“Because I Live in this Community”:

Literacy, Learning, and Participation in Critical Service-Learning Projects

DISSERTATION

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By

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Abstract

Over the last decade, service-learning researchers have documented a lack of attention paid to the dynamic nature of student learning in service-learning projects (Butin, 2003/2010) and a lack of attention paid to learning over time (Melchior & Bailis, 2002; Yamauchi, et al., 2006). In light of these gaps in the literature, this dissertation study used New Literacy Studies (e.g., Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Street, 1984) and communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) to explore situated literacies and learning of four focal students participating in two critical service-learning projects at a traditional urban public high school in a mid-size city. Specifically, I explored the following three research questions: 1. What happens when students and their teacher participate in a critical service-learning project; 2. What learning opportunities and forms of participation emerge in a critical service-learning project and how are they taken up by the students; and 3. What is the role of literacy in these learning opportunities and forms of participation? Using an ethnographic case study design, I collected data over the course of an academic school year to include fieldnotes, artifacts, and transcripts. I analyzed these data using an iterative data analysis process. I concluded the study by offering implications for classroom practice, education policy, and service-learning research.
Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated in loving memory of M. Bernadette Nemeth who inspired me to love unconditionally, seek balance between life’s many competing priorities, and whenever possible, escape into the magical world of books.
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Vita

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Fields of Study

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In the Fall of 2009, Anne Davis was in the front office of Liberty High School when she received a phone call from Hannah, a staff member at the church across the street. Hannah was calling to invite Anne and her students to assist in creating a community garden in the vacant plot of land that sat across from the school and just behind the church. Given the school and the church’s location in a large urban city, Hannah saw the garden serving a real community need of offering the residents of the surrounding Hadley Park neighborhood affordable, fertile ground to plant vegetables and flowers. She knew, though, that breaking ground, constructing beds, and planting seeds would take more hands than she had available.

Anne, who had been teaching for over fourteen years, and who had spent the previous four as a ninth grade English teacher at Liberty, was intrigued by the opportunity. Her students were restless given the sunny weather that had lingered from the Midwestern summer and she recognized accepting the invitation would allow her ninth graders to release some energy by “play[ing] in the dirt” (Line 183). In addition, her students were required to complete service-hours during their ninth grade year and working in the garden would help them to meet this requirement. Realizing the dual purpose the garden would serve, Anne accepted Hannah’s invitation and eventually led her students across the street to the vacant plot of land—hoes, shovels, trash bags, and gloves in hand.
The Purpose of this Study

My dissertation study began three years after Anne Davis and her students joined Hannah in breaking ground for the Good Seeds Community Garden. By the time I entered Anne’s classroom, the garden project had evolved from a community service project to service learning project and Anne and her students had added an additional service-learning project to the ninth grade English curriculum—a Disability Awareness Campaign. I entered Anne’s classroom in the Fall of 2012 wanting to explore the learning opportunities and forms of participation that were now being afforded to students through these service-learning projects, grounded in their local communities, and wanting to explore the role literacy played in these engagements.

Moreover, I was intrigued by a unique social network of students that had emerged from the service-learning project in Anne’s classroom, the Design Team (the Team), and I pondered similar questions to those I was posing about Anne’s classroom around learning, participation, and literacy. The Team, which had been established in 2009 to help Anne with the additional responsibilities that the garden had generated (e.g., pairing gardening gloves, organizing tools), was now composed of a cross-grade grouping of students who not only supported Anne with these logistical pieces, but were also serving as public spokespeople for the service-learning projects, as grant writers and fundraisers, and as idea generators for the next steps in the projects.

The Team was composed of students who had responded to a writing prompt in Anne’s ninth grade English class, “Would you like to be a part of the Design Team? If so, explain why.” The students who joined the Team that first year—when Hannah called the school—were seniors on the Team at the time of this dissertation study and thus, had not
disbanded after leaving Anne’s classroom. In addition to the seniors, Anne had posed this question to every subsequent class, and now the Team was composed of ten active members\(^1\) (See Table 1), including freshmen, sophomores, and seniors, all of whom had been interested in taking on roles beyond those afforded by the traditional service-learning project in ninth grade—and for the students who were no longer in Anne’s ninth grade English class, it enabled them to stay connected to the project. The four focal students in this dissertation study, Angela, Benjamin, Jordan, and Sarah, were all members of the Team.

In order to explore learning, participation, and literacy in the service-learning projects at Liberty, both within Anne’s classroom and among Design Team members, I took up two theoretical frames: 1. communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998); and 2. New Literacy Studies (e.g., Barton, 1991; Barton & Hamilton, 1998/2005; Gee, 2000; Street, 1984/1995/2003). I approached my literature review of existing service-learning research from the intersection of these two theoretical frames in order to uncover holes in the literature. In addition, I approached the data from Liberty High School from the intersection of these two theoretical frames in order to explore and understand the social nature of learning, participation, and literacy in service-learning projects. In the following section, I offer the statement of the problem that served as the driving force behind this dissertation study and the three research questions that were generated from this problem statement. I also, in brief, orient myself within the research and discuss the reasons why I was interested in exploring learning, literacy, and participation within service-learning projects in a high school setting.

\(^1\)While there were ten active members on the Team, only nine members are listed in Table 1. The tenth student never submitted his permission form and so he is not listed on this chart, nor are his experiences documented in this study. I will discuss this as a limitation toward the end of Chapter 3.
Statement of the Problem

Service-learning is widely understood as a pedagogical approach which tightly weaves together classroom learning with meaningful, community-based service (e.g., Butin, 2003; Cipolle, 2010; Kaye, 2010; Pritchard, 2002; Wade, 1997b). The pedagogy has been embraced by educators across the K-16 system as a means to empower student voice, fully engage students in their educational experience, and connect students’ classroom learning to important social issues locally and globally. As of 2008, “over one-third of all K-12 schools use some form of service-learning and more than 1000 postsecondary institutions are members of Campus Compact” (Butin, 2008, p. 77), a university-based network and support system for service-learning initiatives. Across these institutions, various social issues are being taken up and addressed by students, teachers/professors, and community partners.

The range of approaches across K-12 schools, and colleges and universities is highly varied given the number of models available for reference (e.g., Cipolle, 2010; Kaye, 2010; Wade, 1997a) and the plasticity of the approach once it is taken up within a particular context. In other words, each classroom, each context, and each discipline will uniquely inform the way the service-learning is structured and the kinds of learning opportunities and forms of participation afforded to students. Despite the increase in service-learning, particularly within K-12 schools, few empirical studies have been conducted to investigate the emergent learning opportunities, forms of participation and literacy practices in these projects. In their review of high school service-learning programs, Dymond, Renzaglia, and Chun (2008) were only able to uncover 62 articles from 1990 and 2004 documenting high
school service learning projects\(^2\) in particular. I was interested in the dearth of studies given that my dissertation study is situated in the context of a traditional public high school. Of the studies Dymond et al. (2008) uncovered, the methodologies varied (i.e., pre-post-tests, mixed methods, case study, descriptive study) and the findings were primarily quantitative in nature (e.g., “effect on,” and “impact of,”). Moreover, Dymond et al. (2008) identified only two case studies—the methodology employed in this dissertation study—in peer-reviewed journals that captured empirical data around the experiences of adolescents in service-learning programs.

Beyond the paucity of studies documenting service-learning, specifically within high school settings, little attention has been given to the theory of learning operating within service-learning projects. According to Butin (2003) this has meant that service-learning researchers have not fully captured the why and how learning occurs in service-learning projects (Butin, 2003). In other words, without an explicit theory of learning operating in service-learning research, the field has not fully attended to the learning opportunities afforded to students in service-learning project, nor the ways in which students have taken them up. Butin’s (2003/2010) research has begun to address this gap in the literature through his interrogation of three prevailing service-learning framings (i.e., technical, cultural, and political) and his reconceptualization of a fourth category, poststructural and antifoundational (2003, 2010). In these prevailing framings, Butin (2003/2010) has noted the way these framings imply a particular learning outcome—making learning only a product of teaching, rather than a socially dynamic enterprise of its own. I will explore these three prevailing approaches and Butin’s reconceptualization of a fourth category in greater depth in Chapter

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\(^2\) The researchers used the following criteria to identify these 62 articles: “(a) The article was published in a peer-reviewed journal, (b) the topic of service learning was explicitly addressed, (c) the focus was on high school programs, and (d) the article was published in the English language” (p. 38).
2, but I mention them here in Chapter 1 to offer a brief nod to the beginnings of these conversations in service-learning literature, particularly within higher education. In K-12 settings, this kind of interrogation of prevailing frameworks has yet to be done, but similar to the service-learning literature in higher education, little work has been done to capture the fluid and somewhat unstable (Butin, 2003) nature of learning within service-learning projects. Billig (2000) shared a similar observation about learning in service-learning research to that of Butin (2003/2010), noting that, “most of the ‘research’ that exists…comes from service-learning program evaluations” (p. 660). Such reports frame learning outcomes as products and given the nature of program evaluations, often veil the theoretical and philosophical assumptions undergirding the findings. The framing of learning as a product of teaching, versus a social practice worthy of study in its own right, pointed to one of the most significant gaps in service-learning research.

In line with the lack of attention paid to learning, literacy has been conceived of narrowly within these projects, again with little attention paid to the nature of literacy as a social practice within classroom settings. Again, there are examples where literacy is incorporated as a teaching strategy within the pedagogical approach (e.g., Mitchell, 2008), but much less attention has been paid to literacy as a social practice in the same way it has been taken up by literacy scholars who are engaged in community-based projects with young people (e.g., Flower, 2008; Jocson, 2006; Kinloch, 2010; Kirshner, 2006; Morrell, 2006). Understanding the importance of literacy in the learning process is a parallel interest in this study: what role does literacy play in service-learning projects?

The service-learning research that is currently available too narrowly conceives of the learning opportunities afforded by engagements among students, their teacher, and their
community partners. Butin (2003/2010), specifically, is calling for a broadening of how scholars and practitioners approach service-learning and how they conceive of the learning process and learning outcomes that occur during these engagements. Moreover, very little work has been done to understand the nature of these learning opportunities among high school students. Dymond et al., (2008) documented the lacuna of research at the high school level, while scholars like Hart\(^3\) (2006) have argued that service-learning among high school students is meaningfully different from other service-learning projects; high school students have the opportunity to engage in projects in the communities where they live. Finally, as this statement of the problem has revealed, little attention has been paid to literacy as a social practice within service-learning projects. Flower’s (2008) research on community literacy among community members, high school students, university faculty and graduate students, and public officials (the public and the counterpublic) in Pittsburgh has done some of this work, but again, Flower’s study does not localize service-learning within the high school classroom. Before I leave this section, the last point I will make is one made by service-learning scholars who are concerned about the lack of empirical documenting learning over time in service-learning projects (e.g., Yamauchi, Billig, Meyer & Hofschire, 2006; Maybach, 1996; Melchior & Bailis, 2002). As noted by other service-learning scholars (Abernathy & Obenchain, 2001; Billig, 2000; Giles & Eyler, 1994) evaluative studies are prevalent, and so empirical studies with explicit theoretical lenses and detailed methodologies are needed, particularly those that document learning over time—before, during, and after the project has been completed. These gaps in the literature led me to explore three research questions at Liberty High School, which I detail in the following section.

\(^3\) I will explore Hart’s (2006) work in greater depth in Chapter 2.
Research Questions

In this study, I employ ethnographic case study design (Dyson & Genishi, 2005; Flyvberg, 2006; Heath & Street, 2008) to explore literacy and learning as social practices within service-learning projects over time. I use Lave and Wenger’s (1991) sociocultural approach to learning and New Literacy Studies approach to literacy as situated and historical to frame this investigation, and to inform my three research questions, which include:

1. What happens when students and their teacher participate in a critical service-learning project?

2. What learning opportunities and forms of participation emerge in a critical service-learning project and how are they taken up by the students?

3. What is the role of literacy in these learning opportunities and forms of participation?

In Chapter 4, I explore these questions by looking at the learning, literacy, and participation of four focal students, Angela, Benjamin, Jordan and Sarah who were each students in Anne’s ninth grade English class at one time and who were all members of the Design Team during this dissertation study.

Angela and Benjamin were both participating in traditional service-learning projects as students in Anne’s ninth grade English class. I consider their participation in these projects, the Good Seeds Community Garden and the Disability Awareness Campaign, and the learning opportunities and forms of participation generated between the classroom and the service focuses. I then turn my attention to the Design Team, which was a community of practice that emerged from the projects in Anne’s classroom, to explore the ways in which learning and participation were extended for Benjamin and Angela. Exploring Benjamin and Angela’s positions as newcomers (Lave & Wenger, 1991) on the Team allowed me to think
about Jordan and Sarah as oldtimers. Jordan and Sarah, a sophomore and senior at Liberty High School, had continued to participate in the Team even after they left Anne’s classroom. Given that Jordan and Sarah no longer had an explicit curricular component, I sought to understand what members of this emergent community of practice would do as they reregistered the new environment (Brown & Duguid, 1991) in which their participation was taking place. By identifying four focal students, Angela and Benjamin who were ninth graders, Jordan who was a sophomore, and Sarah who was a senior, I also aimed to explore the way these students entered the community of practice from different positions, as newcomers and oldtimers, and what this meant for how they might learn from one another.

As Kapucu (2012) noted, “bringing individuals together and forming communities of practice is an important tenet of learning, and learning patterns within a community are particularly important because most of the learning occurs due to human practice and interaction with others” (p. 586).

**Why this Study?**

I situate myself in this study as an alumna of City Year, a literacy-based, national service program where college and high school graduates, or individuals in pursuit of their GED, work in K-12 public schools with young people who are below grade level in reading and writing. During my service year, 2004-2005, I worked in an urban elementary school on the southeast side of a mid-size city to support “typically developing” first graders, as well as kindergarteners, first, second, and third graders with special needs. On a daily basis, I would provide classroom support, and direct, one-on-one literacy tutoring. It was during this City Year that I found myself concerned about who was on grade level in terms of reading and writing, who was not, and why that was the case for the students I was tutoring. It was not
within my capacity to really investigate this issue—though I had an inkling that there were inequities operating in this context that were manifesting in the form of grade-level reading issues.

City Year launched me into graduate school so that I could equip myself with a deeper understanding of social justice, schools, and communities, which is another positionality I bring to bear on this study. It was at the University of Massachusetts Amherst School of Education where I concentrated in service-learning and spent time studying the theoretical tenets informing the pedagogy, exploring research documenting engagements between universities and communities, and by the end of the program, came to focus on the role of community voice in service-learning projects. I was interested in knowing what role the community played in shaping the actual focus of the service-learning projects, and to what extent the community factored into whether the project was deemed successful or unsuccessful. While at UMass, I worked with a community organization to think about the way collaborations with the University both enhanced and hindered their work. As an unabashed advocate for service-learning, and as someone who now employs it in my own college classrooms, I see value in exploring the learning opportunities afforded by engaged pedagogies that might extend the learning of the classroom, but also go beyond what was ever intended by the curriculum or course goals.

And finally, I situate myself as doctoral candidate in a department of teaching and learning that has taken up the work of New Literacy Studies scholars (among others) both in terms of study, and scholarship. Being with, and studying among faculty whose work challenges prevailing notions of literacy and learning as systematic, standardized, regulated, neutral, and universal, I understand literacy and learning in the social spaces, cultural
practices, and linguistic customs of which they are a part. It was in this department where I was able to reflect back on my time in City Year and give serious consideration to institutional factors and issues of equity and justice that contribute to the marginalization of particular groups of students.

My interest in service, learning, participation, and literacy has been emerging for some time, and in the Spring of 2012, I found myself in the perfect storm to pose a meaningful research questions at the intersection of these interests. It was at this time that I was working as a graduate research assistant on a national grant for one of my dissertation advisors focusing on service-learning in K-12 priority schools. I was also on the verge of narrowing my focus for a dissertation study. I took the opportunity to dig deeper into these scholarly and personal interests and continued to work with one of the teachers I had met through my assistantship.

As I turn my attention to this service-learning project and focus on Anne, Angela, Benjamin, Jordan, and Sarah, I draw on my own personal experiences as motivating forces to pose questions about service, learning, participation, and literacy. I think about the first graders who were behind in reading and writing and the pile of basal readers that formed the content of our tutoring sessions. I wonder if there was a more meaningful way to engage these students in reading and writing. I wonder what a sociocultural approach to literacy and learning could have afforded me in the context of those tutoring sessions. I think back to my work at UMass, and wonder how learning opportunities and literacy engagements differ in the context of K-12 service-learning projects and I note that there are important differences to explore.
In the following section, I offer the reader a number of key terms that will serve as a reference for the rest of this dissertation study. Then, I move directly into the organization of this dissertation study and turn my attention to Chapter 2, which details both my theoretical frame and my review of service-learning literature.

**Key Terms**

I use a number of key terms throughout this dissertation study, which I explain here in the introduction to serve as a resource to the reader. While I simplify these terms somewhat in this section, their complexities are revealed in the discussion and analysis offered in the proceeding chapters.

**Community**

The concept of “community” is used frequently throughout this dissertation study because the study is focused on service-learning projects in a ninth grade English class. Given the nature of service-learning engagements, which privilege connections between classroom and community, *community* was integral to understanding the service focus of Anne’s classroom and of the Design Team. In order to make sense of “community” in service-learning projects, I drew on the work of Kinloch (2009) who offered a definition of community that is useful here, which is “a social unit composed of relationships, associations, practices, and networks of people with geographical, cultural, ideological, or some other defined connection” (Kinloch, 2009, p. 164). I also draw from Jones (2006) who described community as “a physical space that is shared by a group or groups of people with at least something in common” (p. 17). The two service-learning projects explored in this dissertation are the Good Seeds Community Garden and the Disability Awareness Campaign. Applying Kinloch (2009) and Jones (2006) notions of community, here, I frame community
as a shared, geographical space among people who have something in common. In the case of the garden, it was situated in the Hadley Park *community*, and in the case of the Disability Awareness Campaign, it was situated in the Liberty High School *community*.

**Communities of Practice**

My use of the term community—in referencing the shared space that gave rise to the service projects in Anne’s classroom—should not be conflated with *communities of practice* (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), which is a “set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice. A community of practice is an intrinsic condition for the existence of knowledge, not least because it provides the interpretive support necessary for making sense of its heritage” (p. 98). I draw on Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998) at length in this dissertation study, but I also draw on scholars who have applied this concept in their research. For instance, I turned to Kapucu (2012) to think about a classroom as a community of practice and to Brown and Duguid (1991) to think about emergent communities of practice.

**Legitimate Peripheral Participation.** This concept is central to Lave and Wenger’s (1991) notion of communities of practice and refers to the gradual movement of a person from the periphery to full participation as s/he acquires the relevant skills and knowledge associated with practice.

**Newcomer.** A newcomer is the individual situated on the periphery of a community of practice who has not yet acquired full membership. The newcomer both learns from the oldtimer and proposes new ways of being, acting, and knowing within the community of practice.
Oldtimer. An oldtimer is a full participant within a community of practice who embodies many of the “conditions for legitimacy” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 98) within that community of practice.

Critical Service-Learning

Critical service-learning is recognized as a pedagogical approach that engages students, teachers and community members in transformative work across the traditional P.A.R.E. (preparation, action, reflection, evaluation) model of service-learning, moving students’ engagement with the service-learning projects beyond a surface-level recognition of community need, to a deeper understanding and interrogation of normalized/institutionalized root causes of injustice (Cipolle, 2010; Hart, 2006; Maybach, 1996; Mitchell, 2008; Wade, 2000/2008). Informed by critical pedagogies, social justice education, and multicultural education, critical service-learning is a necessary and welcomed variation of service-learning that seeks to engage in work with community, rather than for community (Hart, 2006; Maybach, 1996; Wade, 2008).

Texts

I think about texts broadly in this dissertation study to include text as both the word and the world (Freire, 1970/2000). As such, I consider traditional notions of texts, such as young adult novels, and untraditional texts, such as community and experience as readable and writable. I drew on Freire for this expansion of text, but I also turn to Bloome and Egan-Robertson (1993) to think about the process of how a text becomes a text in the classroom with the next concept, textualizing (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993, p. 311).

Textualizing. Textualizing is the process of making “experience and the world…” a “part of a language system (broadly defined)” (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993, p. 311).
a result, “what counts as a text cannot be determined a priori” (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993, p. 311), but rather comes to be as people make use of it as a text.

**Intertextuality.** Intertextuality occurs when an individual explicitly juxtaposes texts, broadly defined, which are then “interactionally recognized” (p. 308) in order to make meaning. If the juxtaposition of texts is not recognized, then it is not socially significant and the meaning is not taken up. Bloome and Egan-Robertson (1993) assert that intertextuality is “a social construction, located in the social interactions that people have with each other” (p. 308).

**Organization of the Dissertation**

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. In this first chapter, I offered a brief introduction of the context and the people involved in this study. I then provided the purpose of this study, which was to explore the learning opportunities within the service-learning projects at Liberty, a statement of the problem—grounded in service-learning research—and the three research questions that were generated from the gaps in the literature. I also explained how the students at Liberty, Angela, Benjamin, Jordan and Sarah, and their teacher Anne, would provide an opportunity to think about learning, participation, and literacy in the context of two service-learning projects, and to explore these social practices with (i.e., Angela and Benjamin) and without (Jordan and Sarah) a curricular component. Finally, I discussed what drew me to this particular dissertation study and key terms and theoretical assumptions that informed the investigation.

In Chapter 2, I delve into service-learning literature to uncover the way learning, participation, and literacy are discussed—or not discussed—in service-learning research, and to explore the emphasis that has been placed on service-learning as a teaching method. I also
explain that communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) and New Literacy Studies (e.g., Barton, 1991; Barton & Hamilton, 1998/2005; Gee, 2000; Street, 1984/1995/2003) collectively offer a theoretical lens through which to understand learning and literacy as social practices, which further unveils the gaps in current service-learning research and lays the groundwork necessary for understanding these social practices in the projects at Liberty High School. I conclude the chapter with a brief nod to literacy scholars who have explored the dynamic nature of learning among young people engaged in community-based research and problem-posing and the important role literacy played in documenting and investigating issues of (in)justice and (in)equality.

In Chapter 3, I offer an overview of the methodology I employed in this dissertation study. I begin the chapter with a brief discussion of the pilot study that led to this dissertation study and include a more in-depth description of the context, including Liberty High School and the surrounding neighborhood. I then describe the casing process that led to the selection of the four focal students, Angela, Benjamin, Jordan, and Sarah. In the proceeding section, I offer a reflective analysis of my position within the study and within the school. From there I discuss the data sources and data analysis process. At the end of the chapter, I speak to the verification process employed throughout this study, as well as the limitations of the study.

In Chapter 4, I offer the findings from this dissertation study. In order to address my research questions, I analyze and interpret the data I collected over the course of the 2012-2013 academic school year at Liberty, including observations and literacy artifacts from Anne’s classroom and Design Team meetings, interviews with students and Anne, and conference presentations in which focal students presented. I discuss the forms of participation and learning opportunities taken up by Angela and Benjamin in the service-
learning projects in Anne’s classroom, and the literacy practices that were unique to the service focuses. I also discuss the forms of participation and learning opportunities afforded within the Design Team, an emergent community of practice that came out of Anne’s classroom. In looking at these data, I attend to the overlap in practice between Anne’s classroom and the Team, but then I turn to the Team as a social network of innovation, where forms of participation, learning opportunities, and literacy practices took shape as members reregistered their environment.

Finally, in Chapter 5, I begin with a brief overview of findings from Chapter 4. I then offer a discussion of implications for practice—specifically in terms of classroom practice and education policy—and for theory and research, particularly in terms of promising directions for future service-learning research.
Chapter 2: A Review of the Literature and Theoretical Frame

Introduction

As I noted in Chapter 1, the goal of this dissertation study is to explore literacy and learning as social practices within the service-learning projects at Liberty High School. In light of the increase in service-learning across K-12 classrooms (Butin, 2008) and the lack of attention paid to theories of learning operating within these engagements, I turn to two theories in this chapter, communities of practice and New Literacy Studies, that I bring to bear on my dissertation study and that I argue would allow service-learning scholars and researchers to understand more fully literacy and learning as social practices within service-learning projects. I draw on scholars such as Butin (2003/2010) who has exposed the lack of attention paid to the dynamic nature of learning in service-learning and Billig (2000) who acknowledged the overemphasis on program evaluations—versus sound research—in documenting learning outcomes. Beyond these calls offered by Butin (2003) and Billig (2000), the empirical research I review in this chapter further undergirds the importance of locating learning and literacy as social practices in service-learning engagements.

