

# CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON SERVICE LEARNING AT NTU

*“TO ENTER INTO DIALOGUE PRESUPPOSES EQUALITY  
AMONGST PARTICIPANTS. EACH MUST TRUST THE OTHERS;  
THERE MUST BE MUTUAL RESPECT AND LOVE”.*  
*(FREIRE, 1970, P. 89)*

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# OVERVIEW

- What is service learning and why do we do it?
- Examples of service learning projects
- Key reflections - values, students and challenges
- A pedagogy of **love**
- Could it work for you?

# WHAT IS SERVICE LEARNING?

**Simply put** - Students working on projects determined by local, not-for-profit organisations which they reflect upon and connect to their disciplinary understandings.

*‘Service-learning programs are distinguished **from other approaches to experiential education** by their intention to equally benefit the provider and the recipient of the service as well as to ensure equal focus on both the service being provided and the learning that is occurring’. (Furco, 2011:75)*

# SERVICE LEARNING JOURNEY AT NTU

## **From pilot to full rollout**

2012 – community volunteering module

2013 - SL pilot. 16 students 2 organisations

2014 – 200 students and 25+ partners

2018 – 3 Core modules and next year 300 students

**IT IS EXHAUSTING!**

# WHY SERVICE LEARNING IN NOTTINGHAM?

## To engage with Nottingham

In 2007 13th most deprived local authority area

In 2010 it was the 20th and

In 2015 it was the 8<sup>th</sup>

High levels of income deprivation and employment deprivation

High number of children and older people in income deprivation

Nottingham North – lowest number of university applications

# STUDENTS AS CRITICAL AGENTS?

## A shift from the banking concept of education?

- Opportunities for dialogue
- Learning beyond the campus
- Tackling social challenges transforming both students and the communities in which they are located

### For our students to:

“... become critical agents actively questioning and negotiating the relationship between theory and practice, critical analysis and common sense, and learning and social change”.

Giroux (2003)

# VALUES GUIDING PRACTICE

## Endeavour to build:

- Authentic, positive relationships centred on social justice
- Insights beyond generalized or abstract knowledge (Eyler & Giles, 1999)
- Relationships that are mutually beneficial



## Within a public sociology framework context

## In connection to NTU's strategic plan

*Enriching society strand – “We will develop strategic relationships with civic and commercial partners that enable each party to achieve mutually agreed goals.”*

# EXAMPLES OF SERVICE LEARNING


- **Nottingham Citizens:**  
Islamaphobia, participation & public life
- **Himmah:**  
racist attacks on taxi drivers in Nottingham
- **Nottinghamshire Sexual Assault Centre:**  
raising awareness rape & sexual assault
- **Renewal Trust:**  
Welcome pack for new arrivals to the city
- **Community Cohesion Team:**  
Hate crime against Romanians
- **Mojatu:**  
Raising awareness of FGM

**GREAT**  
**HOLLABACK!**  
**CHALK WALK**

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# STUDENTS REFLECTIONS

**Working at the refugee centre:** “...it has provided me with a confidence and a sense of fulfilment ...this learning curve has been a foundation in which to progress on in my degree and in life”.

**Homeless centre:** “...I felt slightly apprehensive...unjust stereotypes...different next time”.

**Nottingham Citizens** - “Two words have stuck with me from this training...POWER and PEOPLE. Relatively small words but words that can have such...well power”!

**Sexual harassment** - the research our team would be doing would not only effect and influence the student community but could impact the general public in Nottingham City Centre too & I felt excited at the idea of being able to impact the student community in a positive way”

# THE CHALLENGES

## Resources

- It is not 'just another module' but resourced as such
- Management shifts and perpetual 'refresh' 'review' 'reimagining'

## Academic credibility

- Assumptions lacking theoretical base and perceived as 'skills'

## Wider HE agendas

- Employability and impact agendas
- Community not a 'cultural commodity' in an 'unscripted world' (Sandmann et al, in Hatcher and Bringle 2010:32)

## Community partnerships

- Steering group
- A resource? NTU strategic plan – how has SL benefited?

