagement and career exploration in Hong Kong. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement, 20*(4), 37–56.

Hollander, E. L., Lapping, M., Rice, R. E., & Cruz, N. (2017). Talking about origins: Four stories of engagement. In C. Dolgon, T. D. Mitchell, & T. K. Eatman (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of service learning and community engagement* (pp. 20–41). Cambridge University Press.

Hondagneu-Sotelo, P., & Raskoff, S. (1994). Community service-learning: Promises and problems. *Teaching Sociology, 22*(3), 248–254.

Hustedde, R. J., & Ganowicz, J. (2002). The basics: What's essential about theory for community development practice? *Journal of the Community Development Society, 33*(1), 1–19.

Latta, M., Kruger, T. M., Payne, L., Weaver, L., & VanSickle, J. L. (2018). Approaching critical service-learning: A model for reflection on positionality and possibility. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement, 22*(2), 31–55.

Ma, C. H. K., & Chan, A. (2013). A Hong Kong University first: Establishing service-learning as an academic credit-bearing subject. *International Journal of Community Research and Engagement, 6*(1), 178–198.

Mitchell, T. D. (2008). Traditional vs. critical service-learning: Engaging the literature to differentiate two models. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, *14*(2), 50–65.

Moore, T. L., & Ward, K. (2010). Institutionalizing faculty engagement through research, teaching, and service at research universities. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, *17*(1), 44–58.

Morton, K. (1995). The irony of service: Charity, project and social change in service-learning. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, *2*, 19–32. http://masoncblfaculty.pbworks.com/w/file/fetch/46705809/Morton%2C%20The%20Irony%20of%20Service.pdf

Myers-Lipton, S. J. (1998). Effect of a comprehensive service-learning program on college students' civic responsibility. *Teaching Sociology*, *26*(4), 243–258.

Neuman, W. L. (2011). *Basics of social research: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (2nd ed.). Pearson Education.

O'Meara, K., & Niehaus, E. (2009). Service-learning is... How faculty explain their practice. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, *16*(1), 17–32.

Parsons, T. (1961). *Theories of society: Foundations of modern sociological theory*. Free Press of Glencoe.

Permaul, J. S. (2009). Theoretical bases for service-learning: Implications for program design and effectiveness. *New Horizons in Education*, *57*(3), 1–7.

Peters, S. J. (2017). Recovering a forgotten lineage of democratic engagement. In C. Dolgon, T. D. Mitchell, & T. K. Eatman (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of service learning and community engagement* (pp. 71–80). Cambridge University Press.

Philion, S. (2017). Engaging neoliberal community engagement: Research and organizing with immigrant workers. In C. Dolgon, T. D. Mitchell, & T. K. Eatman (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of service learning and community engagement* (pp. 470–484). Cambridge University Press.

Porter, M., & Monard, K. (2001). "Ayni" in the global village: Building relationships of reciprocity through international service-learning. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, *8*(1), 5–17.

Raddon, M.-B., & Harrison, B. (2015). Is service-learning the kind face of the neo-liberal university? *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, *45*(2), 134–153.

Ritzer, G., & Stepnisky, J. (2017). *Sociological theory*. SAGE Publications.

Santiago-Ortiz, J. D. (2019). From critical to decolonizing service-learning. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, *25*(1), 43–54.

Scobey, D. (2017). The frayed compact: American democracy, higher education, and the movement for community engagement. In C. Dolgon, T. D. Mitchell, & T. K. Eatman (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of service learning and community engagement* (pp. 511–526). Cambridge University Press.

Sherman, D. J. (2013). Partnering to survive: Reflections on the pursuit of campus-community initiatives prior to tenure. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, *17*(4), 155–174.

Silvers, A., Wasserman, D., Mahowald, M. B., & Becker, L. C. (1999). *Disability, difference, discrimination: Perspectives on justice in bioethics and public policy*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Stoecker, R. (2016). *Liberating service learning and the rest of higher education civic engagement*. Temple University Press.

Stoecker, R., Tryon, E. A., & Hilgendorf, A. (Eds.). (2009). The unheard voices: Community organizations and service-learning. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, *12*(3), 47–59.

Streetman, H. D. (2015). Jesuit values, Ignatian pedagogy, and service-learning: Catalysts for transcendence and transformation via action research. *Jesuit Higher Education: A Journal*, *4*(1), 36–50.

Thompson, V. L. S., & Hood, S. M. (2016). Academic and community partnerships and social change. In W. F. Tate, N. Staudt, & A. Macrander (Eds.), *The crises of race in higher education: A day of discovery and dialogue* (Vol. 19, pp. 127–149). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Vogel, A. L., & Seifer, S. D. (2011). Impacts of sustained institutional participation in service-learning. *Gateways: International Journal of Community Research and Engagement*, *4*, 186–202.

Ward, K., & Wolf-Wendel, L. (2000). Community-centered service-learning: Moving from doing for to doing with. *American Behavioral Scientist*, *43*(5), 767–780.

Weerts, D. J., & Sandmann, L. R. (2008). Building a two-way street: Challenges and opportunities for community engagement at research universities. *The Review of Higher Education*, *32*(1), 73–106.

Westheimer, J., & Kahne, J. (2004). What kind of citizen? The politics of educating for democracy. *American Educational Research Journal*, *41*(2), 237–269.

Wong, P. (2008). Transactions, transformation, and transcendence: Multicultural service-learning experience of preservice teachers. *Multicultural Education*, *16*(2), 31–36.

Woolf, M. (2005). Avoiding the missionary tendency. *International Educator*, *14*(2), 27–32.

Author Note

Mark Anthony D. Abenir is a retired Professor at the Department of Sociology, University of Santo Tomas-Manila. He is now a faculty member at the Development Studies Program of the Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines.

Carol Ma Hok Ka is a Senior Fellow (Office of Service-Learning and Community Engagement) and Head of the Gerontology Program (Master and PhD) of the Singapore University of Social Sciences. She may be contacted at carolmahk@suss.edu.sg.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Mark Anthony D. Abenir, Development Studies Program, Room 408, 4th Floor Ricardo & Dr. Rosita Leong Hall, Ateneo de Manila University, Katipunan Rd., Loyola Heights, Quezon City, Philippines 1108. Email: mabenir@ateneo.edu.