I begin this chapter with a brief historical overview of service-learning literature to look specifically at the way the literature has traditionally emphasized teaching, rather than learning, and consequently, positioned learning as a product of teaching rather than a social enterprise of its own. I also expand upon the problem statement discussed in Chapter 1,
which spoke to the absence of an explicit theory of learning in service-learning, and consequently, a narrow approach to documenting student learning and literacy within these engagements. In reviewing this literature, I aim to lay the groundwork for why a theory of learning and literacy is necessary in order to fully understand what is happening within service-learning projects in terms of youth participation.

After providing a brief historical overview of service-learning literature, I then explore the two theoretical frames I have privileged in my data analysis in Chapter 4, that I argue, have larger implications for service-learning research. These two theories are communities of practice, or COP (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and New Literacy Studies, or NLS (e.g., Barton, 1991; Barton & Hamilton, 1998/2005; Gee, 2000; Street, 1984/1995/2003). These two theories intersect at the point of practice in that they recognize learning and literacy, respectively, as social practices. I spend time in this chapter explaining these frames and the ways they inform each other, particularly as they come to bear on the data from this dissertation study. I also explore empirical studies that have embraced social theories of learning and literacy and aim to put these studies in conversation with service-learning literature to explicate the relationship among participation, learning, and literacy.

A Brief History of Service-Learning

While there has been a recent surge of service-learning in U.S. classrooms over the last decade (Butin, 2008; Daigre, 2000; Pritchard, 2002), service-learning is not new. It has had a long history in the United States school system, originating in latter part of the 19th and early part of the 20th centuries. Oden and Casey (2007) noted a more recent connection, tracing service-learning back to the civil rights era (1954-1974), but the most common tie made in service learning research is to the philosophy of John Dewey (Daigre, 2000; Giles &
In the late 1800s and early 1900s, Dewey was proposing a new kind of educational approach to formalized schooling, which encouraged students and teachers to practice the things they were learning and teaching in the classroom. According to Lagemann (2000), “Dewey approached education as a means for nurturing new social capacities, especially the skills, orientation, and knowledge necessary to building and sustaining a democratic community” (p. 50). Dewey’s pedagogical approach, commonly termed experiential learning, became the foundation of an experimental school at the University of Chicago in 1896 focused on skill development and physical engagement in educational tasks (Lagemann, 2000). According to Dewey (1937),

Absence of participation tends to produce lack of interest and concern on the part of those shut out. The result is corresponding lack of effective responsibility. Automatically and unconsciously, if not consciously, the feeling develops, “This is none of our affair; it is the business of those at the top; let that particular set of Georges do what needs to be done.”

Thus, according to Dewey, participation provoked interest, and he argued that this was a central tenet to a sound democracy.

Around the same time, one of Dewey’s colleagues, William James, who had been working in Harvard University’s philosophy department and dabbling in psychology, wrote an essay titled, “The Moral Equivalent of War” (1910). James (1910) was proposing an alternative to war that acknowledged the potential of human beings to reach compromise without engaging in violence, where “we should get toughness without callousness, authority with as little criminal cruelty as possible, and painful work done cheerily because the duty is temporary, and threatens not, as now, to degrade the whole remainder of one's life” (James,
1910). He recognized that such a moral alternative would conflict with the unwavering investment in war that had traditionally dominated conflict resolution in the country and had historically served as the means of securing the nation’s “manly virtues” (James, 1910). James (1910) argued that despite the tensions between the opposing approaches, such an alternative was possible:

I spoke of the "moral equivalent" of war. So far, war has been the only force that can discipline a whole community, and until and equivalent discipline is organized, I believe that war must have its way. But I have no serious doubt that the ordinary prides and shames of social man, once developed to a certain intensity, are capable of organizing such a moral equivalent as I have sketched, or some other just as effective for preserving manliness of type. It is but a question of time, of skilful propagandism, and of opinion-making men seizing historic opportunities.

The ideas in James’ essay are oft cited as the impetus behind organized, national service programs (National Service-Learning Clearinghouse, 2011).

Some claim that the marrying of Dewey and James’ ideas provided the structural foundation necessary to conceptualize service learning (National Service-Learning Clearinghouse, 2011; National and Community Service, 2011; Wade, 1997b). While this certainly could be the case, it is not uncommon for white, male voices to dominate educational history. Therefore, other scholars (e.g., Kraft, 1996; Stevens, 2003) have troubled this narrow link among Dewey, James, and service-learning by offering other possibilities for its origin. One such possibility is a link between service-learning and religious philosophies of Christianity and Judaism (Kraft, 1996) as well as the philosophies of Black churches in the late 1800s and early 1900s (Stevens, 2003). The settlement house movement beginning with Jane Addams’ Hull House has also been linked to the beginnings of service-learning (Daynes & Longo, 2004) as well as institutionalized social services (Flower, 2008).
Both Cipolle (2010) and Giles and Eyler (1994) recognize Sigmon and Ramsey as the individuals who coined the term *service-learning* in 1967 at the Southern Regional Education Board. Then, in 1969, they developed a definition of service-learning that defined service-learning as “‘connecting student learning opportunities to community service and social change’” (Cipolle, 2010, p. 80). Since the late 1960s, service-learning has maintained a similar definition. Interestingly, despite being recognized as a useful approach to teaching and learning in the 60s, Giles and Eyler (1994) noted that service-learning did not appear at the American Educational Research Association conference until 1994. The gradual growth of service-learning has continued to be supported through the creation and distribution of funds4 through the “*National and Community Service Act of 1990*, the *Serve America Program* and the *National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993* and the *Learn and Serve America Program*” (Giles & Eyler, 1994, p. 5). At the K-12 level, service-learning has come a long way since its conceptualization in the 1960s. In 1999, the National Center for Education Statistics reported 32 percent (2.0 standard error) of public schools in the United States were engaging their students in service-learning.

Returning to Dewey and his ideas around experiential learning, Giles and Eyler (1994) noted two of the philosophical underpinnings that drove his theory of learning, the first being the Principle of Continuity and the second being the Principle of Interaction. The Principle of Continuity referred to the idea that in the process of learning, an individual uses previous experiences to build upon future ones—a layering of the learning process. The Principle of Interaction refers to the relationship between human beings and their sociocultural contexts, suggesting that contexts play important roles in how and what people learn. These initial ideas espoused by Dewey seem to have been embedded within service-

4 These funds were largely decimated in 2011, with additional budget cuts in 2012.
learning models, but to a much lesser extent, have they been explored within service-learning research.

**An Emphasis on Teaching**

The literature on service-learning has offered a range of pedagogical approaches, most of which embrace a similar skeletal structure known as P.A.R.E. (i.e., preparation, action, reflection, evaluation). While P.A.R.E. tends to be the basic structure for conducting service-learning initiatives, most service-learning practitioners and researchers describe some variation of this model. For example, Wade (1997a) identifies six components to service-learning projects: 1) preparation; 2) collaboration; 3) service; 4) curriculum integration; 5) reflection; and 6) celebration, whereas Kaye (2010) discusses five components: 1) investigation; 2) preparation and planning; 3) action; 4) reflection; and 5) demonstration.

Both Wade and Kaye place different degrees of emphasis on each component, which is reflective of the flexibility of the pedagogical approach; however, the core components of the model (i.e., P.A.R.E.) are still readily apparent, as they are in most variations of service-learning. One of the ways these models accommodate different classroom contexts and project focuses is through the collaboration (Wade, 1997a) or the action component (Kaye, 2010) of the model. There are three primary modes of collaboration or action, which include direct service, which is active, visible service with the community partner; indirect service, which is behind-the-scenes action that might not be visible to the public, but still directly benefits the community partner; and advocacy or research, which is not necessarily done at a service site, but targets the community issue under investigation through reading, writing, and dialogue.
Recently, the service-learning models explored above have been extended by scholars (e.g., Cipolle, 2010; Daigre, 2000; Hart, 2006; Mitchell, 2008; Wade, 2000/2008) who have recognized the transformative potential of embedding service-learning within a critical framework. This idea of critical service-learning is one that emphasizes collaborative relationships between teachers, students and community members as they seek to interrogate the issues of power, privilege and injustice underlying the service need requiring their attention. The first documented reference to critical service-learning was relatively recent. In 2000, Rice, Pollack and Rosenberger coined the term, “critical service learning” (Mitchell, 2008, p. 1), which distinguished itself from service-learning by taking the basic P.A.R.E. model and multiplying⁶ it by elements of critical theories. While it appeared in service-learning literature in 1997 as “critical community service,” it was not until 2000 that the literature tied critical community service to academic engagements (Mitchell, 2008, p. 1).

Since its introduction a little over a decade ago, critical service-learning has been a thread in service-learning research, but has continued to emphasize teaching rather than learning. Hart’s (2006) framework, for instance, pulls together critical pedagogy—an approach to teaching—and service-learning, observing that “these educational theories are both rooted in aim of connecting academic instruction to the social, political and economic conditions of students’ lived experiences” (p. 18). Hart (2006) observes that the pairing of these two counter-normative pedagogical approaches is a natural one because critical pedagogy has long-been criticized for being too theoretical and service-learning has been

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⁶ I borrow this notion of a multiplicative relationship from Hoover and Gough (1990) in order to describe the nature of the relationship between service-learning and critical elements, which they used to describe the relationship between decoding and comprehension in reading; one is incomplete without the other. In order for critical service-learning to be realized, the literature indicates that the elements of service-learning and critical theory cannot simply be added to one another in a linear fashion, nor complement one another by proximity; rather they must exist through one another, by colliding in such a way that the resulting product is a pedagogical approach all of its own with distinct qualities.
criticized for lacking a theoretical framework. Hart (2006) adds that critical service-learning has been conceptualized in order “to subvert and transform facets of school life that may have served to alienate and oppress students” (p. 18), repositioning students from passive recipients of their education to capable and agentive actors in their educational lives and communities.

Daigre (2000) also suggested that critical pedagogy and service-learning have a mutually constitutive relationship, both having theoretical and practical applications, but collectively becoming much stronger in both areas. Together, Daigre (2000) and Hart’s (2006) scholarship support a move toward critically-oriented service-learning in order to enhance the application of theory, but also the practice of the pedagogy; service-learning alone does not fully take up the “critical” and critical pedagogy alone lacks a mode of application. Yet still with critical service-learning the emphasis has been on a model of teaching and the ways that teachers can more intentionally center students in service-learning projects (e.g., critical pedagogy as a method of teaching, rather than a theory of learning). In his introduction of Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Macedo (2000) observed,

unfortunately, in the United States, many educators who claim to be Freirian in their pedagogical orientation mistakenly transform Freire’s notion of dialogue into a method, thus losing sight of the fact that the fundamental goal of dialogical teaching is to create a process of learning and knowing that invariably involves theorizing about the experiences shared in the dialogue process” (p. 17).

Macedo’s (2000) point serves as a caution to critical service-learning scholars to not solely attend to the teaching methods of critical pedagogy as they are taken up within service-learning, but to also attend to the process of learning and knowing as students engage with one another through the dialogical process in the context of their communities.
Hart’s (2006) work has begun to attend to the importance of the process of learning and knowing noted by Macedo (2000) in the way he has sought to locate K-12 students within the communities where their service-learning projects are taking place. He explained that partnerships at the K-12 level frequently focus on students’ “own lived realities” (p. 26) and orient students within the communities where they live and learn. By locating students in their communities and locating their communities in the critical service-learning project, “the dichotomies of ‘fortunate helping unfortunate’, or ‘us doing for them,’ are erased and replaced with ‘us doing for us’, essentially eliminating the perpetuation of dominant positions” (p. 27). The emphasis here is not on what the teacher has done in terms of method, rather the learning opportunities afforded by investigating pressing social issues in the students’ own communities. Hart’s (2006) move of locating students in their communities is a powerful contribution to service-learning research because it offers new roles for students to take up who are participating in these projects, such as “active contributing members of his or her community” (see Koliba, Campbell, & Shapiro, 2006). In fact, I include critical service-learning in this literature review because it helped me to understand the significance of the local focus of the service-learning projects at Liberty High School, and what learning opportunities were generated as a result of these local focuses. Locating students in their communities and recognizing the importance of context offers a promising direction for service-learning research at the K-12 level, particularly around issues of learning and participation across classroom and community spaces.

Recently, Butin (2003/2010) reviewed service-learning literature and identified three prevailing conceptualizations of service-learning that speak, in part, to the intended learning outcomes behind the pedagogical approach (i.e., technical, cultural, and political). Butin
(2003) claims that service-learning has been discussed in theory and practice in terms of three primary distinct conceptualizations: technical, cultural, and political (p. 1675). The technical form of service-learning emphasizes the process-product components of pedagogy. In this approach, there is a focus on the logistical elements of the teaching method including “efficacy, quality, efficiency, and sustainability” (p. 1679), as well as attention paid to what and who comes out on the other side of the process. In other words, who benefits and what do those benefits look like? The large body of research documenting student outcomes is a good illustration of the technical perspective (e.g., Billig, 2000; Gross, 2010; Kinsley, 1997; Melchior & Bailis, 2002).

The cultural perspective of service-learning, according to Butin (2003) emphasizes the different levels of reflection embedded within the service-learning experience including reflection on self, reflection on self to others, and reflection on self to world, moving across macro and micro understandings of the society, self and the educative possibilities within those reflections. Butin (2003) argues that filtered through the cultural lens, service-learning projects take up issues of diversity and privilege the assumption that “students will come to better understand, respect, and engage with the cultural plurality of our diverse society” (p. 1681) by having participated in the project.

The third perspective is a political perspective. Butin (2003) explains the political perspective as one that highlights power relations embedded within, and surrounding the service-learning partnership. It highlights the potential for service-learning pedagogy to make classrooms more student-centered by disrupting the power imbalance between teacher and student, but it also addresses the underbelly of some service-learning partnerships that perpetuate an us versus them binary. Butin (2003) states, “from the political perspective,
service learning is both potentially transformative and repressive” (p. 1681). The political perspective is one that heightens awareness around issues of community voice, reciprocity and mutuality.

Based on these three prevailing approaches, Butin proposed a fourth (re)conceptualization of service-learning, which in 2003 took the form of a poststructuralist approach, and more recently, in 2010, an antifoundational approach. Both of these approaches moved beyond the prevailing approaches in service-learning research and recognized learning and participation in service-learning as less stable than these research paradigms would suggest. Unlike the previous approaches, a poststructural approach avoids “totalizing logics,” emphasizing instead “contingency, instability, and vulnerability” (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005, p. 57).

According to Butin (2003), the poststructuralist perspective recognizes the potential for service-learning to change the way the scholars in the field have discussed teaching and learning as well as the positions available within the classroom setting and those who occupy them. Further, it speaks to the idea of space and border crossing—“be it physical, social, cultural, or intellectual” (Butin, 2003, p. 1683); service-learning from the poststructuralist position disrupts the common place and shifts assumed perspectives. Butin (2003) rests this poststructuralist perspective on two key premises. The first one he discusses is Lyotard’s (1984) “incredulity of metanarratives: There is no single and objective truth to be found, for all perspectives are beholden to particular presuppositions, contexts, and modes of thought” (p. 1683). The second is Foucault’s (1983) “the subjectification of the self. Our identities do not consist of unitary, essential, and internal attributes. Rather, we are constructed and construct ourselves within the multiple confines and relations of our society” (p. 1683). In
Butin (2003) is arguing, “service learning is a site of identity construction, destruction, and reconstruction with profound consequences of how we view the definitions and boundaries of the teaching process” (p. 1684). He is placing greater emphasis on the dynamic nature of learning in these projects, as well as the structural and institutional forces that inform and shape the everyday experiences of students, teachers, and community partners. Such a paradigm shift offers a productive direction for service-learning research.

Butin’s (2003) attention to this fourth category appears to be an attempt to highlight the dynamic nature of learning embedded within service-learning projects. He argued that while “researchers have begun to articulate what positive outcomes may accrue from service-learning, there is almost no solid research on how such outcomes occur” (p. 1687). An example of this narrow approach to learning can be seen in Melchior and Bailis’ (2002) study where they looked at the results of a follow up, quantitative study on student participation in a service-learning program. The study surveyed students one year after participating in a Learn and Serve service learning program and the researchers reported that the results of the survey “suggest that one-time involvement in service-learning programs is unlikely to generate long-term impacts on young people” (p. 217), but “students who continued their involvement in service-learning showed strong, statistically significant impacts on three outcomes at follow up: service-leadership, hours of service, and school engagement, and more marginal impacts (at the .10 level) on three additional measures: involvement in at least one type of service, educational aspirations, and reduction in alcohol use” (p. 217). The shear variation in these learning outcomes is one problematic concern (e.g., why is there a connection between educational aspirations and alcohol use?) given that the focus of the
service-learning project was not fully explored. Moreover, “long-term impacts” begs the question, long-term in what form, and impact in what way?

In somewhat of a contrast to Melchior and Bailis’ (2002) study, Yamauchi, Billig, Meyer and Hofschire (2006) framed their study using Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory of learning, but still narrowly conceived the possibilities for learning in that they were interested in the following: “whether service-learning influenced students’ (a) connectedness to their local community, (b) civic attitudes, and (c) career development” (p. 153). The rationale for predetermining these particular categories, relative to a service learning program embedded in an Hawaiian, culturally relevant high school were unclear. A question regarding the social exchanges among students and community members within the actual project, for example, would have led to a more complicated understanding of the learning opportunities afforded by a service-learning project that emphasized the Wai‘anae community of Hawai‘i. While the researchers framed their study using Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory of learning, the theoretical frame was not fully captured by the methodology they employed which included a post-test survey, focus groups, and interviews following participation in the project.

It has not been uncommon for service-learning literature to privilege learning outcomes as a measurable product within the reflection portion of service-learning projects. As Koliba, Campbell, and Shapiro (2006) noted, a “feature of service learning is the existence of a reflective component used to facilitate the learning objectives…reflection can serve to connect and synthesize service experiences with specific areas of knowledge, providing essential evidence that a student is learning from his or her experiences” (p. 686). Yet again this kind of framing around learning speaks to the potential of the pedagogy to produce learning (i.e., a teacher can pose particular questions relative to the curriculum to
produce an outcome) rather than fully attending to the social nature of the learning opportunities afforded by interactions among people and their context within the project itself.

Given the lack of attention to the learning process, and instead, the significant focus on best reflection practices and subsequent outcomes, Butin (2003/2010) noted that practitioners and scholars of service-learning have unnecessarily constrained their practice and research. As I referenced earlier, Butin (2003/2010) documented three prevailing approaches that included the technical, the cultural, and the political approach. Moving beyond these approaches, he suggested, would require a fourth category, which in 2003 he proposed that a poststructuralist approach would “foster emergent practices” (p. 1687). Such an approach would be disruptive of the prevailing technical, cultural, and political models, which anticipate particular results from service-learning. In 2010, with similar intent, Butin conceptualized this fourth category differently—maintaining technical, cultural and political as the prevailing approaches—and suggesting an “antifoundational perspective” (p. 12) to move the field forward. This perspective, he insisted, “argues that there is no neutral, objective, or contentless ‘foundation’ by which we can ever know the ‘truth’ unmediated by our particular condition” (Butin, 2010, p. 12). In other words, scholars in the field of service-learning can no longer ignore the social spaces, the learning resources, and the tensions generated from diverse knowledge and positions present within partnerships between schools and communities.

In both his poststructuralist framing and his antifoundational framing Butin (2003/2010) underscored the value of recognizing the fluidity in teaching and learning within service-learning and cautioned practitioners and scholars of service-learning from being too
narrowly focused on a one-size-fits-all sequenced, formulaic approach as producing a particular learning outcome. Taking a poststructural approach, as Butin (2003) suggested, turns the research gaze away from documenting and reporting on best teaching practices, and instead, emphasizes the dynamic process through which teachers, students and community partners engage with one another in service-learning projects. Approaching learning from this angle—as dynamic and social—allows for a wider net to be cast around the possible learning opportunities and forms of participation occurring within the engagements. It also attends to the power struggle that might occur as communities are proposed as legitimate focuses for learning in school—a power struggle that exposes privileged knowledges within the context of this institution (Foucault, 1977). I draw on Butin’s (2003/2010) work, and briefly, Foucault (1977), to acknowledge the vulnerability and instability of the teaching and learning process in service-learning and “the interweaving of effects of power and knowledge” (Foucault, 1977, p. 109) as students engage with one another across grades, with social issues across contexts, and with reading and writing practices across time and space.

There is a productive tension between Butin’s (2003/2010) work and Foucault’s (1977) theories, and the way I have framed this dissertation study. While Butin (2003/2010) and Foucault (1977) are grounded in poststructuralism, this study privileges a sociocultural framing. I maintain that the experiences, understandings, and observations of Anne, Angela, Benjamin, Jordan, and Sarah are important in pushing the field of service-learning forward; their local truths speak to the how and why students learn, how students use texts and community to generate knowledge, and how students interpret their own lived experiences. Given that both a sociocultural and a poststructuralist lens are present in this dissertation study, I grapple with their productive tension in Chapter 4. In the section below, I offer an
overview of my theoretical frame: communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and New Literacy Studies. I argue that along with Butin’s (2003/2010) work, a sociocultural lens will generate new understands of learning and literacy in critical service-learning projects.

**Theoretical Frame**

**Communities of Practice**

Lave and Wenger’s (1991) analytical viewpoint on learning argues for “a relational interdependency of agent and world, activity, meaning, cognition, learning, and knowing” (p. 50). In other words, the learning process must be understood as a set of relationships between the individual—who herself is a cultural, historical, raced, classed, aged, gendered being—and the sociocultural context in which she is embedded, including the actors, the information, and the activities with which she engages. Lave and Wenger (1991) proposed communities of practice as a way to understand the situated nature of learning, which they describe as,

a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice. A community of practice is an intrinsic condition for the existence of knowledge, not least because it provides the interpretive support necessary for making sense of its heritage. Thus, participation in the cultural practice in which any knowledge exists is an epistemological principle of learning. The social structure of this practice, its power relations, and its conditions for legitimacy define possibilities for learning (i.e., for legitimate peripheral participation) (p. 98).

Lave and Wenger (1991) were clear that they were not suggesting a theory of teaching and learning. Instead, they were actually trying to disentangle the two—emphasizing that learning is in fact a social enterprise of its own. Accordingly, the concept communities of practice speaks to the social exchange and construction of knowledge among people. As Eckert (2006) explained, communities of practice are social groupings in which people develop “ways of doing [sic] things, views, values, power relations, ways of talking” (p. 1).
Lave and Wenger (1991) argued that it is necessary to understand the community of practice under (re)production, as well as other related communities of practice that might be present and overlapping with a particular community of practice. Practice, according to Wenger (1998) “is about meaning as an experience of everyday life” (p. 52). Wenger’s (1998) description places practice in the common, daily experiences of human beings as they interact with one another and try to make sense of their social worlds. In order to explicate this relationship between meaning making and communities of practice, Lave and Wenger (1991) use the example of the physics classroom. They explain that while students participate in physics within the classroom, they participate in a different way than the teacher, who is also a member of a professional practice of physicists. The students’ forms of participation differ from the teacher’s because they are still situated on the margins of the practice, whereas the teacher, as an oldtimer, embodies many of the “conditions for legitimacy” (p. 98).

Noting their shared participation in the community of practice of the physics classroom, Lave and Wenger (1991) observed the divergent communities of practice in which the teacher and students participate in separately, too, such as “the reproduction of high school itself” (p. 99). The students, for instance, have been participating in the community of practice of being students, gradually moving toward full participation of what it means to be a student, “good,” “bad,” or otherwise. Similarly, the physics teacher has been participating in communities of practice associated with teaching. The overlapping nature of these communities of practice is important to note as it highlights the complex nature of learning within any given setting—that we are all, at any point in time, members of multiple, overlapping communities of practice (See Brown & Duguid, 1991).
While certain communities of practice might be more explicitly displayed through behaviors and discourse, such as the physics classroom itself, the underlying communities of practice, such as the reproduction of high school, are equally important, but perhaps more elusive to the observer. Brown and Duguid (1991) argued that it is important to recognize and support these more elusive communities of practice within an organization because they can be innovative sites for learning and participation. Brown and Duguid (1991) were talking about the workplace environment as a space where these innovative communities of practice come into being. They argued that communities of practice take shape around the actual needs of an organization, which might have gone unnoticed by the governance of an organization. The actors themselves realize these communities of practice through participation. I use Brown and Duguid’s (1991) argument in this dissertation study to think about the communities of practice that might emerge as students participate in service-learning projects (i.e., the Design Team) and allow them to move beyond the traditional role of student.