## Changing cultures?

- School wide approach
- Who really benefits?

## Risks

- Take risks and resist/challenge instrumental agendas
- When it goes wrong?

# RADICAL LOVE AND SERVICE LEARNING

## **So, we aim to be guided by Freirean notions of love**

To be understood in context of Freire's critical pedagogy and dialogue

## **Service learning - A pedagogy of radical love?**

Secular, humanist radical love provides the 'postsecular' lens to guide practice. (Cloke et al, 2010)

"Love is essential to dialogue and becomes radical when attached to a political project." Liambas and Kaskaris

"Toward this end, we define the term "radical love" as the empathetic, active, and passionate impulse to transform social relationships in ways that seek justice and freedom".

**It brings a "language (and praxis) of possibility" Giroux**

# COULD IT WORK FOR YOU?

**Thank you and questions?**

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# STUDENT REFLECTIONS

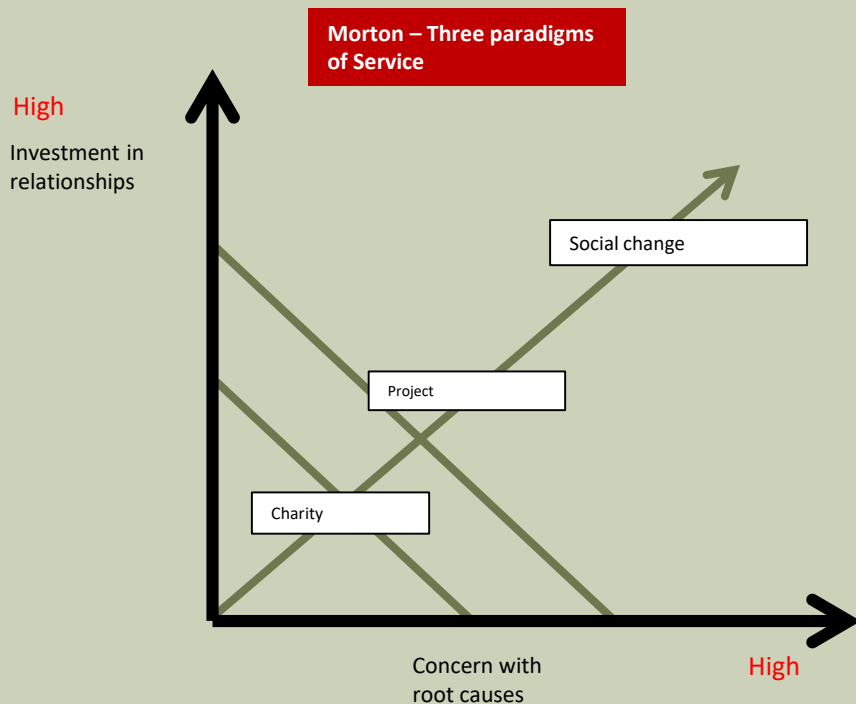
*"I did not think that street harassment was a big issue but once the surveys had been completed it became clear to me that this is something which occurs way too often. Reading how this made people feel helped me empathise with them and realise how much of a problem street harassment is".*

*"As a woman, it was extremely important on a personal level to take control of this reoccurring problem and create a movement on a level in which the city had failed to see before."*

*"It made me realise I'm quite politically minded and I didn't think I was .... Oh my goodness this is ridiculously important, how have I been so blind? Yes, that's one of the things it's made me realise – is that I'm really passionate about politics"*

*"the research our team would be doing would not only effect and influence the student community but could impact the general public in Nottingham City Centre too & I felt excited at the idea of being able to impact the student community in a positive way"*

