Validation of a Scale to Measure Development of Social Responsibility

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*A service-learning model by Delve, Mintz, and Stewart (1990) describes developmental processes experienced by students engaged in community volunteer work, from sporadic involvement to internalization of social responsibility. The Scale of Service Learning Involvement was developed to validate the model as well as to assess student outcomes. Reliability, concurrent validity, and contrasting group validity indicated strong psychometric qualities. Applications pertaining to the potential use of this instrument are discussed.*

Service-learning programs provide opportunities for students to engage in meaningful and reciprocal service to the community while participating in various forms of reflection including classroom learning. Although passage of the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 recently brought service-learning into the national spotlight, the service-learning movement has been gaining momentum since the mid-1980's. Hundreds of colleges and universities have developed offices, programs and services designed to integrate students’ community experiences with academic learning (Gitlin, 1994).

Over 100 different definitions have been recorded for service-learning, often with a common theme that service-learning is a “program type and philosophy of education” (Giles, Honnet, & Migliore, 1991, p. 7). As an educational philosophy, service-learning emphasizes experience for the common good rather than for personal advancement (Giles et al., 1991). Service-learning differs from volunteering in that (1) students engage in active reflection on their community experience, and (2) community learning is connected to academic learning. In addition, it is often assumed that volunteering and service-learning enhance students’ development of social responsibility, which includes a sense of the obligations of citizenship, awareness of social injustice and its complex causes, and dedication to working toward social equity. There has been very little research investigating the relationship between student development theory and service involvement; for instance, adequate data does not exist to confirm a relationship between service and the development of social responsibility (Giles & Eyler, 1994).

However, a model created by Delve, Mintz, and Stewart (1990) provides a valuable conceptual framework for assessing the developmental effects of service-learning. The model describes the developmental process that students experience as they engage in service-learning activities and clearly outlines the relationship between service and social responsibility. To date, the model has received little empirical validation, due in part to lack of an appropriate measurement tool. This article reports the psychometric qualities of the Scale of Service Learning Involvement (SSLI; see Appendix), which was designed to track the effects of community involvement and service learning on college students’ development of social responsibility.

**Service-Learning Model**

Delve et al.’s (1990) service-learning model describes the development of students’ social responsibility via volunteer experiences. Drawing on the intellectual and moral development theories of Perry, Kohlberg, and Gilligan, the service-learning model consists of five phases of social responsibility development. The first is the *exploration* phase, in which students are eager to help or get involved in public service activities, but have no focused commitment to a campus