An important dimension of learning, and therefore an essential characteristic of communities of practice is time—both an individual’s participation over time and the evolution of the practice over time. Eckert (2006) emphasized that “shared experience over time” (p. 1) is central to meaning making within communities of practice. In order to extend this notion of time, beyond that offered by communities of practice (e.g., Eckert, 2006; Lave & Wenger, 1991), I briefly turn to Lemke (2000), who offered a more explicit framing for time. He asserted:

A classroom community can be taken as a whole on its longest timescale of activity, typically a few months to a year. We can ask how it develops as an individual and as a typical instance of its kind. Subject to what constraints from which still larger-scale processes? Made possible by which characteristics of which shorter timescale
processes? We can look at its component processes and constitutive units as well, each on their own timescales. And here things begin to get rather complex because we can easily see that, for example, a social grouping may form that lasts longer than the classroom community. Is it a unit within the classroom community or a unit at a higher scale? (p. 278).

Lemke (2000) recognized here that social groupings of people are reliant upon shorter and longer timescales, which are both official and unofficial, or unregulated in nature. Such a concept of time is important to this study in that he is arguing social groups may form within the classroom that last longer than those associated with the traditional schooling structure. I use his understanding of social grouping and time to analyze the way the student group, the Design Team, existed both within Anne’s classroom on a shorter timescale, but also on a larger timescale as a community of practice.

Fundamentally, I aim to use time in this dissertation study as an “epistemological principle for learning” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 98). The notion of time as an epistemological principle for learning is especially apparent in Lave and Wenger’s (1991) concepts of “newcomer” and “oldtimer,” which they use to illustrate the variance in participation and experience of people within a community of practice. These concepts are best explored nested within Lave and Wenger’s (1991) theoretical concept, “legitimate peripheral participation” (p. 98). Legitimate peripheral participation offers a way to think about the conditions for learning in a community of practice, and the ways in which newcomers move from the periphery toward the position of oldtimer, or full participant.

*Legitimate* participation is understood vis-à-vis the community of practice and the relevancy of one’s participation to the social practice. In their study, Lave and Wenger (1991) used a number of examples to illustrate their point, one of which is that of the midwife in training who might not be directly assisting in the birth of the baby, but is still contributing
to the activity in a way that is legitimate to the practice. The *peripheral* nature of the participation speaks to one’s proximal position to full participation. Newcomers, for instance, are more peripheral to the practice, working toward “full participation” (p. 37), whereas oldtimers are viewed as full participants in the practice. The gradual movement from the periphery is predicated on the first concept of *legitimacy*; a newcomer must be participating in legitimate ways to move toward full participation (Brown & Duguid, 1991).

The third part of Lave and Wenger’s (1991) legitimate peripheral participation describes the movement of an individual as he or she engages in “the diversity of relations involved in varying forms of community membership” (p. 37). To this point, Brown and Duguid (1991) observed that practices are “constantly changing both as newcomers replace old timers and as the demands of practice force the community to revise its relationships to its environment” (p. 50). Thus, the forms of participation are not rigid, but fluid as newcomers join the practice and as the context of the practice is reevaluated.

The emergent nature of communities of practice is not explicitly stated above, but this is an important feature of communities of practice. Communities of practice are not imposed, predesigned, canonical groupings (Brown & Duguid, 1991). Instead, they are “often noncanonical and not recognized by the organization⁶. They are more fluid and interpenetrative than bounded, often crossing the restrictive boundaries of the organization to incorporate people from outside” (Brown & Duguid, 1991, p. 49). As Brown and Duguid (1991) emphasized, “learners do not receive or even construct abstract, ‘objective,’ individual knowledge; rather, they learn to function in a community…they acquire that particular community’s subjective viewpoint and learn to speak its language” (p. 48). Later, in Chapters 3 and 4, I explore the emergent nature of the Design Team to illuminate the

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⁶ In the case of this dissertation study, the school would serve as the organization, or on a smaller scale, the classroom.
important contributions COP makes in understanding the nature of learning in service-learning projects. Service-learning projects are “neither inherently stable nor inherently unstable” (Wenger, 1998, p. 97)—rather, the people participating give shape to them over time. As the project changes so do the forms of participation afforded by the project; roles are seen as organic to the practice itself.

In terms of the actual meaning making process within communities of practice, Wenger (1998) proposed that, “1) meaning is located in a process I will call the negotiation of meaning; 2) the negotiation of meaning involves the interaction of two constituent processes, which I will call participation and reification; and 3) participation and reification form a duality that is fundamental to the human experience of meaning and thus to the nature of practice” (p. 52). The two constituent processes of participation and reification are ways individuals negotiate meaning within the social world (Wenger, 1998). Participation “refers to a process of taking part and also to the relation with others that reflect this process” (p. 55). Therefore, participation refers both to the actions among and between people, as well as their connections to one another through the community of practice.

Reification is the process of “attribut[ing] to our meanings an independent existence” (p. 58) or “the process of giving form to our experience by producing objects that congeal this experience into ‘thingness’” (p. 58). Wenger (1998) complicated the notion of reification by arguing that sometimes in the process of reification, the status of “thingness” could lose its meaning and fail to represent that which it was originally intended to represent. A reification of a practice could also become disconnected from the practice itself, either because the practice never was, or it ceased to be. An example of a reification that surfaced during my time at Liberty High School was the introduction of a technology ban. Due to an increase in
cell phone theft, the school administrators banned the use of personal technology devices from school grounds (e.g. cell phones, iPods). Signs were posted around the school building insisting that students were not allowed to use personal technology in any form, which for a few weeks, materialized in practice: students, by and large, were not seen using cell phones or iPods in the hallways. A few weeks after this policy was instituted, though, the use of personal technology devices regularly occurred in the hallways and classrooms—rendering the signs, which still hung on the wall, empty reifications of a practice rejected by the student body.

Beyond participation and reification as dimensions of the meaning making process, Tusting (2005) pushed Wenger (1998) to more fully develop the significance of language in the process. She observed that, despite the centrality of negotiation of meaning to the communities of practice model, and the key role of language within process of participation and reification, Wenger does not draw out ideas about the relationship between language and meaning making more generally, beyond stating that meaning making cannot be reduced to language alone (pp. 39-40).

Eckert (2006) affirmed this claim observing, “the community of practice is a prime locus of this process of identity and linguistic construction” (p. 3) furthering the argument that language is central to the construction of knowledge, and therefore, integral to the existence of communities of practice. Tusting (2005) argued that more attention be paid not just to language, but other forms of semiosis.

Barton and Hamilton (2005) were also interested in other forms of semiosis in the meaning making process, arguing for the importance of literacy. In Barton and Hamilton’s (2005) study, they took excerpts from Wenger’s work from 1998, and analyzed these excerpts for textual dimensions of meaning making, emphasizing the role literacy played in
Wenger’s own study. According to Barton and Hamilton (2005), Wenger (1998) had not carefully attended to the significant role literacy played in the meaning making process.

Drawing on the work of Eckert (2006), Tusting (2005), and Barton and Hamilton (2005), I recognized the value of including a social constructionist orientation, which broadened the range of influence in the meaning making process (e.g. recognizing dialogue and other forms of semiosis as important in knowledge construction), and embraced the complicated and socially embedded nature of truth. The epistemological orientation of these scholars recognized truth as “an act of production within the limited horizon of a community’s texts and meanings” (Kamberelis & Dimitriades, 2005, p. 32). And so the community’s discourse, and other forms of semiosis are central to understanding their practice and ways of knowing the world.

In the following section, I continue to think about “other forms of semiosis” by turning to New Literacy Studies (NLS) scholars who have documented the uses and functions (Heath, 1980) of literacy across cultural contexts, and the value of understanding literacy events and practices as a means of social engagement and meaning making. As Barton and Hamilton (2005) argued, “most social interactions in contemporary society, including those covered by Wenger, are textbook mediated; this shapes, structures and constrains them” (p. 14). In turning to NLS, I hope to flesh out the points made by Tusting (2005) and Eckert (2006), too, around language, but more explicitly, Barton and Hamilton’s (2005) point regarding the role literacy plays in social interactions, and thus, in the process of learning.

**New Literacy Studies**

According to New Literacy Studies (NLS) scholars (e.g., Barton, 1991; Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Gee, 2000; Street, 1984/1995/2003), reading, writing and dialoging are
fundamentally connected to context, culture, language and history. In this way, NLS scholars were calling attention to the way literacy is lived as a social practice. Conceiving of literacy as practice “offers a powerful way of conceptualising the link between the activities of reading and writing and the social structures in which they are embedded and which they help shape” (Barton & Hamilton, 2000, p. 7). Unlike their more cognitive-oriented predecessors, NLS scholars have argued that individuals’ literacy practices are firmly grounded in social, cultural, and historical spaces in which they exist (Lewis & Fabos, 2005). These individuals (e.g., Barton, 1991; Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Gee, 2000; Street, 1984/1995/2003) have challenged prevailing notions of what it means to be literate, and the resulting binary, illiterate, and justly located reading and writing within “the context of social and cultural (and we can add historical, political and economic) practices of which they are but a part” (Gee, 2000, p. 180). NLS scholars were not discounting the cognitive processes that occur as one learns to read and/or write. Instead, drawing on the work of individuals like Scribner and Cole (1981), they were noting the equally important social dimensions of literacy that are informed by culture, tradition, values, and belief systems. Therefore, the work of these scholars has pushed beyond the cognitive-centric philosophies that have historically dominated understandings and approaches to literacy, and as a result, have challenged (L)iterac(y) as a singular, universal, developmental process void of sociocultural influences. Street (1995) termed this universal approach to literacy autonomous literacy. Thinking about literacy in this way precludes any discussion around the deeply social and historical nature of the production and consumption of text and perpetuates the myth that there is a single, easy route toward obtaining mass (L)iterac(y) (Graff, 1993).
The autonomous view of literacy has very clearly been adopted in particular domains of society, one salient example being standardized testing. Such an approach embodies the very elements Street (1994) describes in the autonomous view: neutral, discrete skills that all students should be able to employ, ignoring the literacy practices of the classroom or those embraced by youth outside schools, and even more egregiously, rendering these other practices deficient and less-than. An assumption embedded within the autonomous model is that as one acquires these reading, writing, and language skills, the individual will have automatic access to a more profitable, successful existence, such as “greater opportunity for jobs, social mobility, fuller lives” (Street, 1995, p. 28). Building on the previous example of standardized testing, obtaining a high score on the SAT might earn a student positive recognition as an intelligent person and entry into a prestigious college. The problematic nature of this assumption that is left unveiled is that the test itself was socially constructed and might be more reflective of one student’s literacy practices over another’s. Such a problematic view of literacy also appears to be taken up by service-learning research in that social uses of literacy within the projects have largely gone unexplored. There has been an emphasis on best practices (Butin, 2003), particularly in terms of reflection, but much less attention has been paid to the deeply social nature of literacy within these projects.

In response to the autonomous view of literacy, Street (1995) argued for an ideological model, one that emphasized “specific social practices of reading and writing” (p. 29). He envisioned a “model [that] stresses the significance of the socialization process in the construction of the meaning of literacy for participants, and is therefore concerned with the general social institutions through which this process takes place and not just the specific ‘educational’ ones” (p. 29). Moreover, a social view of literacy recognizes the value of
literacy “realised in social relationships” and “the ways in which whole communities use literacy” (Barton & Hamilton, 2000, p. 13). Thus, literacy is conceived of as a social practice rather than a set of neutral, discrete skills.

Foundational to a social view of literacy practice is literacy event, or as Street (1994) explained, “any event in which reading and/or writing has a role” (p. 116). Within literacy research, the concept of literacy event helps to guide the lens of the researcher in that it offers something tangible to observe, such as an individual using or engaging with written text. Barton and Hamilton (2005) assert, “the explicit analysis of literacy events provides a methodology for working with empirical data within a theoretical framework and deriving new insights about social interaction” (p. 18). Heath (1982), who originally coined the concept of literacy event, noted “participants follow socially established rules for verbalizing what they know from and about the written material” (p. 50). In fact, “each community has rules for socially interacting and sharing knowledge in literacy events” (p. 50). In the context of the high school classroom, a common literacy event is the use of worksheets. There are particular rules in this space that create the conditions for practice: in one classroom, engaging in a worksheet activity might be a silent exercise, whereas in another, the worksheet might be a platform for discussion, which encourages group work at tables and vocal exchanges with the teacher.

Empirical studies documenting the social uses of literacy (e.g., Heath, 1982; Barton, 1991; Barton & Hamilton, 1998) have supported the claims articulated by NLS scholars. Heath’s (1983) study made a significant contribution toward this end. She explored the literacy practices of three communities in the Piedmont Carolinas—a Black, low-income community, a white, low-income community, and a middle to upper-class, heterogeneous
community. Her study contributed significant findings in the way she documented the ties between literacy (e.g., reading, writing, inventive spelling), linguistic practices (e.g., storytelling strategies), beliefs (e.g., children can share narratives unprompted by adults), and discourses (e.g., parents speaking directly to children in the home).

In a later study, Barton (1991) built upon Heath’s work by thinking about literacy in terms of its location. He used the term “domain” to refer to spaces such as home, work and school, recognizing that literacies within these spaces differ—that within each of these contexts a different type of literacy is required and in turn, helps to define whether or not an individual is competent within that space. Many of these literacies are supported through institutional power and are reinforced by social rules within the context. Barton (1991) also acknowledged the importance of networks through which these literacy forms are negotiated and practiced, arguing that individuals within the same network will utilize similar literacy practices.

Barton and Hamilton (1998) also thought about the social, networked dimensions of literacy practices in the community of Springside. In this study, they sought to “uncover patterns and regularities in the organisation of one aspect of cultural life” (p. 57). They argued that “vernacular knowledge,” or areas of expertise within familial and communal networks contribute to the way that literacy practices are understood among groups of people and that these informal practices are rooted in the everyday context of the learner. Barton and Hamilton (1998) distinguished this type of literacy from others by noting that it is not regulated by social institutions—which would be considered “dominant literacies”—but instead learned through use; closely tied to the activity in which it is learned. Since these
literacies are learned locally, “vernacular practices are more likely to be voluntary and self-regulated, rather than being imposed externally” (p. 253).

The ideological view of literacy points to the enculturation of young people to use particular literacy practices within home and community—Heath’s (1983) study being a strong example of this—and the acculturation of young people to take up different literacy practices in other domains (Barton & Hamilton, 2000), such as schools. Barton and Hamilton (2000) used the concept of *domain* to describe the spatial and social distinctions where literacy practices occur. They explained, “looking at different literacy events it is clear that literacy is not the same in all contexts; rather, there are different *literacies*” (p. 10). Consequently the notion of a single, neutral literacy “with a big ‘L’ and a single ‘y’” (Street, 1995, p. 2) is problematized, and is replaced by literacies (plural) existing within sociocultural contexts. Barton and Hamilton (2000) add that the boundaries between the spaces where particular literacy practices take place are “not clear-cut” and in fact, they are “perme[able]” and “overlap[ing]” (p. 11). In other words, while literacy practices are constructed in relation to context, people and culture, they are not confined to those spaces.

More recently, scholars (e.g., Duncan-Andrade, 2006; Flower, 2008; Kinloch, 2010; Winn, 2011) have captured literacy practices as they have taken shape with youth who are using literacy as a means of self-reflection, social critique, and community transformation, a sorely missing element from service-learning research in high school settings. A number of these kinds of engagements with youth can be found in Kinloch’s (2011) and Ginwright, Noguera, and Cammarota’s (2006) edited texts, which explored young people reading and writing around issues of race, culture, language, activism, and community change. In Ginwright et al.’s text, (2006) for example, Jocson (2006), explored how two young men of
color, Damon and Jaime, used poetry as “a vehicle for expressing and exposing their lived realities, which are often hidden from public view” (p. 144) as they participated in Poetry for the People (P4P), a university-high school collaboration. Specifically, the two young men explored biraciality, identity, community change, and power—among other meaningful issues—through their writing while deepening their critical reflections on the world and strengthening their writing skills. The students had the opportunity to share their poetry in public venues and to have their writing published; for Damon in books of poetry and for Jaime, in an anthology. In this study, Jocson (2006) captured the potential of a writing program, like P4P, to create a generative space for youth to interrogate “complex social, cultural, and political issues” (p. 144) operating within their communities.

Duncan-Andrade (2006) did similar work with twenty-six, Black and Latino eleventh graders from Los Angeles California to use critical media literacy as a means of interrogating issues within their schools and communities. His analysis focused on one student group who explored three interrelated issues: 1. inequitable conditions in South Central LA; 2. the public’s desire for change; and 3. the roles of elected officials and teachers in fostering that change. Through their research, the students contributed to conversations around social justice in their community (e.g., inequitable living conditions within their community) and offered new understandings to “teacher education programs and educational research conferences” (p. 166). Both Jocson (2006) and Duncan-Andrade (2006) used literacy as a form of engagement with young people to document and interrogate issues of (in)equality and (in)justice in their communities.

The critically-oriented, justice-focused nature of literacy was at the heart of Winn’s (2011) study of Girl Time, a program committed to working with incarcerated young women.
In her study, she explored the ways the program’s “teaching artists” (p. 125) helped “adjudicated teen girls use playwriting and performance to develop critical literacies” (p. 125). Using ethnographic methods, Winn (2011) interviewed the young women and collected fieldnotes before, during and after the performative-based workshops. The way Winn (2011) wrote about the young women’s engagement with writing and performance captured the transformative potential of the young women assuming the identities of fictional characters, using critical literacy to reimagine the story. Winn (2011) noted the potential of these kinds of activities in classrooms to offer students “a window to view alternatives as real or possible” (p. 140).

In New York’s Harlem community, Kinloch (2010) documented the potential of pedagogical approaches that privilege youth participation in questions of (in)equity and community change. Kinloch (2010) worked with a group of high school students, focusing primarily on Phillip and Khaleeq, to document, analyze, and trouble the gentrification of Harlem through observation, reading, journaling, mapping, photography, creative prose, and video. Reading, writing, and digital documentation became a means for the students to capture their own lived realities as well as those of fellow community members in Harlem and to illuminate the injustice that surrounded supposed “revitalization.” As Kinloch (2010) reflected, “the skills [the students] displayed—critical literacy, reciprocal learning, multimodal literacy, and establishing specific connections—connect to present and long-term educational goals that foster high academic achievement of students as they prepare for participation in a larger world” (p. 102). In an earlier publication, Kinloch (2009) proposed a way of thinking about these kinds of engagements as Democratic Engagements. Kinloch (2009) argued,
Democratic Engagements are based in conversations, mutual exchanges, and reciprocal learning that people have with one another in multiple spaces of interaction. In this way, students and teachers can collectively pose a problem to investigate, develop a series of questions that guide the investigation, and participate in critical exchanges (i.e., conversations, in-and-out-of-school activities, shared print and oral responses) about differences (i.e., perspectives) to engage education as a social process (Dewey, 1916/1997).

Finally, in Columbus, Ohio, Adejumo (2010) captured another example of engaged pedagogy that centered literacy engagements, but unlike the previous scholars, he identified the pedagogical approach as “service learning and critical pedagogy” (p. 23). In his study, he explored *Children of the Future*, a project in Poindexter Village in Columbus, which focused on the cultural realities and backgrounds of youth participants. The program brought youth voices to the table in order to engage in conversations and action around community needs such as “juvenile delinquency, teen pregnancy, school dropout, vandalism, low self-esteem, and indifference to community welfare” (p. 26). The literacy lives of these young people became immersed in their cultural pasts and presents, and their location within community became essential to their educational process. Adejumo (2010) noted that the project served to disrupt the standard curriculum by including voices and cultures—past and present—that were not typically represented in the texts available to students.

The studies explored above document collaborations among young people, university researchers, and community members and capture the importance of engaging young people in their educational and literacy lives. Service-learning models have been designed to do similar work, particularly those that have taken shape more recently with a critical orientation (e.g. Mitchell, 2008). What these studies afford, which service-learning research by and large has not emphasized, is a focus on the social and collaborative use of literacies in situated spaces. While academic achievement is broadly captured within the service-learning
literature (Billig, 2002), current studies document student engagement in service-learning has not specifically sought to understand the social role of literacy beyond the reflection stage of service-learning (see Dymond, Renzaglia & Chun, 2008). Conversely, literacy scholars have documented these engagements at length. Literacy, in each of the studies mentioned above, was paramount in the ways students engaged in problem posing and the ways they inserted their own voices into the discussion around issues of (in)justice and (in)equality. These studies motivate a similar focus within service-learning projects that privilege the use of reading and writing in terms of student reflection and even more clearly, in projects that center advocacy and research.

These more nuanced views of literacy, which challenge a singular, universal view of literacy, account for literacy as a social practice embedded within cultures, communities, and institutions, informed by particular values, beliefs and ideologies. Such an approach to literacy has been further explored by scholars interested in multiliteracies (e.g., Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; Lewis & Fabos, 2005; The New London Group, 1996). Multiliteracies, which is a conceptual approach to literacy pedagogy that considers multimodalities, technology, and the new/knowledge economy, among other social practices and structures (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; Lewis & Fabos, 2005; The New London Group, 1996), has turned part of the literacy research gaze to challenging traditional notions of literacy by attending to the developing modes which people are using to generate meaning. The multiliteracies approach “suggests a pedagogy for active citizenship, centered on learners as agents in their own knowledge processes, capable of contributing their own as well as negotiating the differences between one community and the next” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p. 173). In this way, the student in the classroom is agentive, not complacent, in learning opportunities, and
draws on multiple modes to make meaning. Delbridge (2008) pointed out that this is a natural approach in working with adolescents who “already possess knowledge and skills” and “want to participate in literacy practices that are suited to their lives” (p. 160).

While the evolution of NLS scholarship in its entirety is not fully documented in this review, the research cited above contributes to a more complicated understanding of literacy engagements, beyond a universal, singular approach to an approach that accounts for uses of literacy within situated contexts. By tying literacy to language, culture, and history, and embedding its use within space and time, NLS scholars have broadened understandings about where and how literacy practices take shape.

**An Ethnographic Case Study of Overlapping Communities of Practice**

Privileging communities of practice and New Literacy Studies as theoretical framings allowed me to attend to the social nature of literacy and learning in the service-learning project at Liberty High School, and more specifically, to pay attention to the social practices that took shape among members of the Design Team within and beyond Anne’s classroom. In addition, these theoretical frames emphasize the importance of the voices and perspectives of research participants in generating knowledge and truth claims (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005, p. 32). Bringing the theoretical frames of communities of practice and New Literacy Studies to bear on service-learning research might begin to address the calls issued by service-learning scholars and researchers (e.g., Billig, 2000; Butin, 2003/2010) for a more complex understanding of learning in service-learning projects.

The review of service-learning literature above revealed gaps that invite additional research: narrowly conceived roles for K-12 youth participating in service-learning in their own communities; a clear articulation of a pedagogical approach that calls for a more robust
theory of learning; and an understanding of the role literacy plays in mediating these social engagements. As Barton and Hamilton (2005) argued, “communities of practice is essential in that it provides a vocabulary for analysing socially situated learning. Literacy studies is essential because it enables a much closer and differentiated analysis of the power and affordances of different kinds of textual artefacts in mediating social interaction” (p. 32). Thinking about the gaps in service-learning literature, communities of practice and New Literacy Studies offer promising possibilities for new understandings in the field.

The theoretical frames outlined in this chapter significantly influenced my selection of an ethnographic case study design, which I explore in the next chapter; these frames enabled me to explore a particular case of learning, literacy, and participation, over time, as a participant observer. In addition, these framings informed my data analysis, which was an iterative process of inductive and deductive analysis whereupon I drew on COP and NLS to make sense of themes and categories emerging from the data. In the following chapter, I thread these theoretical lenses into my discussion of the methodological approach and data analysis I employed to investigate and understand learning, literacy and participation within the service-learning projects at Liberty High School.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

In Chapter 2 of this dissertation study, I explored the absence of a clear theory of learning operating within service-learning research, specifically a theory that recognizes learning and literacy as social practices. I drew extensively on the work of Butin (2003/2010) who has documented narrow approaches (i.e., technical, cultural and political) to understanding learning in service-learning projects and who has argued that learning is more dynamic than these approaches suggest. I also turned to Billig (2000) who has documented the prevalence of evaluative studies in documenting service-learning learning outcomes, which overlook and undervalue the important social engagements among students, teachers, and community partners within service-learning projects. In light of these holes in the literature, I proposed communities of practice and New Literacy Studies in Chapter 2 as theoretical frames to think about the social nature of learning and literacy in service-learning and to explore how learning happens among students who are participating in these projects. Those theories, in turn, informed the methodological approach of my dissertation study.

In this chapter, I discuss the methodological approach I employed in this dissertation study, which was ethnographic case study design. Approaching this investigation of learning, literacy and participation in a service-learning project in this way enabled me to privilege a social orientation, emphasized by the theoretical frames in Chapter 2, and to document the
particularities of a telling case of learning and literacy in a service-learning project.