# MODELS TO SITUATE SERVICE LEARNING



## Conceptual framework – situating SL experiences

### Moral Domain

Relationships may develop around either giving or caring

### Political domain

Experience can foster a sense of civic duty

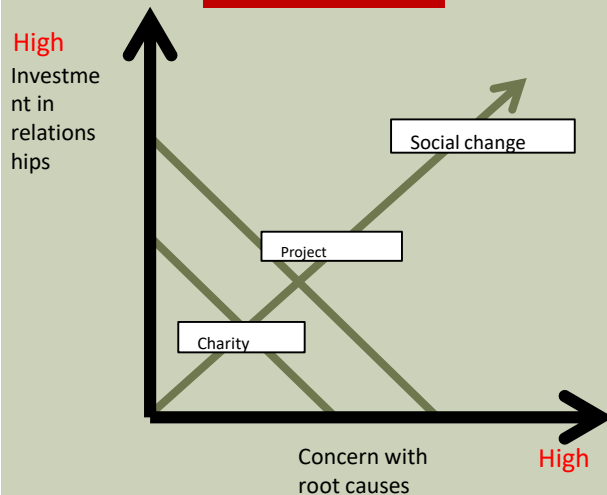
### Intellectual domain

Experiences are either additive (adding to knowledge and skills) or transformative (transforming participants understanding of complex social issues)

Kahne and Westheimer (1996) in Tinkler et al (2013:83)

# MODELS TO SITUATE SERVICE LEARNING

## Morton – Three paradigms of Service



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**What's missing?**  
**The affective domain**  
**Radical Love!**

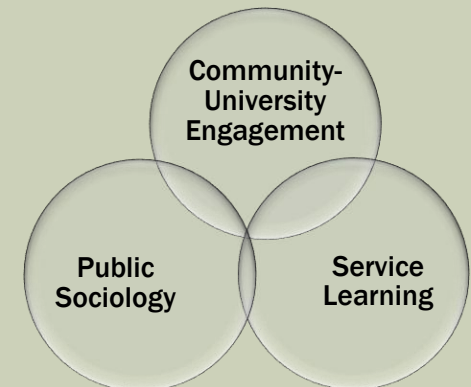
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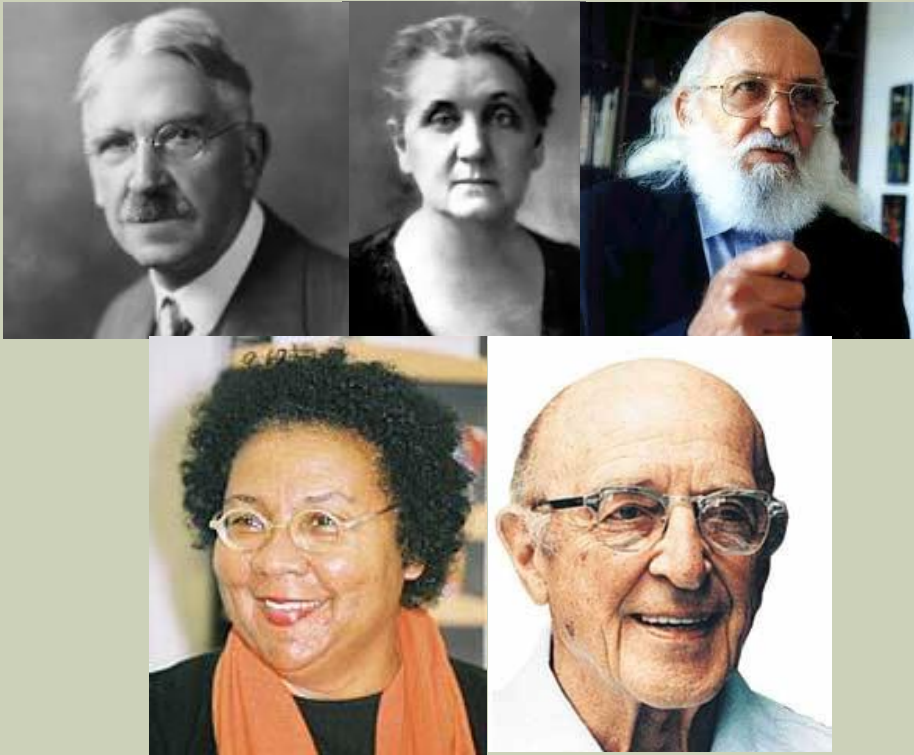
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# A PEDAGOGY OF LOVE



**In common:**  
Experiential  
learning  
Critical learning  
Political context  
Change and  
**Radical love**

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