fixed and that experiential approaches offer ways for students to examine “shifting systems of meaning.” The method requires that students learn to “read” their workplaces as “texts” in which students “examine...the histories, power arrangements, and values underlying their work organizations” (p. 280).

FIGURE 1
Kolb’s Model of Experiential Learning

Reflective Observation

Concrete Experiences

Abstract Conceptualization

Active Experimentation

Kolb’s model has helped service-learning educators develop an awareness of the role of reflection in relating the world of concrete experiences to abstract theories. The primary thrust of the model, however, has been to suggest that experiential approaches accommodate students with different learning styles better than traditional didactic methodologies. We find Kolb’s model is somewhat ambiguous for educators attempting to better understand their role within a service-learning paradigm. As a consequence, many educators continue to send students out to “learn in community settings” and “reflect” on their work without a clear understanding of how experiences instruct or how educators make use of the reflective process. Moore’s approach has not, to our knowledge, been widely adopted, but it falls prey to the same set of instructional ambiguities as Kolb’s model.

Service-learning educators also make frequent reference to Brazilian philosopher and educator Paulo Freire. Most often these references are made in describing service approaches that “empower” communities and treat community members with dignity and respect. Less often is Freireian pedagogy applied to our own students. Freire challenges post-secondary education when he opposes a “banking” approach to education and endorses a “(p)roblem-posing education (which) affirms men and women as beings in the process of becoming - as unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality” (1994, p. 65).

The authors believe that a number of theories evolving from studies of cognition, philosophy, critical pedagogy, and postmodern theory suggest that it may be possible to adapt components of these different strategies into a more comprehensive service-learning model. In proposing this model, we hope to clarify the role of educators, incorporate Freire’s ideas, and avoid some of the ambiguity that we find in Kolb’s model and Moore’s suggested approach.

A Service-Learning Model

In this paper, we hope to develop a model of service-learning that bridges the typically expansive gap between theory and practice. A model which best seems to capture both the individual, psychological nature and the interpersonal, socio-cultural nature of service-learning is the six stage lens model which appears in Figure 2.

A Brief Overview of the Model

Before moving into a detailed analysis of the model, we offer a summary of each of the main components. The model begins with the learner and his or her unique set of characteristics. While it is typically impractical, if not impossible, to coordinate individualized service-learning programs, we nevertheless recognize the significance that individual characteristics have on the service-learning experience. Keeping this in mind, the second component of the model takes a look at the academic and pragmatic issues concerning a service-learning practitioner. The model emphasizes the need for carefully planning the service-learning experience so that the student is intellectually challenged and appropriately placed. This involves providing students with pre-service training and theoretical concepts that the student will be expected to apply and understand in the community.

The third part of the model examines the service experience itself. We argue that it is important to make the experience a “discontinuous” one, distinct from students’ everyday experiences, so that students are challenged to broaden their perspectives on the world. Reflection follows the experience, in our model, as in most models of service-learning. However, unlike some models, we argue for more a holistic approach to reflection that involves the student’s intellectual and emotional capacities, as well as their written and oral skills. As important as individual reflection is, the fifth component of our model proposes that reflection is most effective when guided by an educator or men-