Employing such an approach also allowed me to explore the following three research questions in a situated context, as a participant observer:

1. What happens when students and their teacher participate in a critical service-learning project?
2. What learning opportunities and forms of participation emerge in a critical service-learning project and how are they taken up by the students?
3. What is the role of literacy in these learning opportunities and forms of participation?

In this chapter, I begin by briefly sharing the pilot study that led to this larger dissertation study as well as the context in which both the pilot and the dissertation study took place. I then explain prominent features of the ethnographic case study design in the context of this dissertation study, and the decisions that were made to define the boundaries of this particular case of literacy and learning. From there, I attend to the selection process that led to my focus on four high school students, Angela, Ben, Jordan and Sarah, and then, toward the end of this chapter, I move into describing the data corpus and data analysis procedures. I conclude by offering a brief discussion of verifications and limitations.

**The Context**

**Working with Anne**

My friendship and research partnership with Anne, a ninth grade English teacher at Liberty High School, began in the Spring of 2011 when she enrolled in a course at the university where I was working as a graduate research assistant. The course, which was part of a larger grant initiative called *Bringing Learning to Life*, was designed for in-service teachers and other educators from this large Midwestern urban district who were interested in
learning about, and eventually implementing, service-learning with their students. Following Anne’s participation in the class, we continued to work with one another; I was assigned to her classroom as a graduate research assistant to collect data for a larger research project and to support her as she deepened connections between her classroom and the local community.

In addition to the data collection for the larger research project, I spent the final months of Spring 2011 and the first few months of the Fall 2011 working with Anne and her students on a pilot study where I explored how Anne was discursively taking up service-learning in her classroom. Using Scollon’s (2001) mediated discourse analysis, I documented and analyzed the shifts Anne made in her discursive practices when talking about herself, her students, and the service-learning project, which evidenced important lexical and pronoun shifts reflective of the pedagogy. Following the conclusion of the pilot study in the Fall of 2011, I asked Anne if I could remain in her classroom the following year for my dissertation study. She agreed, inviting me into her ninth grade English classroom and thus, inviting me to observe her teaching practices, her students, and the evolution of their critical service-learning projects.

The Neighborhood

Liberty High School, where Anne teaches, is located on the north side of a mid-size Midwestern city and is one of two high schools that students coming out of Alexandria Middle School can attend. The other school (with which there is a notable rivalry), Harden High School, is approximately 2.2 miles away. The area surrounding Liberty is mostly residential consisting of standard one and two-story homes, and two large apartment complexes. In my discussions with the community partners who reside in the neighborhood and through my own observations, I learned that the demographic composition of the
neighborhood has been in flux for the last decade. Both of the community partners who partnered with Anne and her students live and work in the neighborhood and stated the 2000s marked a departure from the “old” Hadley Park—which was composed of predominately white, middle class, English-speaking families—to the “new” Hadley Park, which was more reflective of the socioeconomic, linguistic, and racial diversity of Liberty High School (see Vuk and Hannah’s interviews).

The signage in the area around the school fosters a sense of safety with the school zone and speed limit signs prominently displayed and parking and bicycle lanes distinctly marked—solid white paint, separating stationary vehicles and vulnerable bike riders from passing cars. The church, with which the students and Anne partnered, is located directly across the street from the high school and is one of the only visible institutional structures in the immediate area. It is a one-story, brick building with white trim and a large parking lot in the back. Directly next to the church’s parking lot, situated behind the chapel, is the community garden, which is now a physical reification of the four-year partnership between Liberty High School and the Church of the Good Shepherd. The garden is made up of raised and flat beds, and a paver-patio, all of which were co-constructed by youth, teachers, and community members over the last several years. The sign that stands at the front of the property, which features the garden’s name, was replaced in 2012 from its original elementary-school student, hand-painted sign, to one created by a church member with greater precision in the lettering and the layout (See Images 2 & 5, p. 91). Nearby to the school and the church is a public park and swimming pool physically accessible to all community members.
The commercial district of the Hadley Park community is less than half a mile away from the school. Populated with chain restaurants such as Chipotle, Red Lobster, Wendy’s, McDonalds and Friendly’s, office supply stores (e.g. Staples), and grocery stores (e.g. Kroger) the area has continued to thrive despite the current recession. This main road is also reflective of the diversity of the north-side neighborhood, as evidenced by the restaurants and supermarkets that have rented spaces within the strip malls: China-Dynasty, Taqueria Mi Bandera, Mi Bandera Supermarket, African Market and Udipi Café. The Democratic Party also had a presence within the strip mall, promoting that year’s presidential candidate on their awning. The commercial district of the area fared better than others in the economic downturn of the early 2000s, but it did not go untouched. Hannah, one of the community partners working with Anne and her students, shared that church elders, who have been a part of the neighborhood for decades, blamed the construction of two major malls for the demise of their local businesses. “So all the businesses went she:::u:::” Hannah made the noise a vacuum sucking up dirt (Line number 308-309) when the malls were built within a short drive north and south of the neighborhood. The seven cash advance businesses within a two-mile radius of the high school in comparison to the four major banks also story the socioeconomic diversity of the residents living in the surrounding area.

**Liberty High School**

Liberty, one of twenty-four high schools in this large, Midwestern, urban school district, has an average daily student enrollment of 699 students (October headcount, 2012). The majority of the student body, approximately 79 percent, identified as Black, 11 percent as white, 7 percent as Hispanic, and 2 percent identified as multi-racial. Collectively, the Asian and Native American students made up less than 1 percent of the student body. In
terms of exceptional children, approximately 5 percent of the student body was Limited English Proficient\(^7\), 16.9 percent of the students were identified as gifted, and 21.7 percent were identified as having a disability of some kind including single or multiple physical impairment(s), learning disability, or cognitive delay. As one of two occupational handicap units in the district, Liberty High School served a large number of students with physical impairments, which made up 7.3 percent of its student body. During the year of this dissertation study, 75.1 percent of the students were categorized as economically disadvantaged. The four-year graduation rate that year was slightly lower than the state average of 81.3 percent, sitting at 76.4 percent (Department of Education)\(^8\).

The façade of Liberty High School is like that of many public high schools. It is a two-story, brick building with the name of the school, in big block letters, resting above the main entrance. A larger parking lot remains partially filled throughout the day with cars of the teachers, administrators, and visitors on any given day as the majority of the students either walks or rides the bus to school. In the back of the school there is a track and football field, as well as another small parking lot. The school came into existence in 1974, making it one of the district’s “younger buildings.” Anne’s classroom was on the first floor, down at the end of the second long hallway that sat perpendicular to the school’s entrance.

**An Ethnographic Case Study of an Overlap in Practice**

Liberty High School was located in a district that had been identified as a priority school by the National Education Association. As a result, they were targeted for the service-learning grant on which I served as a graduate research assistant. As I noted above, I had been working with Anne for a year and a half at the start of this dissertation study and had

\(^7\) This is the label used by the state to describe English Language Learners (ELL).

\(^8\) The most current graduation rate data available at the time of the study, which lags one year behind the other data.
conducted an initial pilot study that explored the way Anne was taking up service-learning pedagogy with her ninth grade English students. During that process, I had become interested in the learning opportunities that were afforded as her pedagogy had begun to shift. In light of my developing interests, I sought to understand, more deeply, the learning opportunities that were emerging from within the service-learning projects and how literacy played a role in those learning opportunities. I entered Anne’s classroom in the Fall of 2012 with a wide lens, trying to narrow in on the boundaries of the case study that would allow me to explore these theoretical and practical concerns in service-learning.

**The Process of Casing**

> And so he said, “Do this: go get to know one thing as well as you can. It should be something small…” (Baylor & Parnall, 1978, as cited in Dyson & Genishi, 2005)

From the moment I entered Anne’s classroom, I had begun the process of casing (Dyson & Genishi, 2005; Ragin, 1992). Given that “cases often must be found” rather than “specified beforehand” (Ragin, 1992, p. 220), I began by observing all of Anne’s classes. Specifically, I took on the role of a participant observer, which is “the key means of collecting data as an ethnographer” (Heath & Street, 2008, p. 31). In total, I observed four ninth grade English classes and one eleventh grade English class—each of which had a service-learning component. During each class period, I walked around the room assisting students with their work, contributed to class discussion and book discussion groups, and on
occasion, I engaged in more menial tasks such as making copies and relaying information between Anne and the office.

By September, I knew most of the students by name, and they too were calling me by mine (“Ms. Emily”). I recognized this point as an important one as an outsider in this community. While I certainly was not an insider, it was clear that in the exchange of names and in the conversations about assignments and students’ lives, we had developed familiarity and rapport with one another. I knew that establishing this kind of relationship was essential before I could ask the students to participate in my research. Working with high school students in the past, I had discovered that they found the IRB consent form to be off-putting, the institutional jargon to be distancing and for some students, threatening. I remember one student asking me if I intended to put him in concentration camp like in Nazi Germany. Startled by the student’s thought and taken aback by this comparison, I remained diligent in building relationships with students first—and then approaching the research and IRB forms second. Based on this, I waited until the fourth week of classes to explain my research fully to the students, and to hand out to each student in Anne’s ninth grade classes permission and assent forms.

My initial distribution of assent and permission forms generated a large convenient sample in the third and fourth period ninth grade English classes from which I knew I would need to identify a more manageable group of participants. It was at that time that I lessened my visits to Anne’s third and fourth period classes, twice a week, in a way that was reflective of the recurrent research mode (Jeffrey & Troman, 2004). Such a mode enables a researcher to pursue a documentary approach where sampling occurs over the course of a “whole cycle such as a school year” (p. 542). This allows a researcher to attend to the developing story,
and/or to account for change in “an institution, group or set of individuals” (p. 543). In this mode, “researchers sample a regular, predetermined basis irrespective of specific events” (p. 542), which is fitting for a study like this one where I sought to understand literacy and learning over time. Based on this initial convenient sample of students from the third and fourth period class, I began collecting data to include participant observations, fieldnotes, collection of artifacts and systematic writing of theoretical memos. Still engaged in the casing process, though, I continued to cast my net wide and tried to make sense of the case that might be materializing from within this social setting.

The Boundaries of the Case Starting to Take Shape

Early in the school year, Anne posed a writing prompt to each of her ninth grade classes, “Would you like to be a part of the Design Team? If so, explain why.” The Design Team, as I discussed in Chapter 1, was a student group Anne had initiated during the first year of the service-learning project to help her with the logistics of the projects, but it had evolved into a leadership group that assisted her with guiding the project in her ninth grade classroom, with presenting to community and district stakeholders interested in the service-learning projects, and with fundraising efforts for the project. In Anne’s fourth period class, two students who had already agreed to be a part of this dissertation study, responded to the prompt and subsequently decided to join the Team (See Table 1): Angela, an African American female, and Ben, a white male.

During the school’s winter break, I sat down to organize my fieldnotes, informal interviews, and artifacts and revisit the boundaries of this ethnographic case study. As I mulled over the data, I noted the Design Team as a recurring theme in my notes and initial memos. To borrow the words of Dyson and Genishi (2005), the Design Team was becoming
“an object of study—the foreground—against a particular background” (p. 43). I had worked with older Design Team students the year and a half prior to this dissertation study as a graduate research assistant, and had continued to follow their involvement in Anne’s class. I had noted that the members of the Design Team had stood out from other students in terms of how they were participating in the project, the ways they were using literacy within the project, and their cross-grade affiliations, which disrupted traditional grade-band-based groupings of students in service-learning projects. Their forms of engagement offered a unique, telling case of the possibilities afforded within a community of practice generated from within a service-learning project. Thus, it was against the backdrop of a longer timescale of the service-learning project (i.e., 2010-present) that I saw “the boundaries of the case” (Dyson & Genishi, 2005, p. 43) taking shape and the Design Team students coming to the fore.

Beginning in January 2013, I started the second phase of the study where I focused specifically on Design Team students. This part of the study lasted until the conclusion of data collection in May 2013. In total, the Design Team had ten active members, which was too large of a group to study deeply within this one ethnographic case study. I devised a plan with my advisors to make this group more manageable and drew upon “decisive theoretical properties” (Ragin, 1992, p. 221) from Chapter 2 of this dissertation to delimit the boundaries of the case. Borrowing from Lave and Wenger’s (1991) concepts of “oldtimers” and “newcomers,” and more broadly, their “community of practice,” I moved theoretically and methodologically in the direction that would allow me to explore students’ participation in the community of practice of the Design Team over time. To that end, I engaged in “purposeful selection” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 89) of Design Team members relative to the
categories of newcomer and oldtimer, as well as their forms and degree of participation.

Maxwell (2005) argued that purposeful selection can be beneficial in “achieving representativeness or typicality of the settings, individuals, or activities selected,” “capturing the heterogeneity in the population,” “examining cases that are critical for the theories that [I] began the study with, or that [I] have subsequently developed,” and finally, “establishing particular comparisons to illuminate the reasons for differences between settings or individuals” (p. 89-90). Table 1, on the next page, provides a visual for the systematic way that focal students were selected for this dissertation study. Pseudonyms were given to each of the active members of the Design Team. The leftmost column of the table lists the names of all Design Team members, and the first row of the table details the criteria used to determine focal students. These criteria reflect a combination of etic and emic perspectives. From an etic perspective, I developed a list of criteria based on participant observations and fieldnotes I had collected over the course of the academic school year. These criteria are designated with an asterisk (*). The Design Team members constructed the emic-oriented criteria during group and one-on-one interviews.

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9 “Active” here denotes the ten students who actually participated in Design Team meetings and events, while the actual list of members included around sixteen students. The other students who were listed on the Design Team roster would occasionally attend meetings, or contribute to special projects.
Table 1.  
*Design Team Membership*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name and grade year</th>
<th>Curricular component in 9th grade: Garden (G), Disability Awareness Campaign (DAC)*</th>
<th>Attends DT meetings</th>
<th>“Hangs out” outside of DT</th>
<th>Participated in grant writing*</th>
<th>Participated in Global Youth Service Day</th>
<th>Conferences attended*</th>
<th>Involved outside of assigned projects*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angela, 9</td>
<td>G and DAC</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Webinar, Spring Roundtable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benjamin, 9</td>
<td>G and DAC</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fall Conference</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan, 10</td>
<td>G and DAC</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fall Conference, Nashville, Denver, Spring Roundtable</td>
<td></td>
<td>Continued to volunteer at Independence Village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruby, 10</td>
<td>G and DAC</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fall Conference, Denver</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Todd, 10</td>
<td>G and DAC</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fall Conference, Denver</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah, 12</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Fall Conference, Denver, Spring Roundtable</td>
<td>Initiated Rotary Scholarship. Maintained DT space in Anne's classroom.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brendan, 12</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fall Conference, Nashville</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanya, 12</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fall Conference, Webinar, Nashville</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brooke, 12</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Fall Conference, Nashville</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on these criteria and my research questions, I narrowed my focus to a “purposeful selection” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 89) of two ninth grade students, Angela and Benjamin, one sophomore, Jordan, and one senior, Sarah. The selection of these students enabled me to think about literacy and learning across the grade years in these critical service-learning projects, and it enabled me to think about the dynamics of the Design Team as a community.
of practice. Specifically, my rationale for including two ninth grade students was so that I could have a comparative case of two diverse students whose learning opportunities and literacy engagements still had a formalized curricular component. The ninth graders were also “newcomers” within the Design Team, which meant their learning and participation took on different forms than those of the “oldtimers.” I considered Jordan and Sarah as oldtimers within this dissertation study due to their forms of participation as well as their years of involvement, two and four years respectively. Sarah, who in many ways seemed to be the leader of the Design Team, maintained a small office space in Anne’s classroom where she kept Design Team attendance sheets and meeting notes. Jordan, who came to all Design Team meetings, had maintained a significant time commitment to Independence Village, the assisted living facility with whom the students and Anne had partnered the year prior. Since Sarah and Jordan were no longer involved in Anne’s ninth grade English classroom, their learning opportunities and forms of participation differed from those of Angela and Benjamin who were still participating in the formal curricular dimension of the service-learning project. For Jordan and Sarah, their learning opportunities and forms of participation were often generated from within the community of practice of the Team.

Once I had selected these four students, I continued observations in Anne’s classroom to observe and work with Angela and Ben, but also made sure to attend Design Team meetings when I was able (six in total), which occurred irregularly—either in Anne’s classroom or the hallway—and ranged from ten minutes to a half hour. Like in the classroom, I served as a participant observer during Design Team meetings, jotted down fieldnotes and collected artifacts. The only time I tried to use video-recording in a Design
Team meeting, the students became very distracted and wanted to make short videos with the equipment. The camera proved to be too distracting for those meetings.

In addition to classroom observations and Design Team meetings, I attended two conferences and three community meetings during which Design Team students were invited to present. I employed similar methods during the conference presentations to those of Design Team meetings, but due to the formality of the environment, I was able to use video-recording without disrupting the flow of the students’ presentations. The Design Team also presented at another national conference, which I was unable to attend, but was able to acquire a video-recording of the presentation from one of the study participants. I have included it in the corpus of data. Beyond these formal observations, Jordan and Sarah regularly visited Anne’s classroom throughout the school year, which gave us an opportunity to talk formally and informally. I would jot down fieldnotes about our conversations to incorporate into the data corpus.

**Positioning of Self**

As Heath and Street (2008) noted, employing ethnographic methods “forces us to think consciously about ways to enter into the life of the individual, group or institutional life of the “other” (Heath & Street, 2008, p. 31). It was for this reason that I was intentional about the way I presented myself from the moment I entered Anne’s ninth grade English class. I was intrigued by the work of Pascoe (2007) who pulled from Mandell (1988) to negotiate a “least-adult” identity in order to avoid being seen as an authority figure or teacher. In addition, like Finders (1997) “I wanted students to view me as different from other adults who held authority in the school” (p. 2). As Pascoe (2007) and Finders (1997) indicated, I too considered how I was being perceived by students, and the consequences these perceptions
would have on the kinds of conversations I could have with students, and the kinds of relationships we could foster. Having consciously made the decision to assume a “least-adult” identity, I sought Anne’s approval at the beginning of the year to “dress-down” by wearing jeans, t-shirts and sweatshirts, and tennis shoes (Finders, 1997), and to have the students call me “Ms. Emily” instead of “Ms. Nemeth.” I saw the “Ms.” as a way for me to respect the school culture, but using my first name as a way to further distance myself from the role of teacher and authority figure. The students were curious about my age from the moment I stepped foot in the classroom. “How old are you?” “Give us a range.” “Are you in college?” Students also offered guesses, spanning from, “21!” to “47!” When they asked me how old I was, I responded with, “How old do you think I am?” and “Keep guessing…” to avoid the assumptions that come with age. The students quickly gave up interest in this question after my first week in the classroom, or more likely, realized I was not going to provide them with the answer and had sought out other means of figuring out the answer (e.g., asking, “when did you graduate from high school?”).

Whereas my age was a negotiable part of my identity that I sought to minimize or “wear” differently, I could not manipulate or negotiate two important parts of my identity, which undoubtedly contributed to the dissertation study explicitly and implicitly: my whiteness and my female-ness. Regardless of what I wore to disguise my age at the high school, I had to own my whiteness, a part of my identity that was clearly visible to me and to others, particularly in a predominately Black high school. Being a white woman has been a significant part of my lived experiences, giving me particular privileges in a society that has historically marginalized people of color and left a number of policies unexamined of
racially-oriented threads (e.g. redistricting, open enrollment, immigration laws). My whiteness and the privileges afforded by it have certainly operated in my favor outside this study, but I also saw them at work while conducting the study. For example, I was neither questioned when I walked through the hallways of the school about why I was there or who I was there to see, nor stopped by an administrator if I forgot to sign in at the front office. There were other privileges I had been given, which I could detail in the way McIntosh (1990) did, but even if I attempted an exhaustive list, there would be additional privileges that operate(d) at a subtle, systemic level that remain elusive—yet to be recognized, yet to be understood—but meanwhile still operating in my favor. I recognize these privileges because I see them at work, but also because I see the consequences of privilege operating to oppress, marginalize, and dominate people—including the spaces where this dissertation study was being conducted.

In addition to recognizing my privileges as a white woman, it was important for me to remember that I have been raised in a racist society surrounded by oppressive narratives about Black youth, particularly young Black men. Fecho (2003) writes, “Delpit helped me to see the racist in me, the prejudice in all of us” and much like Fecho, I, too, “am a product of a racist society, but am working to lessen its grip on me” (p. 53). While I am not always aware of how racism influences my thoughts and actions, I am aware that these narratives are ever-present and that I have not been impervious to these ideologies. Therefore, I must be diligent in recognizing how these ideologies might shape my lens as a researcher, if and how they influence my interactions with students, and again, with regard to my research, how I take up the questions that guide my work as I remain ever-mindful of the power dynamics that

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In fact, I became hyper-aware of my privilege as a white woman during the year of my study because it was the same year that race was being simultaneously proposed and resisted as a national topic of conversation through the Supreme Court case on the United States Voting Rights Act and the Trayvon Martin case in central Florida.
materialize when working across and within differences. On this latter point, I turned to Smith (1999) who asked, “Whose research is it? Who owns it? Whose interests does it serve? Who will benefit from it? Who has designed questions and framed its scope? Who will carry it out? Who will write it up?” (p. 10).

My position within the school was strongly connected to the focus of my ethnographic case study. During my interview with Jordan, I asked him to tell me about the Design Team, he responded, “What about it? You’re a part of it” (Line 493). The truth, though, as asserted by Heath and Street (2008) is that “only rarely can we shed features of ourselves to be a ‘real’ participant” (p. 31) with people in the contexts of our research. Thus, even when I was perceived as a part of the Design Team, I remained an outsider. Deciding to take on the role of a participant observer was a generative one for me in terms of building relationships with the students and Anne, and collecting data, but it also required me to consider the ways in which my behaviors, actions and words were then becoming a part of the very case I was trying to study. In the section below, I address issues of verification, but briefly, here, I note the generative potential of conducting research as a participant observer.

Harper (1992) discusses the nature of relationships within ethnographic case studies, saying, “relationships are typically run on a logic which comes from human give-and-take” (p. 151), in essence, reciprocity. His words resonated with me as I thought about the relationships I formed with Anne, the students, and the community partners. Initially, my relationships with the research participants were one-sided in the sense that I was taking and they were giving: I took data from their discursive exchanges, their interviews with me, and the writing that they consumed and produced within the context of the service-learning projects. The imbalance in the relationship was unmistakable and I sought for the balance
that I maintained in other relationships, such as those with colleagues, friends, and family. With Harper’s words in mind (1992) I put effort into knowing the students, Anne, and the community partners on a deeper level, beyond their lives at Liberty High School. I sought to understand more personal dimensions of their homes, families and future aspirations. The strengthening of these relationships gave me ways to give to, and not just take from, these young people and adults. In a Freirian sense, I worked in unity and in cooperation with the students and the adults to meet shared and individual goals that advanced our own humanization. In this way, I identified ways I could support the students and Anne. One of the ways I did this with students was by helping them with their writing: seniors with editing college essays and interpreting institutional jargon on financial aid forms and ninth graders with classroom assignments. With Anne, I was responsive to daily, improvisational needs when I was able (e.g., making copies, running down to the office, running small group discussions) and I worked with her, Vuk and Hannah on three grant applications for the garden and the disability awareness campaign. Of the three grants, we received two of them: Donor’s Choose and Whole Kids Foundation.

I intentionally discuss my own positioning as a researcher prior to moving into the data sources below in order to be transparent about the connections I built with Anne and her students. As Jordan noted, in some ways I was a part of it (the Design Team). As an advocate of service-learning, which I explored in Chapter 1 of this dissertation study, I realized the role I could play in helping to sustain the service-learning projects within Liberty High School. From grant writing to participating in conference presentations, my hope was that the service-learning projects, which meant a great deal to Anne and her students, would continue well into the future after the conclusion of this dissertation study.

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Data Sources

While the data sources are listed below in Table 2, I explore them here in narrative form.

