

# Open Source Tutoring

An Examination of the Role of  
Service-Learning in the Writing  
Center

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Service-Learning is a way for students to acquire “real life” experience.

## Pragmatism vs. Hyperpragmatism

- Pragmatic approach features a practical use of service learning to give experience and insight to the service learner
- Hyperpragmatic approach sacrifices critical examination and introspection in favor of meeting practical goals

(Scott, 2003)

# Why use service-learning in the Writing Center?

- Fosters connections between academic institution and the surrounding community
- Allows students to “make a difference”
- Enhances diversity of experience

# What are some necessary components for service-learning endeavors?

- Willing participants
- A course or other structured, regular meeting
- Faculty advisor
- (Partner Organization)

There are several factors to consider when planning service-learning endeavors.

## Partner Organization

- What are the needs of the organization vs. the needs of the community and its members?
- What role will the service-learners have?
- What potential conflicts might occur between the goals of your project and those of the organization/community?

There are several factors to consider when planning service-learning endeavors.

## Logistics and Time Constraints

- How will students get to the location?
- How much time is available for face-to-face interaction?
- What is the interest or willingness of the community members to participate
  - Captive audience
  - Ratio of students to participants

Conflicts between service-learning goals and partner organization goals can occur.

- Is the role of the service learner predefined?
- Are the goals for the endeavor consistent with the principles of the Writing Center?
- Is there potential that the collaboration might set the stage for an unproductive, or worse, harmful interaction?

# Some basic problems with service-learning

- Misconceptions of interaction result in ineffectual encounters
- Interaction is limited in such a way that it is not helpful to either party
- Benefits are skewed toward the service-learner
- Service-learners fail to properly reflect, and thus lose much of the value of the endeavor



# The role of race and class in service learning

“If service-learning takes place, as it often does, when mostly white students at predominantly white institutions serve mostly poor people of color in urban settings, then teachers of service-learning need to function in the service-learning paradigm.”

(Green, 2003, p. 227)

# The role of race and class in service learning

“Telling the difficult story [about service-learning] requires a willingness to break our silences around race, class, and service. For those of us who are white, this means beginning the work of dismantling racism by unpacking white privilege. For those of us who are middle class, this means acknowledging differences of class, caste, and culture and not assuming that those who are working class or poor want middle class culture or aspire to middle class materialism.”

(Green, 2003, p. 227)

# What is open source?

Revealing to the user or collaborative designer the source code of an application and allowing that user or collaborator to modify (within reason) the code to serve his or her own individual needs and/or better serve others

Based on [Open Source Definition](#)

# Open-source tutoring: a familiar concept

Making the processes by which writing tutors assist writers visible through demystifying methods of supplementary writing instruction. Providing the participants with the source material for such instruction and tools to adapt that source material to future, individualized needs.

# What is the source?

```
<xml version="1.0">
```

```
<tutoring>
```

```
<brainstorming>
```

A method of generating ideas  
for writing projects.

```
</brainstorming>
```

```
</tutoring>
```

If only it were this simple...

The key to developing lasting, positive effects is to provide students with tools.

Despite time limitations, tools can be developed that act as future resources.

- Website, social media, and/or other web-based collaborative endeavors
  - Social media is relevant and appropriate
  - It's free
- Flier or other print resource
- Multimedia resources

# Developing strategies for open source tutoring and service learning

## Preparation

- Develop a strategy for working with participants outside of face-to-face meetings
- Prepare students in class to adjust their perceptions of race and class

# Developing strategies for open source tutoring and service learning

## Communication

"Students engaged in intellectual inquiry might also enlist community stakeholders in assessing the effects of their work. This assessment could be based on a broader notion of accommodation that includes responsiveness (i.e. sustained, attentive engagement) and long-term empowerment as well as immediate satisfaction"

(Scott, 2004, p. 299)



# Developing strategies for open source tutoring and service learning

## Realistic Expectations of Production

"Larger service-learning projects could be broken up over multiple semesters, each set of student building on (and complicating) the work of the previous set. Students action plans at the end of the course, for example, might be written to future students who will take up the next phase of the project"

(Scott, 2004, p. 300)