Interviews

I used a semi-structured interview approach with the students, Anne and the community partners, entering each interview with a set of questions that allowed me to compare responses across, but unstructured enough so that new questions, generated by the stories they were telling, or a shared memory between us, could be asked (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Leech, 2002; Whiting, 2008). My interviews with the students were bound by their lunch period or study hall, and consequently, the bell schedule, which gave us forty-five to fifty minutes per interview, whereas my interviews with each adult ranged between one to two hours. I conducted one-time individual interviews with each focal student (4 total) and each adult (i.e., Anne, Vuk, and Hannah) and three group interviews with Design Team members who had signed consent/assent/permission forms. I saw value in conducting the group interviews because of the theoretical lens through which I was attempting to view my data. The theoretical framing of communities of practice meant that some of the ideas students had to share were rooted in the collective experience they shared as Design Team members around the garden and the disabilities awareness campaign. The interviews with students took place in the school in spaces that were accessible to me, which was either Anne’s classroom or the library. Interviewing in these spaces meant that the interviewee and I had to entertain occasional interruptions, sometimes another student swinging by to say hello or a visitor looking for Anne. These interruptions were captured on the audio-recordings, but were only transcribed if the person “interrupting” was a part of the study.
As I noted above, my interviews with Anne, Vuk, and Hannah lasted between one to two hours. Since all three of these women had full-time jobs, we scheduled the interviews after work and/or school and multitasked by eating and interviewing at quiet restaurants or in their homes. Similar to the students’ interviews, there were occasional interruptions at the restaurants, but these were never transcribed because I did not have the permission of the wait staff. I also conducted an additional one-hour interview with Anne. Before each interview with the youth and adult participants, I asked if they would mind being recorded. While the audio-recording request was language within the consent, assent and permission forms they had each signed, the temporal distance between them signing these forms and the actual interview warranted a reminder. Based on the participants’ written and verbal permissions all interviews were audio-recorded.

Fieldnotes

I followed the third and fourth period classes across spaces (i.e., the classroom, the library, the garden), jotting down fieldnotes as I engaged in participant observations and informal interviews. I temporarily used audio-recording in the classes, but found that selectively recording students who had given consent was logistically impossible when they were engaged in a whole-class discussion. Due to the ethical ambiguity here, I ceased audio-recording early in the first phase of the study. In order to respect the choice of all students to either participate or not participate in the study, I relied heavily on observational fieldnotes. In addition to the observational fieldnotes, I made personal notes in the margins of my notebook—feelings, reactions and reminders—that related to what I was observing so that I could revisit these thoughts later. After fourth period ended, I used the school library or my car as a quiet space to type my notes, adding detail where I could—what was said, who was
there, where we were, my own reactions. There were days when I did not have time to jot down fieldnotes because I was involved in the activity, or at times, deemed taking out my notebook an intrusive move. In these instances, I audio-recorded my fieldnotes following my visit at Liberty High School while I drove to my next location. These fieldnotes were transcribed at the end of the data collection process.

Fieldnotes were also used during Design Team meetings, and during conference presentations. At the conferences, these fieldnotes served as supplemental documentation beyond the audio- or video-recordings, and later, the transcriptions. I did not limit my fieldnotes or recordings to focal students, community partners, or Anne because I recognized the need to locate the work of these individuals in the larger framing of the Design Team and the project. Thus, I jotted fieldnotes on all research participants present in the meetings and the conference presentations.

**Artifacts**

I collected three different types of artifacts during the two phases of the study. I collected images, including images of the garden work, the disability awareness campaign, conference presentation powerpoint slides, classroom worksheets and journal prompts, and student displays of the service-learning projects (e.g., a trifold board for a rotary competition). I also collected hard copies of students’ classroom writing (i.e., those of Angela and Ben) and Design Team notes. Finally, I collected copies of handouts that Anne used in connection with the critical service-learning projects (e.g., worksheets, supplemental readings).
Table 2.  
*Data Sources*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Type</th>
<th>Nature of Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fieldnotes</td>
<td>Classroom observations, daily reflections, conference presentations, Design Team meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcripts</td>
<td>23 + hours including group and individual interviews, audio-fieldnotes, video-recordings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy Artifacts</td>
<td>Benjamin and Angela's classroom journals, meeting notes from Design Team meetings, writing on chalkboard, Powerpoint slides from student presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Images</td>
<td>Conference presentations, garden, student displays, fieldtrips, classroom activities, student pictures</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis occurred in four phases. The first phase began during the data collection process by way of theoretical memos, or “initial memos” (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p. 143). On a bi-weekly basis, I read through my fieldnotes and looked through photos and classroom handouts to generate initial, inductive memos, identifying themes across the developing data corpus. In this initial phase of analysis, I drew on my review of service-learning literature in Chapter 2 to inform what I was observing.

After completing data collection in May 2013, I put the initial memos aside in order to engage in the second phase of analysis, which was transcription of all audio-fieldnotes, group and individual interviews, and video-recorded conference sessions. Like Ochs (1979), I did not view transcribing as a neutral process, rather, as one that had theoretical and analytical implications for this study. Valuing the insights that could be gained from transcription, which included being able to note qualities such as tone, emphasis, and pregnant pauses, and to then incorporate these observations into the written transcriptions, I transcribed these data sources on my own. I transcribed over 23 hours of audio and video
data during a two-month period using an interview transcription program called *ExpressScribe* and a foot pedal to ease stopping and starting of these recordings.

In the third phase of data analysis, I turned to the data corpus as a whole (i.e., fieldnotes, transcriptions, images, and literacy artifacts) “to identify and formulate any and all ideas, themes or issues they suggest, no matter how varied or disparate” (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p. 143). I employed an iterative approach to data analysis in this third phase, using my initial memos as well as my theoretical frame for deductive analysis of the transcripts, fieldnotes, and artifacts and the data themselves for inductive analysis to see what themes emerged. Since most of these documents were housed within Microsoft Word, I used the comment and highlighting features on the program to code the data, inserting the comment into the margins, adjacent to the words or images that were speaking to the emerging themes. For the artifacts, I used my fieldnotes notebook to generate codes.

Then, for the fourth and final phase of the data analysis, I used the codes I generated from across the data corpus to begin looking for larger categories to write conceptual memos (Heath & Street, 2008, p. 77) and then used these conceptual memos to write the contents of Chapter 4. It was at this point that I had to put certain data aside in order to pursue the ones that were enabling me to address my research questions. As Dyson and Genishi (2005) explained,

> Through these processes, researchers weave together different pieces of data into a patterned quilt, an interpretive case study. The pieces themselves, now coded, are bits of participants’ social actions; accounts of recurrent events; and explicit or implicit indices of historical, societal, and institutional contexts. Thus, there are characters, settings, plots, and grand themes, and, when they are woven together, there are narrative accounts of who did what, how, and in what circumstance” (p. 111).

I generated a total of six conceptual memos, from which I selected four to make sense of my research questions. These four conceptual memos included one on social, spatial, and
temporal disruptions generated by the Design Team; another on the way literacy was used to
generate intertextual connections between the word and the world; a third that highlighted a
critical turn in the Design Team focus; and a fourth that emphasized the forms of
participation within the Design Team and Anne’s classroom. As I moved from the
conceptual memos to the writing of Chapter 4, my analysis of the data continued as I worked
to forge these conceptual memos together to offer a tightly woven ethnographic case study of
overlapping communities of practice participating in critical service-learning projects in an
urban high school.

**Verification**

Early in this dissertation study, I attempted to ensure validity by creating “decision
rules” (Heath & Street, 2008, p. 47) which were informed by my research questions and used
to guide where and how I was collecting data. Heath and Street (2008) talked about the
tensions in qualitative research to ensure reliability, but acknowledged that by “mak[ing]
clear their decision rules” (p. 45) qualitative researchers make explicit how “someone else
might step back into the same location or group” (p. 45). My decision rules were outlined in
a chart and identified, specifically, the who, what, where, when and why of data collection: 1. *Who* was my focus; 2. *What* was the focus; 3. *When* would I collect these data; and 4. *Why*, in
terms of why these particular people and moments helped me to answer my research
questions.

Another way I attempted to ensure validity and reliability in this study was through
triangulation. According to Lather (1986), triangulation should include “multiple data
sources, methods, and theoretical schemes” (p. 67). Reflective of Lather’s (1986) argument,
my methods included audio-recorded interviews, video-recorded conference presentations,
fieldnotes during classroom observations, and artifacts produced and consumed during the academic school year by the focal students. The resulting data consisted of transcripts, fieldnotes, and artifacts from across classroom and community spaces.

I was also cognizant of issues of representation in qualitative research and how careful attention must be paid to the way a researcher captures a participant’s lived experience. As a white, female doctoral candidate attending a research one institution and exploring the literacy lives of youth from different backgrounds, races, and genders than my own, I recognized that there might be differences in the way I analyze the data versus the way the young people in the study would have interpreted the data. In Chapter 1, I explored, candidly, what brought me to this study, and here in Chapter 3, I explored my situated experiences as a participant observer at Liberty High School. In my aim to be transparent about who I am, I also aim to become “vigorously self-aware” (Lather, p. 66, 1986) of how my understanding of self and positionality have influenced every step of this research process. I recognize that I did not come to this work as a blank slate, or without previous theories or assumptions. As a qualitative researcher who participated in the daily routines of Anne’s classroom, and regularly participated in Design Team meetings and presentations, I know that my analysis of the data and the implications of this work are saturated with who I am as a person, as a doctoral candidate, as a service-learning and youth advocate, and as an emerging scholar interested in engaged pedagogies and community literacies.

Limitations

The ethnographic case study approach offers vivid details of a particular situation, group, practice, or event, which do not translate to general claims about the human condition in the same way other methodological approaches might. Therefore, in so far as generating
“predictive theory, universals, and scientism” are concerned, Flyvberg (2006) argued that we cannot necessarily make broadly sweeping claims about the human condition through case study research. If I were to revisit my data corpus through a different analytic framework, say discourse analysis for instance, I might generate new understandings about literacy and learning, or the semantics embedded within students’ speech. Based on these reflections, one of the limitations of this study is that there is loss (Lather, personal communication) in the data collection and analysis processes. I have not accounted for every social phenomenon, nor would that have been feasible in a year-long qualitative, ethnographic case study.

Collectively, ethnographic and case study design recognize the artificial and abrupt departure from the field (Jeffrey & Troman, 2004; Dyson & Genishi, 2005). Even though this dissertation study ended at the conclusion of the school year, the experiences of these students, the teacher and their community partner continued. I returned the following year with one of my advisors to continue another research project, and continued to meet and discuss the service-learning project with the students. The project, by no means, had ended when I left the field in the Spring 2013. Recognizing the artificiality of my departure simultaneously acknowledges a limitation: the research I share in this dissertation is partial, offering a snapshot of literacy and learning over time within one classroom and two specific critical service-learning projects. Further, there were actors present within the service-learning project whose voices were not included in the study. One student from Anne’s class, for example, said he was going to hand in his permission form before the end of the school year, but he was absent for the last two weeks of school. Given that I did not have this final form, his experiences are not captured in this dissertation study. I recognize this as a
limitation in the way that part of the complexity of the case is lost by not being able to explore this particular student’s experiences.

Another limitation within this study was my minimal experience in the field. While I had taken coursework that focused on research methodologies, which afforded me the opportunity to employ qualitative methods (e.g., interviewing, writing fieldnotes, collecting artifacts, conducting surveys), it was not until I engaged in the full dissertation process that I experienced the immensity of a year-long ethnographic case study. During my interviews, I resonated with the words of Errante (2000) who confessed that during her interviews with her research participants, “I was not listening precisely because I was hunting memories and not the present” (p. 21). While not hunting for memories per se, I did find myself hunting for something that resembled “an answer” to my research questions. I thought if I looked hard enough, the answer would materialize. On certain days in the field I found I would ask myself, “what are you looking for?” Based on this hunting that I was consciously and subconsciously doing in this study, I know that I limited the potential of some of the interviews and therefore, the stories the young people and the adults were able to share with me around literacy, learning and participation. I have attempted to account for some of these “missing” data by engaging in member checks with my research participants. I returned to meet with these students during the 2013-2014 academic school year and explored with them the findings I had captured in the data.

Conclusion

As I conclude this chapter, I want to reiterate that ethnographic case studies do not aim to offer broad universals about the world; in fact, case studies are not designed to create generalities. Instead, they acknowledge that “the study of human affairs is, thus, at an eternal
beginning” (Flyvberg, 2006). With that being the case, the particularities offered by an ethnographic case study are unique to the case, but from those particularities, implications can be generated. In the next chapter, I explore the data that came out of this year-long ethnographic case study, focusing specifically on the learning, participation, and literacy practices of Angela, Ben, Jordan and Sarah over time, in the critical service-learning projects at Liberty High School. Following Chapter 4, I turn to the final chapter, where I discuss the potential theoretical and practical implications generated from the data.
Chapter 4: Learning, Literacy, and Participation in Critical Service-Learning

Introduction

In this chapter, I investigate learning and literacy as social practices among students participating in critical service-learning projects at Liberty High School. In order to do this, as detailed in the previous chapter, I constructed the boundaries of this case study around an overlapping, dynamic space between two communities of practice: Anne’s ninth grade English classroom and the Design Team. Specifically, I focused on the learning, participation, and literacy practices of four young people who were members of the Design Team—Angela, Benjamin, Jordan and Sarah. Both Angela and Benjamin were students in Anne’s class, and so they still had a curricular component informing their participation in the service-learning project. Jordan and Sarah, on the other hand—who both had Anne in the ninth grade—were now in the tenth and twelfth grade, respectively. Inviting these four students to participate in the study allowed me to investigate literacy and learning in the context of Anne’s classroom—a somewhat traditional service-learning project with a curricular component—and to understand the important learning opportunities and literacy practices that were being both extended and generated within the Design Team, an emergent community of practice.

As the data in this chapter will illustrate, the two different projects (i.e., the garden and the campaign) differed in their “critical” orientation. By critical I am referring to the work of Hart (2006) who conceptualized critical service-learning as service-learning projects
where youth are working within their own communities and thus, taking on new agentive roles in their educational lives and their communities simultaneously. Given that the garden project was located in the students’ neighborhood and the campaign was located in their school, I considered the gradation of critical-ness each project offered students by thinking about the proximity of the service focus to the students’ everyday lives. Since the garden was a part of the students’ surrounding neighborhood, it was somewhat removed from their daily experiences and therefore less critical than the Disability Awareness Campaign, which was not only located in their school, but even more intimately, called into question their own values and beliefs toward students with physical impairments. Given the critical nature of these projects, the first research question I posed in this dissertation study was, *What happens when students and their teacher participate in a critical service-learning project?*

At the time of this study, Angela and Benjamin were in Anne’s ninth grade English class, and Jordan and Sarah were in the tenth and twelfth grade, respectively. Angela and Benjamin were participating in traditional service-learning projects in the sense that there was both a service and curricular component. The curricular component—which included activities such as reading young adult novels, short stories, and supplementary non-fiction texts; watching films and video clips; and writing across genres at the intersection of curriculum and community—was connected to the service focuses of the garden and the campaign. Jordan and Sarah, on the other hand, who were still participating in the projects, no longer had the traditional curricular component associated with service-learning. Instead, learning opportunities, forms of participation, and literacy practices developed more organically over time as they made sense of demands of the projects and as they found themselves in new contexts.
Given the important differences that shaped learning and participation in Anne’s classroom, and those that shaped learning and participation among Design Team members, who no longer had a curricular component, I used Lave and Wenger’s (1991) communities of practice to differentiate between these two social networks as distinct, yet overlapping communities of practice. In order to explore their distinctive and overlapping practices, I asked, *What learning opportunities and forms of participation emerge in a critical service-learning project and how are they taken up by the students?* Related to this question, I wondered, *What is the role of literacy in these learning opportunities and forms of participation?* Given the lack of focus on social uses of literacy functioning within service-learning projects, I wanted to explore this gap in the literature.

In the sections below, I use data from Anne’s classroom, Design Team meetings, observations, interviews, and conference presentations to explore my three research questions. Before moving into my analysis, though, I begin the next section by offering a brief overview of Anne’s classroom and provide a more thorough introduction of Anne and the four focal students, Angela, Benjamin, Jordan, and Sarah. From there, I turn to my data analysis and findings.

**A Community of Practice: Members and Context**

As I looked around Anne’s classroom on the second day of school, I noted seven clusters of desks, four to a unit. Within each cluster, the desks faced each other so that students were looking at one another instead of the “front” of the classroom. I place “front” in quotation marks because the front of the classroom was an ever-shifting socially constructed locale, typically defined by Anne’s positioning and reinforced by where students were directing their attention. Sometimes the front was the physical back of the classroom,
which was where the chalkboard was located. Anne used the chalkboard rarely, but when she
did, it was typically for Design Team reminders, general classroom reminders, specific points
from her lesson plans (e.g., S.T.E.A.L. for indirect characterization), and grading rubrics.
Other times, the front of the classroom was the physical front, which was where Anne’s desk
was located, along with two additional tables for storage and another sizeable desk. During
individual assignments and group work, Anne would position herself here, and students,
without raising their hands, were allowed to visit her desk with questions, or deliver the
questions loudly from their desks in her general direction. When the front was not the front, it
was because Anne was resting upon her round stool, which sat at the only entrance/exit to the
room. It was from this round stool that Anne would offer brief lectures and engage in
discussions with students. The ever-shifting front of Anne’s classroom meant that she was
often calling for students to locate their attention wherever she had positioned herself, which
she would do by saying, “Hands free and eyes on me.” Her follow up request, directed at
those who were not paying attention was “I’m still waiting on someone’s eyes” only to name
the resistant or daydreaming student on the third or fourth request.

Three of the four walls in the classroom were cinderblock and painted an off-white
color. The walls were mostly blank except for a sign that wrapped around the top of the wall
opposite the entrance/exit, which read, “The Big ?: Do Our Differences Define Us?”. The
cinderblock walls rejected most of Anne’s attempts at creating a literacy-rich environment—
even the most adhesive 3M strips failed to mount the smooth, cool surface, which proved to
be frustrating for an English teacher.

On the same wall as the loosely hanging sign were two small windows, which
hovered right below the crease of where the wall met the ceiling. The windows, which were
covered in flame-retardant, black, roller shades, were just out of everyone’s reach to open, and so they remained in their closed position for the majority of the year. The wall behind Anne’s desk—the only drywalled-wall in the room—was conducive to decorating, and so that was exactly how Anne used the space. Signs (e.g., the bell schedule), curricular guides (e.g., the 6+1 writing traits), and pictures (e.g., Anne’s family and friends, Design Team photos from years past) hung from the wall and covered the corkboard. The wall also had two additional tables for storage, which held classroom sets of young adult novels for Anne’s ninth and eleventh grade classes (i.e., Stoner and Spaz, Seedfolks, The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian) and bins for students’ completed assignments. Propped up against the wall were double sets of wheelbarrows, hoes, and shovels, and then resting underneath the table was a large bag of gardening gloves. These tools and materials, which were used for one of the service-learning projects—a community garden—shaped how one might read this space: a mix between a gardening shed and an English classroom. These supplies were housed within the school and carried over to the community garden whenever the students engaged in direct service.

The Focal Students

Angela. I met Angela, an African American female, on my first day at Liberty High School in Anne’s classroom. Friendly in her demeanor, she approached me by saying “hello” and then proceeded to ask me why I was in her classroom. Fair question. This interaction with Angela was typical in the sense that she never hesitated to come up, ask questions, engage, and then go back to whatever she was doing. She kept her finger on the pulse of the classroom as well as those who entered and exited its doors. Angela, who was quick to laugh or smile, stood about my height—5’1”—so also petite for her age. Angela’s relationship with
literacy was a very personal one. She used writing as a way to process issues in her life, particularly issues within her family (e.g., the death of her grandmother, the contentious relationship with her mom, her desire to live with her dad). She felt like she had “something that [she] could write about,” (Line 574) in that she wanted to use her writing to “encourage others, others to like keep yourself away [from bad decisions] and the mistakes” (Lines 578-579). Angela thought that if she wrote regularly throughout the school year, she would eventually create a book, which she thought she could finish by her senior year. Angela’s positive relationship with writing meant that she willingly participated in the daily journal prompts that Anne put on the board as well as in more involved classroom writing assignments. In terms of the critical service-learning project, Anne saw Angela’s involvement as an opportunity for her to “reflect” (Line 1321) about who she is and “the circumstances that she’s in” (Lines 1325-1326). Anne explained that Angela “does not always realize her potential” (fieldnotes) and that she does not want Angela to define herself by her circumstances.

**Benjamin.** I did not meet Benjamin until four weeks into the school year. Like Angela, Benjamin was also in Anne’s ninth grade English class. He was a white male, and a brother to one of the older Design Team members, Todd. Benjamin played defense for the school’s football team, so he was sizeable in stature. His blond hair, which he wore a little bit longer, sat as calmly on his head as he sat in his chair; Benjamin was laid back. Benjamin’s level of involvement in school and the Design Team rose and fell like the tide throughout the academic year. He was heavily involved in the Design Team at the beginning and end of the year, but in the middle, his engagement lagged—as did his academics and school attendance. I continued to follow Benjamin despite his decreased involvement by touching base with him...
during class, and occasionally asking him for copies of his writing. Benjamin preferred the kind of learning opportunities afforded by the service-learning project in Anne’s classroom: “cause like, sometimes for me, like, I’m like, when I learn, I like to do something. I don’t like to just sit there and do notes” *(Line 628-629)*. Benjamin came from what he described as a seemingly stable home and was aware of the privilege afforded by stability: “we’re not like rich, but like, you know, I’ve never really had to worry about if I’m gonna have food or not. I’ve never really had to worry about my mom being high on drugs or. I would never have had that problem, so like, I can kind of say, like I have it easy” *(Lines 1047-1052)*. He and his brother tried to spend equal time between their mom and dad’s houses. Anne noted Benjamin’s “passion” *(Line 1226)* for the project, adding “he’s serious about it” *(Line 1227)*.

**Jordan.** I met Jordan, an African American male sophomore, in the Spring of 2012 during his freshman year. A sophomore during the time of the study, Jordan was credited with facilitating the Design Team’s relationship with Independence Village, a residential community for people with physical impairments. Jordan volunteered at Independence Village—his father’s place of employment—on the weekends and helped to organize a fieldtrip there his freshman year. Jordan’s relationship with school was much less positive than the one he had with Independence Village and the one he had with the Design Team. During our interview Jordan shared, “I really hate school. I hate being here” *(Line 988)*, “I just hate comin’ to school period” *(Line 993-994)*. Jordan had poor attendance and admitted he had planned on skipping the day of our interview, but remembered “Oh, I gotta look for Ms. Emily. I’m coming [to school]” *(Line 48)*. Jordan’s tenuous relationship with school was exacerbated by the frequency with which he was asked to leave classrooms. Jordan shared
that he would get kicked out of one class repeatedly during his freshman year because he actively resisted the way one of his teachers talked to him:

I’m like, “what? Brother, you better stop talkin’ to me like that. I’m not your kid.” And then he like, “you’re not my kid, you can get out.” I was like, “I don’t care,” and I just get up and get out and just go to the office or something. Go sit down somewhere else. (Lines 1080-1084)

Jordan’s frequent visits “to the office or something” were a sharp contrast to his consistent participation in Design Team meetings, visits to Anne’s classroom and preparation for, and delivery of, conference presentations to public audiences. Anne characterized Jordan’s role in the project in this way: “He’s kind of my thinker, but Jordan likes to be doing things. You know. He needs to be doing” (Lines 1265-1266).

Sarah. I met Sarah, a White female, toward the end of her sophomore year in the Spring of 2011. A senior during the time of the study, Sarah was visibly the most involved of the students, and was noted by other Design Team members and Anne as a longtime member of the student group. Sarah’s daily routine was split between Liberty High School and the vocational education program connected to the school, where she was focusing on education. She credited the service-learning project, and more specifically Anne, with her desire to become a teacher. At the end of the study, Sarah had submitted her deposit for the local community college, but during a follow up meeting, I learned that she decided to delay her matriculation into the program for an academic year. Taking courses the following year at the local community college would—she hoped—eventually lead to certification as a teacher and in the ideal scenario, land her in a classroom next to Anne’s (Sarah, informal interview). Sarah had a strong relationship with Anne, who she called a “second mom.” Anne shared the following about Sarah,
I think this project has really changed [Sarah] a lot. I don’t think her life would be the way it is. I don’t think she would be taking the risks that she’s taken if she hadn’t been a part of this project. I really, I think it helped her come into her own and realize who she really is. (Lines 1643-1645)

Before the project, Anne described Sarah as a shy and quiet student—someone who really did not engage in the classroom, and someone who hesitated to share her opinion. Since her involvement in the project, though, Sarah had earned the nickname, “the enforcer” because of how involved and outspoken she was about the direction of the service-learning projects.

The Focal Teacher: Anne

Anne, the focus of my pilot study, had been teaching at Liberty High School for six years, which contributed to the sixteen years she had been teaching in the district. Anne, an African American woman in her mid-forties, enjoyed teaching ninth graders and made sure her administrators knew it. Few of her colleagues wanted to work with the ninth graders because they were a “little more energized” (Anne, informal discussion) than older students, but Anne welcomed the opportunity. A calm, soothing, respectful tone was characteristic of the way Anne would address her students. Regardless of perceived chaos in the classroom, Anne never once raised her voice, or spoke condescendingly to a student during any of my observations. Her regard for young people was demonstrated in other ways, too, including regular check-in meetings with students during her lunch and preparation periods, afterschool fieldtrips with students (e.g., students went to an Annie Lebovitz exhibit and dinner, paid for by Anne), and an end-of-the-year cookout for the Design Team, just to name a few. Her love and care for the students earned her ascribed identity markers such as “second mom” “mentor,” and “friend.” Often, Anne would make comments such as, “their ideas are the foundations for our tomorrows” (Line 127), sentiments which displayed her confidence in the potential of her students.
**Overlapping Communities of Practice**

I entered this dissertation study to explore the situated learning and literacies of four focal students participating in two critical service-learning projects. As I situated myself in the context of Liberty High School, and more specifically, within the Anne’s classroom, I realized the focus of my case study would be an overlapping space between two community of practice; located at the intersection of Anne’s classroom and the Design Team and situated within the dynamic spaces of classroom and community. As Barton and Hamilton (2005) asserted, “the social world is characterised by multiple membership; it has unresolved boundaries, with many different fluid communities of practice which exist in a variety of relationships to one another, both supporting and competing” (p. 25). Barton and Hamilton’s (2005) observations aptly describe the unique positions of the focal students in this dissertation study whose membership was indeed multiple and connected. I was interested in the overlap *(See Image 1)* of social practices, or as Barton and Hamilton (2005) suggested, the fluid relationship between Anne’s ninth grade English class—the community of practice where the critical service-learning projects originated—and the Design Team—the emergent community of practice. And so, this was a case study of a somewhat messy, fluid space between ninth grade English and the Design Team in order to understand literacy and learning as social practices within critical service learning projects.
Due to the nature of these divergent yet overlapping communities of practice, I separate my analysis in the sections below to give serious consideration to both Anne’s classroom as a community of practice and the Design Team as an emergent community of practice, while also considering their intersection. I begin the next section by focusing on Anne’s class as a community of practice in which both Angela and Benjamin were members. I also begin my analysis in Anne’s classroom considering this dissertation study is grounded in service-learning literature and service-learning projects, traditionally, have a curricular component.

**Service-Learning in a Ninth Grade English Classroom**

“I look at [teaching] differently. I look at, I listen to my students more. I hear what they want to do, and I try to figure out a way to get it done” -Anne

I began this dissertation study at a moment when the service-learning project in Anne’s classroom had taken on an additional focus: the Disability Awareness Campaign. Up
until that point, her students had focused their work solely on the garden across the street.

Anne referred to the garden as the catalyst for this turn:

the kids started talkin’. And it’s like. I remember, I don’t remember who it was but somebody said, “It’s gonna be kind of hard for [students in wheelchairs] to roll those wheelchairs on grass.” You know. And I’m like, “shoot. It is.” Not only that, it’s going to be hard, but it wasn’t functional. (Lines 594-594)

As one of two high schools in the district with an occupational handicap unit, Liberty High School served over fifty students with physical impairments. More significant was that over 21.7 percent of the student body had been identified as having a disability of some kind. The addition of the Disability Awareness Campaign to Anne’s classroom meant that the students were interested in investigating an issue that had serious and immediate implications for their own school community. The beginnings of this campaign led to the first wheelchair accessible community garden in the Hadley Park area (See Images 2, 3, 4, 5). The images below offer a timed sequence of the evolution of the garden between the Spring of 2010 and the Fall of 2012.

Image 2.
Community Garden, Spring 2010

Image 3.
Lowered Beds
Like the evolution of the curriculum and standards in ninth grade English over time, community issues on which service-learning projects rely, continue to reshape and reinvent the learning opportunities and forms of participation in which students engage. So even though I thought I was entering Anne’s classroom in the Fall of 2012 to study a service-learning project solely about a community garden, the project had expanded to also include a Disability Awareness Campaign, which at its core, reflected the students’ desire to change mindsets within the school around (dis)ability.  

**Building Connections Between Classroom and Community through Literacy**

Both of these service focuses—the garden and the campaign—were central to Anne’s ninth grade English class, and therefore, central to the learning opportunities and forms of participation afforded to Benjamin and Angela. One of the ways Anne knitted these service focuses into the fabric of her classroom was by selecting relevant texts that dealt with themes

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11 My use of the parenthetical separation between (dis) and ability is used throughout this dissertation study in order to highlight the way the Design Team attempted to disrupt narrow framings of physical disability and ability. Through their writing, their presentations, and their discursive exchanges, Design Team students noted the ambiguous nature of the label “disabled,” particularly around students with physical impairments.
from the garden and the campaign. I sought to investigate how these selections impacted student learning. Specifically, I explored the literacy events surrounding two young adults novels—*Seedfolks* and *Stoner and Spaz*—and the supplementary multimodal texts, writing prompts, and discussions connected to these novels. As I noted in Chapter 2 of this dissertation study, looking across literacy events, and understanding the way texts are used in a particular domain or sociocultural context, offers important insights in terms of the values and ideologies undergirding literacy practices in those spaces. An understanding of these practices speaks to the social, local and fluid nature of learning and literacy in the context of critical service-learning projects. In this dissertation study, it also revealed an important finding regarding text selection which are two concepts I explore below: project relevant literature and community relevant literature. Such texts offered important learning opportunities for Benjamin and Angela at the intersection of classroom and community.

**Building Connections Across Texts**

The first young adult novel Anne selected for her ninth graders to read was *Seedfolks*. In brief, the story is about a group of diverse residents of an apartment building who come together to convert a vacant parking lot into a community garden. The diverse backgrounds of the apartment residents—in terms of race, ethnicity, age, and ability—are meaningfully woven into the story as the characters grapple with working across difference to create a community garden. Anne had selected the book the year before as a complementary text for the work she and her students were doing in the Good Seed Community Garden; she decided to keep it as the first novel her students would read this year, too.

Angela and Benjamin were reading *Seedfolks* and participating in the Good Seeds Community Garden at the same time. Paralleling the reading of the YA novel with
participation in the garden was intentional move by Anne as she envisioned meaningful
correlations between the students’ reading of the book and their experiences in the garden. In
the data below, I explore the way this explicit juxtaposition of texts (i.e., *Seedfolks* and the
garden) gained social significance for Angela and Benjamin’s learning. In order to do this, I
draw on Bloome and Egan-Robertson’s (1993) concept of textualizing, which speaks to the
way people make their lived phenomena a part of their language system. In other words,
texts are not narrowly understood as books, worksheets, or other documents saturated with
words—instead, texts become such when people make meaning of them, which can include
(or preclude) traditional texts as well as experiences or observations. In the data below, I
discuss findings around how notions of “text” were expanded in these service-learning
projects and how project and community relevant literature offered important learning
opportunities for these adolescent readers.

Angela said she liked reading *Seedfolks* “okay” (*Line 483*) and when I asked her if
she saw connections between the book and Good Seeds Community Garden she said that she
had, specifically in terms of the way the garden, like the one in *Seedfolks*, fostered
connections among people. She observed, “Cause I never talked to uh, what’s his name,
Adam. And we was in the garden and we was talkin’. He was helpin’ me pick up the dirt
and everything.” Angela explained,

> Like it’s me, Frank, LaQuan and Justin sit at one table and we all conversate and
Kyra will come over. Like that side of the room, *pointing to the other side of the
classroom, opposite of where she sits*, we don’t conversate with. Like Tamia and
Kristina that’s right there and Raquel and Reese, that’s on the side of us, we don’t
really conversate with them. (*Lines 578-582*)

The increased level of engagement between Angela and her peers—namely those who did
not sit within her cluster of desks—was fostered by the spatial conditions of the garden, and
the students’ shared goal of maintaining the community garden. In this case, Angela pointed to the constraining nature of classroom desks and seating assignments as preventing these kinds of engagements—she spoke to the people next to her—whereas the garden, as she observed, was an open space that facilitated engagement among students from all sides of the classroom.

The focus of the critical service-learning project for Anne and her students was to help maintain the community garden for the Hadley Park neighborhood so that residents in the community would have access to affordable plots of land. By participating in the garden project (e.g., weeding the beds, planting seeds), the students were helping to make that goal possible, but as Angela was demonstrating in her reflection, the connections she was making were rooted in the YA novel they were reading for class; not the focus of the service-learning project. Angela reflected on the way the garden afforded opportunities to work across difference, around a shared task in the same way that the garden in Seedfolks afforded these opportunities to the residents of the apartment building. The characters in Seedfolks who remained separated from one another by the walls of their apartment came together as they worked on converting the vacant parking lot into a community garden. I discovered that in line with Butin’s (2003/2010) claim that learning is unstable in service-learning, Angela was observing an unintended learning opportunity—one that was fluidly taking shape as she participated in the project:

it’s just like in the garden, we um, we just like, it’s just like we all were, like, we never talked like, before just sittin’ in the class doin’ our work. We never really associated with each other. And then suddenly in the garden we had to help each other. We had to work together as a class. As a team. So I associated with most people out in the garden than I did before. (Angela, Lines 132-136)
Angela noted the difference between the classroom where students would be “sittin…doin’ our work” versus the garden where “suddenly…we had to help each other.”

During a webinar presentation in which Angela participated, Anne invited Angela to share any connections she had made between the garden and the book, *Seedfolks*. Angela said,

[the garden] has changed my attitude toward school a whole lot because at first I took coming to high school as a joke and not just about anyone, but more to my self. And now I have the opportunity to communicate with other people and this is an opportunity to me. I can communicate with more students in our school and other people outside of school in the community (Lines 240-244)

Again, Angela did not mention that the students were creating affordable plots of land for the residents in the community—which was the stated goal of the project—instead, the learning opportunity she was noticing was the one afforded through *participation* in the garden. Through her participation, she was exposed to new forms of engagement with her peers and with their community partner. Angela noted the way the Good Seeds Community Garden allowed her to communicate with “more students” and with people whom she categorized as “other people outside of school in the community.” Her participation in these learning opportunities led to a change in her attitude “toward school a whole lot.” In fact, the meaningful relationships she established with other students and with community members positively influenced her attendance in the school and her mindset about school.

By textualizing her own experience in the Good Seeds Community Garden, Angela was revealing a couple of important connections. The first is that she was making known the learning opportunities she had taken up within the context of the garden and the ways these were afforded by the kinds of participation privileged by the garden. In addition, she was noting the connections she was making between her experience in the garden and the YA
novel—noting the similar ways that the garden afforded new forms of engagement between people. Working across difference in the context of a community garden took on new meaning for Angela in terms of what it looked like and how it felt—it was not something that just the characters in *Seedfolks* were doing, but something in which she was participating. She understood broadly that these connections were afforded by service-learning:

> I didn’t really know what [service learning] was until I was in Ms. Anne’s class and we were reading our book *Seedfolks*. And it had to do with a community garden and we went across the street from our school and we helped out in the community garden. *(Lines 27-29)*

Another student in Anne’s class made a similar connection. Anne shared,

> as a way to introduce the garden this year, I had my students read *Seedfolks*. And we were, we had gone over to the garden for a few days to do some cleanup and one of my students, just in the middle of class blurted out, “[Miss Anne]” I said, “Yes,” She said, “We’re reading about a community garden and we just went and cleaned the garden.” And I said, “Yeah!” And it was like, to see that light bulb moment when she made that connection was just, it was really neat to see. *(Lines 9-15)*

For Angela, learning in the garden was not necessarily about its intended focus (i.e., creating affordable plots for Hadley Park residents), instead she was drawing on *Seedfolks* to recognize the way the garden was changing the relationships among students within Anne’s classroom; she was drawing on the specific environmental conditions to acknowledge the way these connections were easier in the garden than in the classroom; and she was drawing on observations about herself to note the impact such relationships had on her personally (e.g., attendance).

> Reading and writing around *Seedfolks*, while also participating in, and textualizing the experiences in the garden, also prompted valuable learning opportunities for Benjamin. In the writing excerpt below *(Image 6)*, I turn to Benjamin who was responding to one of Anne’s journal prompts, “What have you learned in the garden?” He wrote,
My experience at the garden is a learning experience every time I go. The garden helps me get active in my community, and also have fun. I’m so grateful to have the opportunity to be with my classmates and learn outside of the classroom, called service-learning. I am so glad to have a teacher that lets us do extra things outside of the classroom [sic] and lets us go to the garden.

Image 6.
*Benjamin: An Experience in the Garden*

Using writing as a form of reflection in service-learning projects is a common method intended to offer students an opportunity to think about what they have learned and to draw connections between the classroom and the service focus. Like Angela, I discovered Benjamin highlighting the way the physical nature of the service focus (i.e., the community garden) was fostering new forms of participation and learning opportunities for him: “get to be active in my community,” “have fun,” “be with classmates,” and “learn outside of the classroom.” In my interview with Benjamin later in the school year, he again reflected on the way the garden project impacted how he learned and in this interview, began to draw connections to *Seedfolks* (Lines 587-631):

Benjamin: Like, cause the fact that I actually like, gardened, like, gardening’s really not even the point of it. Gardening’s actually just like, actually an activity that we do to do service-learning. Like, there’s so much more behind it. Like. Like learning, actually learning and actually getting the hands on actually makes them see like a fun part about education. Because us tying in the book with education makes such a big difference instead of just like, sitting here, doing notes, and you’re like, “I don’t want
to do notes.” And when you get out in the garden, you get to learn and you get to tie in what you’re learning from the garden, what you’re learning from the book…This is the best writing, best Language Arts class I’ve ever had.

Emily: Really?

Benjamin: Yeah.

Emily: And why is that?

Benjamin: Just like, cause it’s different. Like instead of like, because I’ve had writing classes that like, “well, you will have this paper done by this time. And this paper done by this time. You’ve gotta read this amount of books.” Well, she’s like, “you can read this book and then we’re gonna go to the garden next week. We’re gonna recap on what we learned from the book in the garden.” It’s such a different, such a, such a better experience than just writing a paper about something that we didn’t even really do hands on or do an activity for.

Emily: Mmm, and why is it better?

Benjamin: Cause like, sometimes for me, like, I’m like, when I learn, I like to do something. I don’t like to just sit there and do notes. I like to like, like my fifth grade teacher, my history, my fifth grade teacher, when she would teach me history she would do these activities where every so weeks we actually uh, set up like a old western and we set up like a bank and stuff.

Again, like Angela, I found that Benjamin was not reflecting on the intended focus of the garden project. Instead, he was describing the way service-learning disrupted the traditional literacy practices of the classroom—which he did not tend to enjoy—contrasting working in the garden with taking notes or writing a paper. The contrast Benjamin was making between taking notes, writing a paper, and participating in the garden captured the way he was using his time in the garden to make mental connections between Seedfolks and the Good Seeds Community Garden; to textualize both the book and his experience and to generate intertextual connections between the two. Interestingly, in his reflection Benjamin does not mention that Anne still assigned journal prompts (like the one above) and paper assignments connected to Seedfolks, but he does not seem to take issue with those. Instead, he talked
about the fact that note-taking and paper writing were not the only forms of participation, nor the only forms of text Anne privileged in her ninth grade English classroom. Texts were broadly understood in that the garden and their experiences in the garden became readable and writeable.

In the analysis above, I found both Benjamin and Angela were textualizing (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993) their actions and reactions with peers and community members in the context of the community garden in ways that were not intended by Anne. Even though the stated focus of the community garden was to create affordable plots of land for residents in the Hadley Park neighborhood, the ways in which Angela and Benjamin participated in the garden and the learning opportunities they took up went beyond the intended focus. They were observing the ways their school had traditionally structured interpersonal exchanges among students and the way the service-learning projects changed the nature of those exchanges.

The data reveal that while the intent of the garden project was pursued by Angela and Benjamin through their participation, the learning opportunities they described in their interviews were not in line with the service focus. They were, in fact, more connected to the YA literature and in other instances, disconnected from both literature and the service focus. This was an important finding within the data and one that speaks to the theories of learning and literacy I am proposing within this dissertation study: that both learning and literacy are socially situated and profoundly shaped by context, texts, and the material resources afforded by the project. The finding also supports Butin’s (2003/2010) proposal that learning in service-learning is unstable.
Above, I have also begun to address the way textual resources—broadly conceived—were used by students in the service-learning project at Liberty High School to include both the YA novel, *Seedfolks*, and the students’ experiences in the garden. Reading and writing of the word and the world, of traditional texts and of experiences served as important material forces in terms of the learning opportunities afforded to Benjamin and Angela in Anne’s classroom. In the section below, I continue to explore these ideas as Anne and her students turned their attention to the Disability Awareness Campaign, the other critical service-learning project, and continued to locate learning at the intersection of school and community.

**Deepening the Critical Orientation of Service-Learning: Disability Awareness**

By early December, the temperamental nature of the Midwestern seasons took hold of the garden and moved the students back indoors. It was around this time that Anne introduced the other dimension of the service-learning project, which had become the focus of the Design Team the previous Spring: the Disability Awareness Campaign. Unlike the garden, though, the Disability Awareness Campaign was not a direct service project. Instead, it was more in line with the advocacy and research-based model discussed in Chapter 2, and so literacy, in terms of reading and writing, and discussions around texts, carried more significance in terms of the way students could participate in the project.

I begin this section by turning to one of the initial literacy events in this teaching unit, which included the article, “Experts\Spinal Cord Injury 101” (Appendix B). This non-fiction piece from facingdisability.com was intended as background knowledge (*Fieldnotes, 12.7.12*) for the article the students would read the next day, “Quadriplegia, What Does it Mean?” After watching a short clip about spinal cords and spinal cord injury, and briefly discussing
the article, Anne expected that the students would be primed to think about spinal cord injuries relevant to quadriplegia the following day.

The next day, before the students arrived, Anne and I were talking about the Common Core. She was concerned about how the English department was going to find the time to even talk about the Core, let alone develop the formative assessments they were being asked to create amidst their other responsibilities—assessments that needed to align across the grade bands. She wondered aloud how service-learning and the Common Core would co-exist and worried that the students’ interests would be lost in the shuffle. In my fieldnotes from that day, I jotted down something Anne said which reflected the very reason she chose the article, “Quadriplegia, What Does it Mean?” (Appendix C). She said, “this is their school, let’s do it with them. Their ideas are the foundations for our tomorrow. We’re not letting our kids be a part of their education.” Anne’s reflections spoke to the values that undergirded her pedagogical approach in that she put students and their community at the very center of her teaching. Anne had selected the piece, “Quadriplegia, What Does it Mean?” because her students—over the past several years—had reinforced what she, too, had come to see as an issue in their school: narrow understandings of (dis)ability, which had led to problematic framings of students with disabilities. “Let’s do it with them,” Anne had said, acknowledging the students were, in fact, already doing something—so why not figure out what that was and incorporate it into the official, school sanctioned learning opportunities in the classroom. I asked Anne to whom she was referring when she said, “we’re” and she brought it back to the Common Core. While there were a lot of authors on the Common Core, the adolescent voice was missing. What are the issues that adolescents find pressing at this time, and in the case of Anne’s students, young people living in urban communities? How
might their perspectives help us to understand more deeply the needs of the 21st Century, particularly in urban communities? For some of the students at Liberty, one of the most pressing needs was to address the dehumanization of students in their school with disabilities.

After the students read the article, Anne assigned the following writing prompt:

_Quadriplegia, what does it mean and how would you respond?_ In this case, the journal prompt was intended to foster connections between the article and the students’ own perceptions and mindsets surrounding quadriplegia. Such writing prompts further supported the deeper “critical” connections students could make in this project in comparison to the garden project. As I noted at the beginning of this chapter, the campaign was more intimately connected to the students’ daily experiences, including their own thoughts and beliefs about students—and more generally, people—with physical impairments. In this instance, Anne was affording a textually mediated learning opportunity to students, through their writing, to interrogate their own thoughts and beliefs about quadriplegia, a physical condition of some of their peers; there were students at Liberty who were paraplegic and students who were quadriplegic. Benjamin responded (_Image 7_),

_The way I would react if I saw someone that was in a wheel chair [sic], with quadraplegia [sic]. Is I would feel the need to do something to help them out. I feel nervous because I try not to get in the way or do anything to make them feel uncomfortable. Because I know how much they go through I just want to make things easier on them. But I get real nervous because some seem stressed, agitated, or irritated [sic] because some people treat them like their [sic] stupid or people laugh at them._

Anne’s comments:

Next to “Because I know” she wrote, “how”
At the bottom of his paper, she wrote, _Sometimes nervousness or stress occurs when we lack knowledge. What can you do to help ease the nervousness/stress?_
In this excerpt, Benjamin shared with Anne, and revealed to himself, that he likes to help people in wheelchairs, but often feels nervous around them. He attributed his nervousness to perceived stress, agitation and irritation—and he does not want his intent to help to be misconstrued as an attempt to make students feel like they are being mocked, or laughed at. Anne responded to Benjamin’s nervousness with an observation and a question, “Sometimes nervousness or stress occurs when we lack knowledge,” asking him in the body of his response “how” he knows what these students go through. She prompted, “What can you do to help ease the nervousness/stress?” encouraging Benjamin to gauge his own knowledge about the lives of these students, and seek to know more. Anne tied Benjamin’s stress and nervousness to a lack of knowledge—not in a judgmental way, but in a way that invited him to pursue additional self-discovery as well as understanding about students in wheelchairs.
She asked him, “what can you do,” encouraging Benjamin to recognize his own agency in the learning process. In the excerpt above, Anne is inviting Benjamin to explore his own lack of awareness, awareness being a central form of participation within the service focus: Disability Awareness Campaign. Such a learning opportunity is also meaningfully situated on the periphery of the Design Team practice given that Design Team students, as I will explore later, were aiming to generate more awareness about (dis)ability in their school.

Angela responded to the same prompt (Image 8),

When I see a person with a disability I just thank god for all the blessings he has giving [sic] me. They go through a lot some aren’t really able to do for there [sic] selves, some aren’t really able to really learn, its [sic] a lot of stuff they can’t do and I can do so I never laugh or make fun of them because its [sic] really not funny. Maybe some are like because they were born like that or maybe they have got into an accident you’ll never know so its [sic] really not good to laugh or make fun of them. I even try to help some of them out if its [sic] something they need and im [sic] able to get it or help them out with I will.

Anne’s comments:

Describe an encounter you had with a disabled person. What did you say/Do? How did they respond?
In this excerpt, Angela is offering a complex view of (dis)ability that goes beyond a singular cause of physical impairment (i.e., they were born that way, an accident), but argues that the potential causes are typically outside of the control of the physically impaired person. She asserted, “you’ll never know so it’s really not good to laugh or make fun of them,” making the argument that it is impossible to justify making fun of, or laughing at a student in a wheelchair. Making such an argument was also situated on the periphery of the Design Team practice: raising awareness about the complexity of the students’ lived realities, while simultaneously attempting to counter dehumanizing actions and reactions with these students. While Angela shared that she too, like Benjamin, was eager to help people in wheelchairs, Anne encouraged Angela to explore, more specifically, her language and actions around
people with disabilities, “Describe an encounter you had with a disabled person. What did you say/do? How did they respond?”

In Angela and Benjamin’s responses I discovered forms of participation afforded by this advocacy-oriented service-learning project, which privileged reading and writing as important forms of engagement around a community issue. Writing, in this instance, served as a way for students to witness, to analyze, and to take a stance. Therefore, literacy was a tool through which the students themselves were becoming aware.

These events also speak to the emergent nature of literacy practices in critical service-learning projects. Because Anne could not predetermine what the students would learn in the service-learning project, her journal prompts were not predetermined days or weeks in advance, rather, they emerged as she observed what students were learning and what they were saying in the context of the project. As Butin (2003) observed, service-learning projects have remainders, which are learning opportunities related to the service-learning project that were not previously anticipated by the teacher. With that being the case, writing prompts in particular were as fluid as the project itself—taking shape as the project evolved. The way literacy practices were taking shape, then, was more fluid and context-based than a standardized approach would suggest or even allow.

Anne’s feedback in the margins and at the foot of the students’ papers (e.g., “How would you respond? What can you do? What did you say? What did you do?”) also captured the interconnected nature of literacy practices to the service focus. While it is not uncommon for a teacher to offer feedback in the margin of students’ papers, Anne’s feedback is unique to the critical service-learning project focus. The students’ written journal entries served as a platform for Anne to offer students additional opportunities to reflect on, and generate
awareness around disability. In other words, her feedback both encouraged critical thought and reflection, but specifically focused on the issues within the students’ communities.