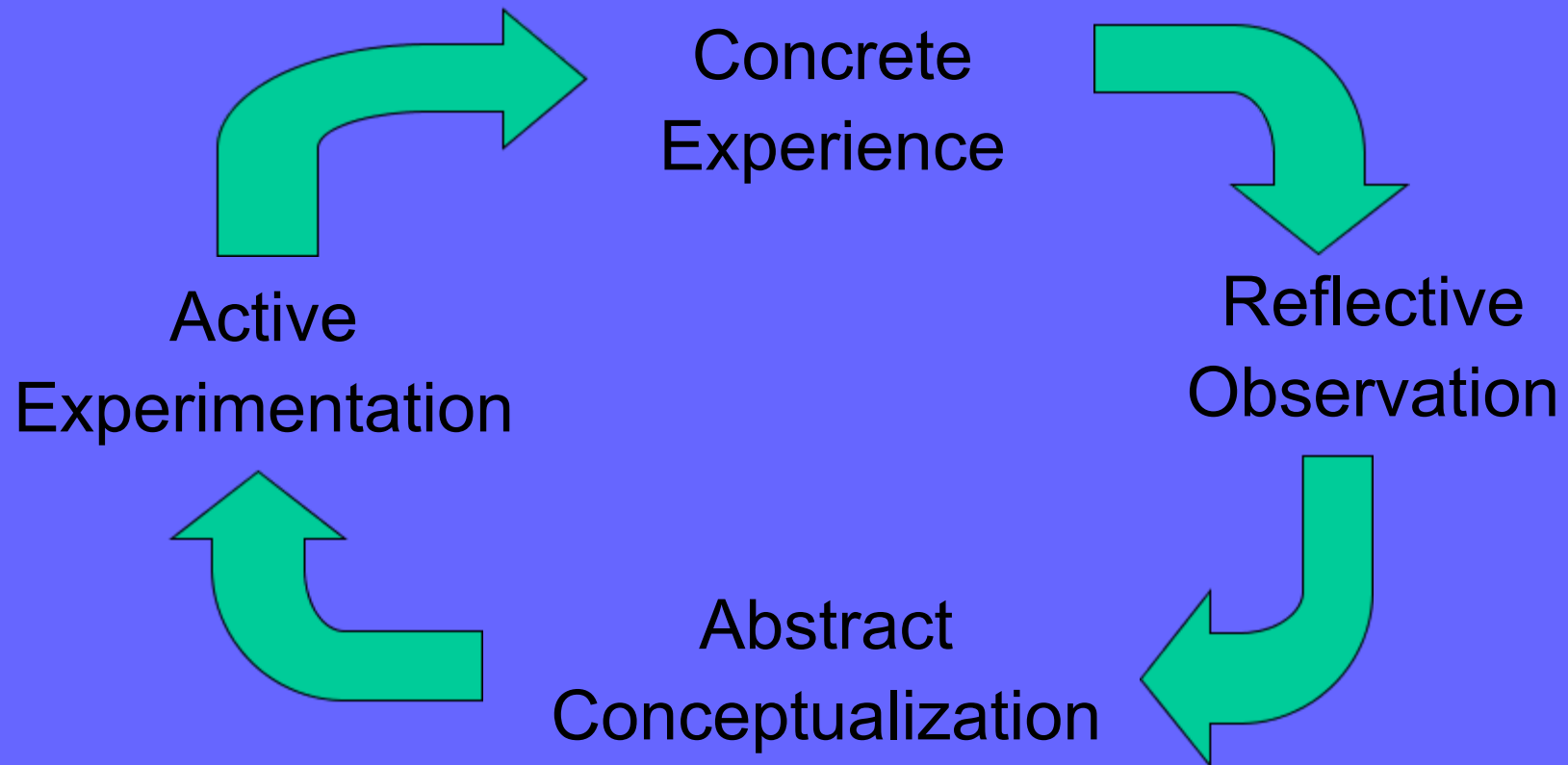
Concept of the [Inquiry Unit](#)

# Some Service-Learning Models To Consider

- David Kolb's Learning Model
- Cultural Studies (Scott, 2004)
- Charettes (Mara, 2006)
- Narratives (Green, 2003)
- (countless others)