**Disconnections located at the intersection of the word and the world.** Other readings on (dis)ability, such as the students’ reading of the YA novel, *Stoner and Spaz*, invited students into fictional worlds where characters were also negotiating (dis)ability. Like with *Seedfolks*, there were clear connections between this YA novel and the service focus in Anne’s classroom (i.e., Disability Awareness Campaign). Unlike *Seedfolks*, though, *Stoner and Spaz* offered an imagined reality that provoked a dialectical tension between that which was possible in terms of perceptions around disability with that which was currently happening within the school. The book *Stoner and Spaz* is about a boy named Ben, who has cerebral palsy, and a girl named Colleen, who is a “pothead,” who form a friendship with one another during the ordinary occurrences of everyday life. Angela shared the following about this book (*Lines 448-454*),

Angela: *Stoner and Spaz*, uh, I liked it, I liked how a person, a person who was a popular person who did drugs could talk to a disabled person, a disability person. Like you would probably never catch that and for that to happen was *Angela offered a pregnant pause and so I asked*,

Emily: So that typically wouldn’t happen?

Angela: No it wouldn’t. I don’t think it would.

Emily: Do you think that happens here [at Liberty]?

Angela thought about this, and eventually responded, “But a lot of people like, Colleen, like Colleen’s attitude and how she was. I wouldn’t not have seen probably seen a person like that, talkin’ to a disabilities person. They’d probably walk past them or be ignorant. Laugh at ‘em, or stare at ‘em. Something like that” (*Lines 467-469*). Angela’s reflections about the interactions between a “popular person” and a “disability person” in *Stoner and Spaz*, versus
those observations she had documented in her own school marked ideological tensions
between the two texts. I learned from Angela’s reflections that learning, in the context of this
project, was uniquely connected to what she had observed about her own community. She
was making a text to self connection—one that allowed her to think more deeply about the
characters and about her own lived reality.

Angela’s evaluation of her peers also spoke to the daily power struggles students
faced within the school. The materialist framing offered by Erevelles (2000)—a scholar of
disability studies—describes the impaired body through a materialist lens, recognizing the
ways in which it is perceived as inefficient and unproductive; not to be taken seriously.
Angela observed the dialectical tension created by the actions and language of the characters
in Stoner and Spaz, which were sharply contrasted with her observations of interactions
between students at Liberty. Colleen and Ben were friends.

Benjamin also noted the negative treatment of students at Liberty, specifically those
with physical impairments. In a journal prompt for Anne’s class, he pondered (Image 8),

Well I don’t really don’t know why, some people just push people with disabilities to
the side, because there [sic] human to [sic]. It agravates [sic] me at times b/c
sometimes I think ‘If I was in a wheelchair ξ notice how hard it is for them. And how
much more complicated there [sic] life is for no reason.
In this particular free-write, Benjamin chose to write about “people with disabilities,” sharing that he sometimes tried to imagine what it would be like to be in a wheelchair. Through this process of imagining, Benjamin acknowledged that the experience would be “hard” and “complicated,” but really, for “no reason.” His final point offers a provocative statement for his reader to consider—there is no justifiable reason for why the lives of people in wheelchairs should be more complicated.

In a later writing prompt, Benjamin went beyond recognizing the hard and complicated lives of “people with disabilities” offering a potential solution for one of the complications they face, which are created by structural inequalities. In the worksheet below (Image 10) the following prompt is offered: “THINK AND WRITE: Can you think of one way to make your own community better?”
Anne framed this handout for students by saying, “write about this in terms of how you could make your community better. Think about Stoner and Spaz” encouraging the students to make a connection to the character Ben, who had cerebral palsy, and the community issue they had identified in their own school of creating awareness around (dis)ability. Benjamin responded, “Make every building wheelchair accessible, and cleaner, and more sidewalks so people with wheelchairs can go anywhere.” Part of Benjamin’s written response was not hypothetical; rather it was something that the Design Team members had actually accomplished in the Hadley Park community. They had surveyed the Good Seeds Community Garden, took note of the lack of the sidewalk, and more generally, the lack of accessibility for students in wheelchairs, and then addressed this structural issue by laying patio pavers around the garden. Benjamin’s reflection went beyond the garden, though, to include buildings, and on a broader scale, “anywhere” people in wheelchairs
wanted to go. He was recognizing the way these inequities were not just located in the
garden, but a part of his everyday reality.

The literacy artifacts offered above demonstrate the way Benjamin and Angela used
writing as a form of participation in the Disability Awareness Campaign, but more
importantly, as a form of agency in changing the social issue under investigation. These
literacy events became a way to bear witness to these issues in their school, to locate
dialectical tensions between lived and fictional realities, and to imagine possible solutions to
these issues. In this way, writing also became a means of advocacy for Angela and
Benjamin—a way to account for and explore the issues students with physical impairments
faced in their school. I discovered through my interviews with Benjamin and Angela that
such awareness had moved both of them to action. During an interview with Angela she
shared an upsetting incident in the hallway involving a student who had fallen out of her
wheelchair (Lines 269-290):

Angela: one time me and Benjamin was walkin’ in the hallway and the girl, Raquel,
that walks on the thingy, like she fell. Everybody kept walkin’ past her. And, it just
so happened me and Benjamin right there and I’m like, “Benjamin help me help her
up. And we both helped her up.”

Emily: Wow.

Angela: Like everybody walked past her.

Emily: Wow. What did you think of that?

Angela: I just really thought that was so disrespectful. You all want somebody to
help you all up. Like, why wouldn’t you all help her up.

This was a critical moment for Angela not only because she was textualizing this experience
and making it a part of her material understanding of (dis)ability in her school, but it also
allowed Angela to reflect on the way her own awareness had grown by being a member of the Design Team (Lines 284-290):

*Emily:* Now, what made you and Benjamin different? What made you guys think to pick her up?

*Angela:* Maybe because that’s just how we are and being in the Design Team, knowin’ that, knowin’ that they are just like us and. Cause before I wouldn’t say I would probably walk past her, I would probably, I don’t know, but it just. I was not going to let, leave her there. So this all happened, me and Benjamin, I’m like, “Benjamin, help me help her pick her up.”

Angela asserted, “that’s just how we are,” “in the Design Team” and expands this point to say acting is about “knowin’” “knowin’ that they are just like us.” Before I explore knowledgeable identities connected to the Design Team, I first want to focus on Angela’s point that it is about “knowin’” having an understanding of how (dis)ability has been socially constructed in the school and “knowin’” differently. The statement “they’re just like us” points to this understanding—that while students with physical impairments have been socially constructed as “other,” they should be treated the way any other human being should be treated if found on the floor in the hallway: humanely. Ways of being, then, were directly connected to ways of knowing and talking (Rabinow, 1984).

Angela also reflected on the noticeable differences between her and Benjamin’s actions and those of her peers: “that’s just how we are and being in the Design Team.” The identity talk documented by Hunt and Benford (1994) offers a useful construct here to think about what Angela meant when she referenced her and Benjamin’s membership on the Design Team. Hunt and Benford (1994) who were documenting social movement organizations noted the ways members of these groups would talk about their own identities as in line with the collective identities of the social movement, and how these identities “shape and are shaped by collective actions” (p. 511). Both Benjamin and Angela’s
experience and Hunt and Benford’s (1994) work can also be framed by a macro theory of communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Lave and Wenger (1991) observed that as someone participates in a community of practice, they both shape and are shaped by the practice—members’ knowledgeable identities become intricately linked to the shared goals of the practice. Such was the case for Angela and Benjamin. Situated on the periphery of Design Team practice, but also engaging in witnessing and documentation through their in class writing, “learning…essentially involve[d] becoming an ‘insider.’ Learners do not receive or even construct abstract, ‘objective,’ individual knowledge; rather, they learn to function in a community…they acquire that particular community’s subjective viewpoint and learn to speak its language” (Brown & Duguid, 1991, p. 48). Angela located her and Benjamin’s actions within the Design Team: “before I wouldn’t say I would probably walk past her, I would probably.” Presented with an opportunity to act upon what they knew—by having participated in witnessing and documenting narrow framings of disability in their school—Angela and Benjamin helped the student from the ground.

Benjamin and Angela were both making their experiences with, and observations of, people with disabilities a part of the contextualization cues (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993) that helped them to understand mindsets and language surrounding people with disabilities in their school. For Angela, there were dialectical tensions between what she had read in Stoner and Spaz and what she had witnessed in the hallway at Liberty. Such a juxtaposition of texts, broadly conceived, spoke to the literacy practices that were operating in the critical service-learning projects in Anne’s classroom and the ways in which they were socially and ideologically situated (e.g., Barton, 1991; Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Barton & Hamilton, 2005; Gee, 2000; Street, 1984/1995/2003). Angela’s observation also speaks to
the instability (Butin, 2003/2010) of service-learning in that she drew on her own experiences to make sense of the relationships between the characters in the book *Stoner and Spaz*. Other students might not have had the same experience, and therefore may not have come out of the text with the same understanding. Thus, another student’s understanding might be less critical, or less aware of the inequities facing students with physical impairments in their school. Due to Angela’s experiences on the Design Team, and the overlapping, fluid nature of her membership with the Team and Anne’s class, she was able to take advantage of this learning opportunity.

**Language and (dis)ability.** Beyond the ways literacy informed learning opportunities in the service-learning project in Anne’s classroom, discursive exchanges also mediated learning opportunities. Tueting (2005) argued, “almost all mutual engagement involves language, to a greater or lesser extent” (p. 41) and Eckert (2006) was convinced that communities of practice are “a rich locus for the study of situated language use” and “of language change” (p. 1). Recognizing communities of practice as fertile ground for language use and exchange, I considered the role this semiotic mode played in learning opportunities in Anne’s classroom. In the following section, I briefly explore the way these opportunities were mediated through language during the disability awareness service-learning project.

Liberty High School, being one of two high schools in the district with an occupational handicap unit, served over fifty students with physical impairments. The laughter and disrespect of students with physical impairments was well documented by Angela and Benjamin in their writing samples above—and by the Design Team later in this dissertation chapter. One of the oldtimers on the Design Team, Brooke, had noticed a specific lack of attention paid to language use surrounding disability. She observed students
using oppressive terms like, “retard” to characterize another student’s violation of a tacit social rule: “That kid has a blue shirt. He’s retarded” (Brooke, informal conversation) was an example of the ways students would use these oppressive terms in casual exchanges.

Negative terms associated with disability were also documented in Anne’s classroom, but in the case of the literacy event explored below, the students used these terms to describe characters in the multimodal texts they were reading in their classroom. The two excerpts below are from Benjamin and Angela’s fourth period class and capture a salient exchange among students and Anne as they negotiate labels associated with disability. In the excerpt below, the students had just finished reading The Scarlet Ibis by James Hurst. Anne was engaging the students in a conversation about symbolism, and asked the students,

Anne: What’s happening in the story? What’s “The Scarlet Ibis?”
Lamar: “It’s about a brother who had a retard…I mean a special brother.”

I documented this brief exchange in my fieldnotes on December 14, 2012, and noted that the conversation had moved on from there. I questioned, “I wonder here whether Lamar caught himself because of the class’s more recent discussions on appropriate terminology used to describe students with cognitive delays? He was quick to correct his language. Lamar’s self-correction of the oppressive label “retard” was reflected in other discussions with the fourth period English students.

During a class discussion on the movie, The Mighty, a movie about a bright young man, Kevin, who is scholastically gifted and has a degenerative disease that will eventually take his life, and Max, a muscular young man who has a strong physical presence and a learning disability, who are friends. Anne was working with her students on a worksheet about this film and she posed a question to the students (Lines 303-334):
Anne: Alright. Look at the last theme. Rising above our limitations. What are some of the limitations faced by Max and Kevin? Tyrique. What are some of the limitations faced by Max and Kevin? What are some of the limitations? Listen to my question. What are some of the limitations that Max faced? What are some of the limitations that Kevin faced?

Lamar: Max is a cripple.

Anne: Okay, that’s a good one.

Lamar: I mean Kevin.

Anne: Kevin, right! Kevin has physical disabilities. Good job. Okay. She said, remember, Max had a learning disability. So that’s something, that’s a limitation.

Keytona: Isn’t Max retarded?

Anne: Say it again. What’d you just say?

Keytona: Isn’t Max slow? Or retarded?

Anne: Listen. He just had, it wasn’t that he couldn’t learn=

Reed: He can’t read=

Anne: He just needed someone to take the time with him and he had to learn it another way. It wasn’t that he couldn’t read.

Reed: He can’t read.

Keyonta: Hold up. I think I’m stringin’ it together. He’s mental and he’s physical. He’s mentally disabled and he’s physically disabled.

Grappling with the language around (dis)ability and difference was afforded during class discussions around texts such as, *The Mighty*. Such opportunities were central to this service-learning project which was rooted in a desire to generate awareness about disability. The learning opportunities in this exchange were discursively structured, and as such, drew upon the particular set of lexical references that the students had within their repertoire. While the students were not specifically addressing the problematic framings of disability in their own school during this exchange, there are meaningful implications for language acquisition
around *The Mighty* if in fact the new words offered in this exchange supplanted pejorative terms such as “cripple,” “slow,” or “retarded” within the school. As was evidenced in the classroom dialogue among students and Anne, generating awareness was not always explicitly done; rather it had also become implicitly embedded in classroom discussions. Anne offered substitutions to students for abusive words used to describe the characters in the text: in the place of “cripple,” she offered Lamar, “physical disabilities,” and for Keyonta, in the place of “retarded” or “slow,” she offered a narrative description of the character’s learning needs, “He just needed someone to take the time with him and he had to learn it another way.” Such a finding demonstrated a struggle between discourses—the way one discourse might interrupt one that has been established and circulated among people who have come to embody a particular “regime of truth” (Foucault, 1977). The struggle among these discourses, though, was not readily apparent to the students; it was subtly operating in their everyday lives.

Meaningfully connecting classroom texts to the service-learning focus, in this case, did not prompt an explicit discussion about the connections to Liberty High School. It did however offer students an alternative way to talk about disability, a way to attend to the nuances of language—particularly in the way language is used to describe marginalized bodies and minds—and a way to expand and complicate (dis)ability as more than a singular, universal experience. In this particular critical service-learning project, then, which was focused on advocacy, discussions of texts connected to the project afforded opportunities to use new language rooted in the service focus, but to also use this language to analyze classroom texts.
In the conversation above, Anne and the three students were disentangling what were conflated experiences in the high school: learning disability, cognitive delay, and physical impairments. Anne approached this conversation with compassion, re-voicing the Lamar’s contribution with, “Kevin has physical disabilities.” Keyonta also made a lexical shift at the end of this exchange, taking up Anne’s use of “disability” and rephrasing “retarded” to mentally disabled. I did not have the opportunity to hear Lamar, Reed or Keyonta use any of those terms again, so I cannot say that the lexical shift was a permanent one for any of the students, but it is clear that the learning opportunity afforded was discursively mediated around a community-relevant text. Such exchanges in Anne’s classroom allowed me to think deeply about how Angela and Benjamin’s participation in the Disability Awareness Campaign in Anne’s ninth grade classroom really reflected the “us doing for us” noted by Hart (2006). The text analysis briefly described above was about the awareness of the students in Anne’s classroom, rather than the students creating awareness for an outside audience. In other words, awareness was not just something other people outside of the class needed, but also a part of the students’ learning opportunities, which were both textually and linguistically mediated.

I found that one of the affordances of engaging students in these YA novels and supplementary non-fiction texts about (dis)ability was that students were gaining access not only to a new discourse, but they were also broadening the contexts in which this discourse was being used, including real and fictional spaces. Gee (2001) explained that “Discourses are ways of being in the world; they are forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, and social identities as well as gestures, glances, body positions, and clothes” (p. 526). In the excerpts above, particularly the classroom discussion with the three
students, Anne implicitly offered her students vocabulary that troubled narrow framings of disability, and vocabulary that could replace, or displace oppressive terms such as “crippled” and “retard.” The non-fiction texts in particular offered specific terminology for students to consider. For example, when the students were reading *Stoner and Spaz*, Anne included an article from “KidsHealth” called “Cerebral Palsy” (See Appendix D), the developmental condition of the character, Ben. The article talked about the condition, how it is diagnosed, how it is prevented, and how people live with it. Offering these kinds of readings illuminated the complexity of lived condition not just of the character, but also more broadly of the human condition surrounding (dis)ability. These readings also connected language to power, creating a friction between established ways of describing disability and more humanizing ways of recognizing (dis)(cap)abilities. Foucault (1977) spoke to the way people come to embody the discourses and ways of being of particular truths and power structures. In this way, the students were interrupting a discourse that was well-established and circulating, in a very natural way, among students at the school.

**Broadening Notions of Text and Tapping into Community Relevant Literature**

Through a topical analysis of the texts Anne selected for her class, it is clear that the YA novels *Stoner and Spaz* and *Seedfolks* were selected because they were project-relevant. Similarly, the non-fiction pieces presented in the data above were selected because of their relevance to each service focus. While “project” relevant literature would be a fitting description for the texts Anne used in her classroom, the underlying significance of these texts was that Benjamin and Angela connected these texts to their own communities and the issues they were tackling through their service-learning projects in ninth grade English. I found that through their active juxtaposition of texts (i.e. YA novel as text and community as
text) Angela and Benjamin were generating meaning by noting the connections as well as the
disconnections and contradictions between the texts (e.g., what was possible in the novels
versus what was happening real-time in their school and community). Thus, I discovered an
important distinction between project-relevant literature—which could be described as texts
with themes relevant to the service focus—and what I came to understand as community
relevant literature, which is realized as students negotiate the meaning generated from the act
of juxtaposing project-relevant texts and community as text. Such a finding supports the
work of New Literacy Scholars who argue that literacy is, in fact, embedded in sociocultural
contexts, value-laden, and a social practice among people.

Given that community relevant literature (CRL) is realized through engaging with
texts and one’s own community, it makes sense that one of the qualities of CRL is that the
meaning generated from such texts is neither predictable nor stable. The fluidity and
unpredictability of connections between community relevant literature and the service-
learning experiences can be found in the meaning Angela and Benjamin drew from Seedfolks.
Despite the service focus of the garden—which was maintaining affordable community
garden plots for neighborhood residents—neither Benjamin nor Angela discussed the actual
focus of the Good Seeds Community Garden. Instead, they had observed the opportunities
afforded by leaving the classroom. In contrast, Benjamin and Angela drew more explicit
connections between the focus of the disability awareness campaign, and for example, Stoner
and Spaz. Angela, for instance, noted the contradictions between the relationships among
students with and without disabilities at Liberty and the relationships between Ben and
Colleen in Stoner and Spaz.
In light of the variation in the connections made by Benjamin and Angela across the two critical service-learning projects—between text and community—another important quality of CRL becomes apparent: it is designed to connect students to their communities and to emphasize the importance of reading and writing in developing those connections. In light of the fluid nature of these connections between traditional texts and community as text, these connections cannot be predetermined nor standardized; students make these important connections in dynamic social spaces as they interact with one another and with texts.

Identifying the nature of CRL helped me to think about the important role these kinds of texts played in students’ learning opportunities within each of the service-learning projects. Similar to the work Kinloch (2007a/b, 2010) did with youth in Harlem, Anne had selected articles, books, and literacy activities that were connected to the community issue under investigation. Unlike the youth in Kinloch’s study (2007a/b, 2010), though, most of the young people in Anne’s class had not entered her classroom with an interest in exploring community gardening or perceptions of ability/disability in the school. Instead, Anne invited students into this exploration based on observations of older students in the school [the Design Team] who—based on the length of time they had spent at Liberty and in Hadley Park—recognized the significance of these social issues in their lives and their communities. Thus, project relevant literature in Anne’s classroom appeared to be a negotiated text; one that required the input of students from the community. The data also seem to suggest that as the students change, the nature of project relevant literature and community relevant literature will also change. In other words, future students will make new observations about their communities, and consequently, the service focus and the accompanying texts will evolve and change.
Collectively, the data above reveal that learning opportunities, forms of participation, and literacy practices necessarily change when the context for learning, the material resources, and the texts of a classroom fundamentally change. The community very clearly became a resource for learning as well as a material force in Angela and Benjamin’s understanding of the texts they were reading for ninth grade English. Important to note here, though, is that the learning opportunities were not necessarily those intended nor offered by Anne. Learning in these service-learning projects, then, was fluid, or as Butin (2003/2010) would argue, unstable. Literacy was also socially situated. Barton and Hamilton (2005) asserted that literacy practices “are often associated with specific areas of life. For example, the set of practices associated with writing an assignment in education is distinct from those associated with filing a safety report in a workplace or writing a personal diary in the home” (p. 18). In line with Barton and Hamilton’s (2005) assertion, the literacy practices in which Angela and Benjamin participated were associated with specific qualities of the service-learning projects (e.g., classroom texts becoming juxtaposed with textualized experiences). Moreover, the students demonstrated the focus of the project mattered in terms of the learning opportunities and forms of participation that they took up, or actively constructed. Simply put, literacy practices in these critical service-learning projects were distinct from those that do not explicitly use the community as a textual resource.

An Overlap in Communities of Practice

The data explored above largely speak to the learning opportunities, forms of participation, and literacy practices of Angela and Benjamin in Anne’s ninth grade English classroom. The learning opportunities afforded through the service-learning project privileged multiple modes of meaning making, including, most notably, literacy and
language. The forms of participation afforded were also shaped by these modes, but also by the spatial characteristics of the service-learning focus (e.g., the open space of the garden), which explicitly valued not only the traditional classroom as a learning space, but also the community.

Understanding the complex and dynamic nature of learning and participation in Anne’s classroom offered promising possibilities for emergent communities of practice—communities of practice that might be unique to a service-learning classroom. In the next section, I frame the Design Team—the student leadership group associated with the projects—as a community of practice that emerged out of this dynamically social environment. In this section, I explore the important ways that forms of participation and learning opportunities in Anne’s classroom overlapped with those of the Team. In addition, I explore important ways in which students on the Team actively constructed new forms of participation and learning opportunities as they reregistered the new environment in which they found themselves—which for the oldtimers, was participating in the service component without a curricular element.

**Recognizing and Creating Space for Emergent Communities of Practice**

*Because I live in this community. -Sarah*

Anne’s initial investment in the Design Team was one rooted in the classic phrase, *many hands make light work.* She shared, “I just decided that this garden project was something that was going to be huge and I couldn’t do it all myself.” Inviting students to participate in the Design Team originally, then, meant that the responsibilities for the original service-learning project—the community garden—would not solely fall upon Anne, but would be distributed among interested students. While this was the impetus behind creating
the Design Team, Anne realized the Design Team had become much more than a student group handling logistics. She came to recognize the importance this group had in students’ lives (Lines 225-229):

For the kids that are a part of the Design Team you know, they’re leaders, and that wasn’t even something that I was counting on. It just kind of happened. But those kids, the kids, dealing with the seniors that I have now, I see, you know, in hindsight, how big of a piece that was for them. And for us in general. And now, I’m trying to make sure I, I, keep that piece solid. Because it’s huge.

Anne recognized that embedded within the community of practice of her ninth grade English class was an emergent (Brown & Duguid, 1991) community of practice that had developed “in response to common interest or position, and play[ed] an important role in forming their members’ participation in, and orientation to, the world around them” (Eckert, 2006, p. 4).

Each year, certain students in Anne’s class were drawn to the participatory nature of service-learning, or they took a particular interest in one of the service projects. As Anne reflected, she recognized that the Design Team served as an official school space for students to continue participating in the critical service-learning projects even after they left her classroom.

Briefly, I want to return to my first research question, What happens when students and their teacher participate in a critical service-learning project, and I do this in order to speak to the emergence of the Design Team as an overlapping community of practice that was not institutionally regulated or generated; one that extended the spacio-temporal (Lemke, 2000) conditions of the traditional service-learning project and of the traditional groupings of students in schools. The unique nature of the Design Team is understood in contrast to the way students are typically organized in service-learning projects. Traditionally, service-learning has been bound by grade band and the academic school year. Lemke (2000) noted,
though, that sometimes social groups form that extend beyond that of the traditional class session. Such a formation also makes sense within the theoretical framing of communities of practice given that other communities of practice take shape beyond that of the targeted discipline. The example used by Lave and Wenger (1991) was that of the physics classroom: not only are students participating in the community of practice of the discipline of physics, but they are also participating in somewhat of a less obvious community of practice, which is the reproduction of high school. In response to my first research question, I thought about how critical service-learning projects might serve as a disruptive force in the kinds of communities of practice that might take shape in the classroom. And so again, I ask, what happens when students and their teacher participate in a critical service-learning project?

Turning to Anne’s reflections about the Team offered at the beginning of this section, it seems that something that happened in the critical service-learning projects at Liberty was that a social network of students had formed around the garden and the campaign. Students had taken up forms of participation that warranted their involvement in the projects that went well beyond what school-sanctioned time (e.g., an academic semester, school year) had permitted.