# David Kolb's Learning Cycle

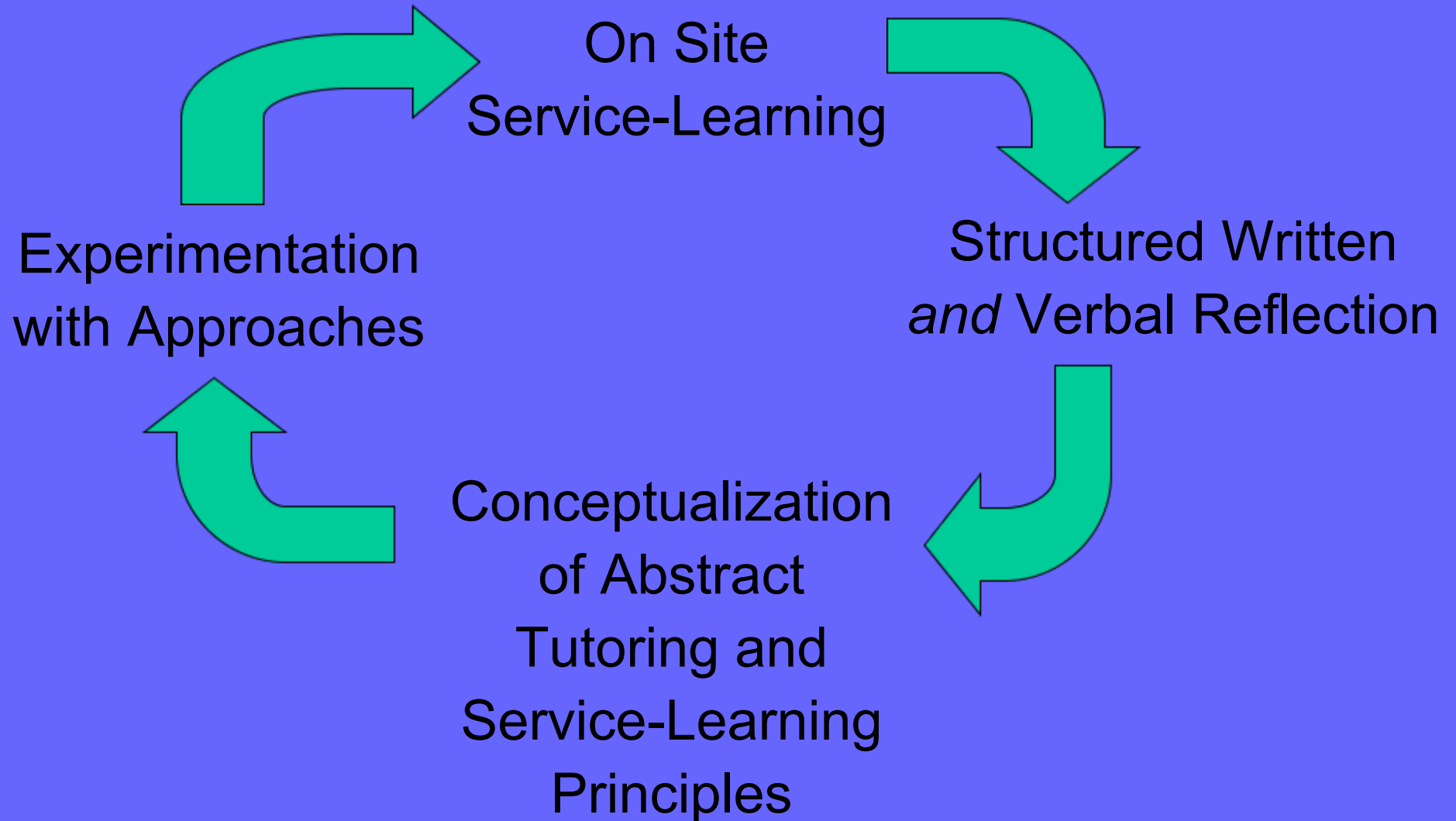
Reproduced from Alder-Knasser et al.1997, p. 10



# David Kolb's Learning Cycle

Reproduced from Alder-Knasser et al.1997, p. 10

Modified by me to reflect steps in WC Service-Learning



# Cultural Studies

- “ethical engagement with, critique of, and intervention into the conditions, functions, and effects of value-laden practices (including discursive ones).”
- “In contrast to approaches that stop at critical awareness or that dance around specific ethical imperatives, the main aim of the [cultural studies model] is to revise problematic practices to create more egalitarian power relations and more widely beneficial effects.”

(Scott, 2004, p. 298)

# Charettes

- Students can be organizers and essentially create their own service-learning partner organization by creating task groups to engage the public and issue reports based on what they learn about public interest.
  - Dangers: misrepresenting the public interest, creating visuals or flashy designs that misdirect the public interest, and the potential for backlash that is inherent when engaging the public.
  - Name derived from carts that collected art students projects in Paris
- (Mara, 2006)

# Areas for future inquiry

- Specific case studies of writing center service-learning projects
- Applications of specific technologies to sustained interaction
- Further interdisciplinary investigation to develop tailor made theoretical and practical standards for WC service-learning endeavors

# Selected References

Alder-Kassner, L., Crooks, R., Watters, A. (Eds.) *Writing the Community: Concepts and Models for Service-Learning in Composition*. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1997.

Green, A. Difficult Stories: Service Learning, Race, Class, and Whiteness. *College Composition and Communication*, 55(2), 276-301.

Mara, A. Using Charettes to Perform Civic Engagement in Technical Communication Classrooms and Workplaces. *TCQ*, 15(2), 215-236.

Open Source Initiative. The Open Source Definition. From: <http://opensource.org/docs/osd>

Scott, J. Rearticulating Civic Engagement Through Cultural Studies and Service-Learning. *TCQ*, 13(3), 289-306.