As newcomers, Benjamin and Angela’s participation in Anne’s class overlapped with their participation in the Team. In other words, they were still members of both communities of practice. Jordan and Sarah, on the other hand, connected with the newcomers through their membership in the Design Team. In the following section, I explore the evolution of the Design Team, the forms of participation and learning opportunities afforded within overlapping space between Anne’s class and the Team, and the role of literacy within that socially dynamic space.
The Social Grouping of the Design Team

The Design Team students observed their formation as the result of shared interest, or as Tusting (2005) argued, the “pursuit of some joint enterprise” (p. 39). Jordan shared (Lines 88-90),

“me and Sarah, we didn’t talk a lot, well before [the Design Team] we didn’t, I didn’t even talk to her and I walked past her every day. And now, we’re real close now. I’m always hanging out with her and everything outside of school.”

Jordan noted that his and Sarah’s need to work closer with one another for Design Team tasks was not without consequence; it brought them closer together and emerged into what appeared to be a friendship. Members of the Team likened their community of practice to other familiar groups of people who shared a bond of some sort. Brooke, for example, compared the Design Team to the *The Breakfast Club*, a 1980s movie with Molly Ringwald: “like how they were all different cliques and stuff and now we’re all friends and we all hang out.” (Lines 314-315). Angela used the metaphor of family: “at first I just thought it was a group of students who helped around the school, like, like, doing posters, getting stuff together, but to me now, Design Team means, really, it’s like, almost like a family. Like, we do stuff to help other people and to help ourselves, like getting to know each other more and helping around the school” (Lines 414-417). Sarah described the group using the very word that labeled them: Team. She said, “Because a team is not one person. A team is multiple people who work together. And you’re bringing all these different cultures, sports, people, all this into one” (Lines 301-303). Anne, as the teacher who was supporting this group with institutional support in terms of space, money (e.g., grants), and time, observed (Lines 1112-1115):

And it just kind of morphed into this whole leadership slash extended family thing. And, and, I think it started because they spent so much time together. I mean these
guys came off of their summer and wrote a grant. And we had just spent so much
time together, that it just kind of, it kind of evolved.

In the excerpts above, three of the focal students and one of their peers were speaking to the
connections that formed among members of the Team as they worked together on the
service-learning projects that originated in Anne’s class.

The four focal students also spoke to the important ways the Team shaped their
relationship with school. During my one-on-one interview with Angela, for example, she told
me she might be switching schools the following year, but shared that she planned to carry
with her what she had learned through the Team: “I mean, if I don’t, even if I don’t [come
back], I’m still going to have this same mind track, doin’ what I’ve been doin’ and wanting to
help people and, other stuff like that” (Lines 780-781). In this statement, Angela was
reflecting on the identity formation that had taken place within the Team: “same mind track.”
She would continue to be and to do what she had been doing by helping people.

For Jordan, Design Team meetings, or obligations of any kind associated with the
Team, became a motivation for coming to school: “the reason I came to school today is
‘cause I knew we had a meeting. Like, our meeting got canceled the other day. I didn’t come”
(Informal conversation, April 10 2013). Echoing Anne’s sentiments about the Design Team,
Jordan shared, “it’s been a huge part of my life” (Line 344).

Benjamin, who was “afraid of failure” (Free write) and was “so disappointed in [his]
efforts” (Free write) his freshman year, saw his participation in the Design Team as an
accomplishment: “I’ve done so much more than what I thought, like. I thought I was going to
come here, you know, I was just going to be like normal, but I did so much with my year, like
I’ve spoken at forty person conference and then I’m goin’ to Atlanta, Georgia in July” (Lines
For Benjamin, the Design Team captured the kind of work he was capable of, whereas his grades and classroom work failed to do so.

And finally, Sarah, who had been involved in the project the longest of the four focal students, struggled to imagine herself apart from the Team (Lines 419-422):

Emily: Will you stay involved in these kinds of projects [in college]?
Sarah: I want to stay involved in this one.
Emily: Tell me why.
Sarah: You know, it’s just something that you’re comfortable with. You’re like in it now. Like it’s something, it was like the seniors, we created it.

Beyond shaping their schooling experience, the students were also attending to the way participation in the Design Team had contributed to their knowledgeable identities. Drawing on Lave and Wenger (1991), I viewed the students’ reflections through the lens of knowledgeable identities, or the way a person becomes intricately connected to her practice. In their definition of identities, Lave and Wenger (1991) characterize them as “long-term, living relations between persons and their place and participation in communities of practice” (p. 53), adding that “identity, knowing, and social membership entail one another” (p. 53).

Eckert (2006) argued that members of a social group begin to understand themselves relative to the world around them, which “includes the common interpretation of other communities, and of their own practice with respect to those communities, and ultimately with the development of style – including a linguistic style – that embodies these interpretations” (pp. 1-2). As Sarah observed about her own participation in the Design Team, “you’re like in it now” and “we created it,” she recognized the Design Team itself was a part of who she was. Leaving the Team meant stepping outside of it, or shedding a part of who she was as a person. She was in it. Similarly, Jordan and Angela did not simply connect the Design Team
to their schooling experiences—rather, they made much deeper connections, tying the project to who they were and how they lived. Angela related it to a track of mind—as embedded in the way she thought and behaved, and Jordan connected it to his life. For Benjamin, who was concerned about the way his school work represented him—or served as a reification of his practice—the Design Team reflected his true accomplishments his freshman year—a likeness in his image not afforded by this grades.

**Reregistering the Environment: Forms of Participation and Learning Opportunities**

Communities of practice, like the Design Team, can be emergent; born out of the innovation and creativity of those participating based on their needs, their material resources, and their context. In this way, communities of practice can be both assigned and organized by an institution (e.g., a classroom of students) and created and organized by participants themselves (e.g., the Design Team). Thinking about the Design Team as an emergent community of practice, versus one assigned by Anne or the school, allowed for me to account for the important ways that students created new roles for themselves organized around their practice. One of the roles the students created and assumed was that of leadership.

**Learning from each other across grade bands.** Given that the Design Team was established to help Anne with the logistics of the project, essentially taking on some of the responsibilities that a teacher might have, students were invited to participate in leadership roles within the project at its inception. The four focal students each spoke to this point, but characterized leadership in different ways than those originally intended by Anne. One of the forms of leadership Sarah recognized was being able to speak on behalf of the project in front of grant stakeholders, educators, community activists, fellow students, and faculty and graduate students from the local university (*Line 16*). Since Anne and her students were
recipients of a National Education Association service-learning grant, there were individuals, such as the ones listed above, who were interested in learning about how the project was going at Liberty, and how it was contributing to students’ academic achievement. As such, Anne and her students were invited to participate in service-learning conferences, community roundtables, and grant stakeholder meetings. The combination of the students’ participation in the service-learning project and their self-selection onto the Design Team afforded them these public speaking opportunities, which Sarah recognized as a form of leadership.

During the same meeting, Brooke, another oldtimer offered that because of the opportunities she had had within the Design Team to speak in public, she intended to attend her first professional YouTube conference that summer—a space that would again require her to speak in public. She now had the confidence to conquer her fear of public speaking, which would have immediate consequences for her next steps after high school graduation.

Jordan also recognized this unique form of participation within the service-learning project and reflected on the learning it had afforded. I asked him what he had learned through the project and he shared (Lines 1225-1236),

Jordan: I actually think I changed because I speak better. Like, more in public speaking.

Emily: Really?

Jordan: Yeah. So public speaking.

Emily: so public speaking. Do you feel more comfortable with it?

Jordan: Yeah, like I could go speak in front of Obama. Jordan smiles

Emily: I smile and offer, Hey, if he comes I bet you could.

The confidence Jordan exhibits in the excerpt above—being ready to speak in front of President Obama—rivaled a deficit framing that Jordan had noticed around the way a
particular teacher talked about his language. During a conversation with Jordan, Ruby, Sarah, and Todd, I listened as they shared experiences about a couple of teachers in their building who were critical of the way the students talked. The students’ language, according to these teachers, made them sound “stupid” (Ruby, personal communication). Such a framing discouraged the students from talking in class (Jordan, personal communication) and made them resistant to engaging in class material. On the Design Team, though, Jordan felt confident—and he felt confident enough to say that in terms of public speaking, he was ready for President Obama.

Jordan’s reflections are particularly significant, then, given that as a young Black man in the school he has been told that his language is inadequate. Among Design Team members, and within the service-learning project, he recognized himself as a highly capable speaker and as someone who could easily craft and deliver a public speech. Moreover, instead of being defined as a problem—which he talks about in my brief introduction of him earlier in this chapter—Jordan was posing a problem (Flower, 2008, p. 16). In the classroom, where he often felt silenced, he would sometimes shut down, or in other instances act out so that he would be asked to leave—which, on certain occasions afforded him time to go to Anne’s classroom. On public stages, though, one time in front of 150 people, Jordan felt confident and it was on these stages that he posed problems that the Design Team, and Anne’s ninth graders were tackling in their school and local community. At the point of the interview mentioned above, Jordan had participated in four public presentations including one the previous year—his freshman year—in front of all of the district’s principals and other key personnel.
For Sarah, Jordan, and Brooke public speaking carried significant weight in terms of the forms of participation made available through the Design Team. Sarah described it as a new form of leadership, whereas both Brooke and Jordan reflect on how it impacted their confidence. Thus, it was clear this was an important dimension of the work of the Team. The focus of this dissertation study, though, is the overlapping space between Anne’s class and the Design Team and so I compared the oldtimers’ responses with the newcomers’ responses and located an important finding. Benjamin recalled his observations about Brendan, one of the oldtimers (Lines 910-930),

Benjamin: He like wasn’t even standing behind the podium. He was walking through the crowd giving his, he was like, the podium was here and Benjamin stands to demonstrate how far Brendan traveled from the mic. The podium was here and he was like, he started his speech and he started talkin’ and then he was like, “you know what” and Benjamin smacks his hand down on the table. “service learning is, this is what service learning can do. Benjamin starts to move across the room, embodying the kind of walking Brendan was doing. And you can look up at the board right here” and Benjamin gestures as if he were Brendan in front of a crowd of people, having them look at the board. “this is service-learning that, video that we made. Right here.” and like, the podium’s over here, dude. And he moves back to where the imaginary podium is. You know you can stand behind the podium, right? I was just sittin here. I was actually like this, Benjamin is sitting down again and looking up at an imaginary Brendan and shaking his hands and legs. Really nervous and the whole time. I was like, and he moves his hands together like he’s warming them over a fire=

Emily: And he’s moving around=

Benjamin: He’s like and he gets up again and moves around the room in swift motions. “I’m gonna do a backflip real quick while I’m doin’ this speech.”

Benjamin was highly complementary of Brendan’s public speaking, noting the contrasts between his own body language, which showed a great deal of nervousness, versus Brendan’s, which displayed feelings of confidence. Benjamin’s hyperbolic reference to watching Brendan do a backflip spoke to the confidence Brendan had developed over the last four years in the project.
I considered Lave and Wenger’s (1991) concept of newcomers and oldtimers as I thought about what Benjamin said in order to understand the valuable learning opportunity that occurred as Benjamin got to watch Brendan present. In his study, which documented apprenticeship learning in youth activism, Kirshner (2006) highlighted the significance of young people being able to watch more expert adults give persuasive speeches. He characterized this as apprenticeship learning, and identified three phases that included modeling, coaching, and fading. By being able to watch and then practice, before giving their own persuasive speech, the youth in Kirshner’s (2006) study were better prepared to deliver the genre of public speaking to a crowd. Similarly, while the oldtimers on the Design Team were not always aware of the way they were coaching and mentoring the newcomers, the newcomers were watching and learning. Such skills might also be likened to those documented in Yamauchi et al.’s (2006) study. Yamauchi et al., (2006) documented a similar, cross-generational service-learning project where teachers had appointed peer mentors, who were students who had participated in the project before. In this role, they “took attendance, assisted students in performing duties, collected and commented on peers’ journal reflections about service, and consulted with teachers about students with difficulties” (p. 153). One peer mentor talked about “‘passing down your knowledge’ to the next generations of students” (p. 155).

The disruptive nature of this cross-grade social grouping at Liberty afforded similar, valuable learning opportunities for the newcomers, Benjamin and Angela, to those documented by Kirshner (2006) and Yamauchi et al., (2006). As Angela reflected, “It’s just, the Design Team is a group of students who want to help lead like, just some leaders, that we learn from each other, we just want to lead and help others” (Lines 418-420). She offered
this reflection at the tail end of another point, which speaks to how Angela thought about leadership: “Like, we do stuff to help other people and to help ourselves, like getting to know each other more and helping around the school. Helping the disability. Helping the garden” (Lines 416-418). I found that in the overlap between Anne’s ninth grade classroom and the Design Team, both Angela and Benjamin were presented with valuable learning opportunities offered by the oldtimers. It was through a disruption in traditional time and space associated with school that the newcomers, Angela and Benjamin, were able to observe and engage with oldtimers, and to take on new roles. This disruption was afforded through service-learning which challenged the structuring structures (Bourdieu, 1992) traditionally associated with the institution of school.

**Textually mediated learning opportunities and forms of participation.** In addition to the leadership roles identified above, particularly in terms of public speaking, the four focal students were also afforded new forms of participation through the projects within the school. In the section below, I explore the way Team members became the public voice of the service-learning projects and the ways in which this form of participation made use of literacy.

**The Rotary Club competition.** Beginning in 2011, the Team had organized a poster presentation to present at the Service Above Self Fair held by the city’s Rotary Club. The Fair, which was actually a competition, was district-wide and recognized the most outstanding community engaged projects across the twenty-four high schools. The Rotary judges would visit each high school to listen to students’ presentations. In Image 11 below, there is a photo of the tri-fold board that Sarah designed for the competition in the Fall of 2012 (See Appendix E for tri-fold board requirements)—the students second submission to
the competition. Sarah had decided to submit an application to the competition on her own, and invited Brooke and Brendan to present with her. The tri-fold offers an example of another learning opportunity afforded among Design Team members, which were authentic literacy engagements with public audiences.

Image 11.

The Rotary Competition

Having participated in this competition before, Sarah felt like she had a good sense of what it would take to win this year (Lines 383-399):

Sarah: The very first [competition]. You should see the one I’m working on for this year. It is really good. I was like, “I’m tired of doing brown and gold. I’m tired of it because=

Brooke: We could do ___ State colors I guess. and giggles a little. Blue and white. This is the college Brooke and Sarah will be attending in the Fall.

Sarah: Like when we go to the Rotary and you see how these schools have like all these bright posters and all that. So I’m thinking like, let’s do neon colors. Or you know, like Spring time colors. So on the pamphlet=

Brooke: It’s like Easter.

Sarah: Pink, blue, orange, green and yellow.
Emily: And you picked that up from being at the presentations before? You’re thinking this might help your chances?

Brooke: Yeah.

On the day of the presentation, I was in Anne’s classroom when Brendan, Brooke and Sarah came down to prepare for their Rotary interview, which included an opening statement by the students and questions from the judges. This was the second year that they would present to the Rotary on the community garden and the Disability Awareness Campaign, and they were determined to do well this year. As they were finalizing their presentation, I wrote in my research journal that Sarah said, “I’m not leaving without an award this year.” And Brendan followed, “I don’t think they realize how good this project is.” Brooke, who was also there to help with the presentation donned a tag that read, “National Day of Silence” a day that recognizes the prejudice and violence amassed against the LGBTQ community. She said, “I can talk this period, though, because I’m doing the presentation. But after that, no talking.” Sarah sat down at the computer to write the opening statement for the Rotary interview (See Appendix F for required content). Her response is offered below in Image 12, and here I briefly offer our conversation just before she began typing:

“What is an opening statement?” she asked me as she read the handout given by the Rotary Club. I said, “it helps to paint a picture for the judges. Kind of like, the big idea. I read over her shoulder as she typed—she asked me to. She wanted someone to look for errors. She had about 7 minutes to get this thing typed and printed (6 copies). The errors were minor—some issues with capitalization and detail. Sarah, who disliked writing, sped through this exercise without an issue (fieldnotes, April 19, 2013):
As I looked back over Sarah’s response and think about the brief amount of time she had to pull this together, I took note of the detail and the depth of this reflection. Very quickly, she recounted the evolution of the project from her ninth grade year to that day in April, while also navigating her first encounter with an opening statement—a new genre of writing. The students and Anne left the classroom after Sarah printed the form and made their way down to the event for their interview. No more than three minutes worth of presentation, the students’ poster board, and their opening statement in hand.

Literacy scholars have argued that engaging adolescents in authentic, active and meaningful learning opportunities has the potential to encourage students to see themselves as necessary forces in their academic and literacy lives (Flower, 2008; Greenleaf & Hinchman, 2009; McCarthey & Moje, 2002; Moje et al., 2000; Peck, Flower & Higgins, 1995). The learning opportunity documented here speaks to what these literacy scholars were arguing for, but something that the field of service-learning has not fully explored. The opportunity presented here also spoke to an important finding located in the fold of practices between the Team and Anne’s class, which was that there was a convergence of school-
sanctioned literacy practices and ones that were emergent and project focused; a hybrid of reading and writing.

In addition, Sarah’s efforts toward the Rotary competition highlighted the way membership in the Design Team caused ruptures in the traditional roles of student. This finding hearkens back to the claims Butin (2003) was making about the instability and fluidity of learning in service-learning projects. As I noted earlier in this dissertation, Butin (2003) claimed that “service learning is a site of identity construction, destruction, and reconstruction with profound consequences of how we view the definitions and boundaries of the teaching process” (p. 1684). This particular experience with the Rotary Club was certainly one that challenged the traditional definitions and boundaries of the teaching process, highlighting the multiple communities of practice in which Sarah participated (e.g., a former student of Anne’s, a participant and oldtimer of the Design Team). It also reinforced findings supported by NLS scholars (e.g., Barton, 1991; Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Gee, 2000; Street, 1984/1995/2003) who argue that literacy is socially shaped, culturally informed, and value-laden. Here, Sarah was acquiring uses for literacy that she had not otherwise encountered.

An important dimension of the literacy practices taking shape here, which is further explored in literacy events below, is that the Team members were agentively selecting their audience, and based on their audience, engaging in new ways of writing to meet the audience’s need. The Rotary competition, for instance, was not an assignment given by Anne. In fact, Anne had told Sarah that she “just didn’t have time for it this year” (Anne, personal communication) due to the demands on her teaching and so, Sarah designed the poster board, the opening statement, and talking points on her own. Thus, new forms of
writing and participation were afforded not only because of Sarah’s long-term engagement with the service-learning project, but also because she anticipated that this would be a good public stage to broaden their impact.

**Spreading the word.** The Design Team students were mindful of their shared goal, which was to generate awareness within the school about (dis)abilities, and more broadly, to begin “respecting each other” (*Sarah, member check*). In line with these goals, the Team sought out ways to generate awareness and like Sarah demonstrated above, they looked for authentic audiences with whom to share their message. One of the ways they chose to do this was by creating a pamphlet. The two images below (*Image 13 & Image 14*) are the front and back of the pamphlet Sarah created, which was made available throughout the school and sometimes during public presentations. The pamphlet was used as a communication tool in these spaces by offering a snapshot glance at the work the Design Team and Anne’s ninth graders had done since 2009. The front of the pamphlet read,

> Since this project began four years ago a lot of things have changed. In year 1, Ms. Anne’s students planted a flower garden. In year 2, they helped build the raised beds for the first Wheel Chair accessible garden in the Hadley Park Community. Students shoveled the dirt in the beds, planted, watered, and mulched. In year 3, her classes went over and cleaned the weeds out of the vegetable garden, strawberry patches, and the raised beds. Year 4, in the fall they went over and cleaned out the weeds. In the spring they went over with Team Depot and built the sidewalk throughout the garden. We plan every year from here on out to expand tremendously.
Embedded in Sarah’s description of the service-learning project is evidence of the sustainable nature of critical service-learning projects that invite students to engage in projects in their own communities. In this pamphlet, Sarah was mostly emphasizing the students’ work in the garden, and was acknowledging the way each ninth grade class built upon the work of the previous one. Given that the garden was directly across the street from the school, the students were able to monitor next steps and future projects.

At the end of the description on the first page, Sarah remarked, “We plan every year from here on out to expand tremendously,” meaning that theoretically, Anne’s classes and future Design Teams would continue to make sense of the community-oriented reifications, such as the garden, as they are handed down, and evolve necessarily. In addition, Sarah uses
the pronoun “we” indicating the overlap in practice between Anne’s class and the Team, which intersected at a critical point of action, reflection, and public outreach.

The back of the pamphlet, which is pictured on the right on the previous page, described the Design Team’s plan to have a Festival of Hope. The text, which is written in white ink, reads:

our future plans are to throw a festival in the Spring of 2013 called the Festival of Hope. We want to raise the awareness of disabilities in our school and in our community. This will be an all day festival that will bring together the entire student body.

The idea for a Festival of Hope was generated during a dialogue in the Spring of 2012, when Jordan was a ninth grader. Design Team members, other students who were interested in participating in the project (with and without physical impairments), and staff from Independence Village brainstormed ways to increase awareness in the school about (dis)ability and to challenge stereotypes, particularly those associated with students who were in wheelchairs. During the meeting, students with physical impairments shared vulnerable reflections about the negative treatment they received from other students in the school as well as the structural limitations they faced as they navigated Liberty High School (e.g., foot-operated sinks in the bathrooms, lack of space in gym for students in wheelchairs to sit during sporting events).

Jordan, who was in the meeting, shared a story where he observed one of Liberty’s administrators engaging with one of the students who was present for the discussion that day: “I saw you going down the hallway (referencing the student in the room who was in a wheelchair) and I saw [the freshman principal], ‘you need to stop coming around that corner like that!’” Jordan offered his best impersonation of the principal. “And he was like, like, he waited til she walked away and said, you’re like, ‘I know what I’m doin’!’” (Audio recording,
April 5, 2012). Jordan recognized that even on an administrative level, there was a lack of awareness around the power of language in shaping the students’ experiences—you need to stop coming around the corner like that—and that once again, the obligation to adapt to the structure of the school was placed upon the student in the wheelchair.

Toward the end of the session, Anne said to everyone in the room (Audio recording, April 5, 2012),

One of the things that we want is that we want all voices in our building to be heard. And I think those are challenges that you guys are bringing up that we would have had no clue about and maybe that can be a part of the next phase so that we can get your voices heard so that we can start to address some of those issues.

The Festival of Hope was going to be the first major event organized by Team members inside of the school. The event was intended to reach a wider number of fellow students, teachers, and staff with their message than they had been able to reach in the past. The students had planned to do this work with Anne’s help, but due to the additional demands put on her schedule with a bigger issue being tackled in the district around attendance and the onset of the Common Core State Standards, the Festival of Hope was moved to the following year. In its place, though, the students planned a public display of service on Global Youth Service Day (GYSD).

**Global Youth Service Day.** In place of the Festival of Hope, the students celebrated Global Youth Service Day (GYSD), a day intended to “engage millions of young people, ages 5-25 especially those not usually asked to serve, in an early step on a life-long path of service and community engagement” (Youth Service America, 2014). The goal of the day, according to Benjamin, was to have their peers in the school write down what they had done to support their local and global communities (*Benjamin and Angela, member check*) and to then display these written statements on the bulletin board in the cafeteria where people could
read them. These particular data reinforced one of the findings in this study, which was that writing had been used—particularly in the Disability Awareness Campaign—to witness. In this instance, students were encouraged to witness and then display their own efforts toward service to others. Such an activity spoke to the Team’s shared goal of creating a culture of respect within the school; students would be making public the ways in which they had respected someone or something through their service.

Benjamin was in charge of creating the form (See Image 15) that would eventually go up on the bulletin board (See Image 16) in the lunchroom, a display area typically reserved for the principal. As the form indicates, the Team members were asking students to identify themselves by name, grade, and student ID, and then encouraged them to write down “what did you do for your community?” Again, this kind of “peripheral experience” (Wenger, 1998, p. 117) was a way of involving people who were not central to the Design Team practice, but given that the focus was to raise awareness, foster a culture of respect, and in this instance, celebrate Global Youth Service Day, their peers’ participation was central to their shared goal.

In this way, “a community of practice is a node of mutual engagement that becomes progressively looser at the periphery, with layers going from core membership to extreme
peripherality” (p. 118). In a sense, the Design Team students involved their peers in their practice by asking students to name, and make public, their commitment to community engagement and to respect. In another sense, though, such practices demonstrated the unstable nature of the fold between Anne’s classroom and the Team. In this dynamic social space, students were making sense of their practice in real-time and trying to make sense of it in a particular sociocultural context. The subtle influences of school-time and school-space regulated and organized some of what the students could do and could not do (i.e., eliminating the Festival of Hope due to constraints). Such a finding meant that Lave and Wenger’s (1991) notion of a community of practice could not fully account for this overlap in social practices that were also impacted by other governing structures, including, but not limited to, school space and time.

Uses of literacy in this fold—between Anne’s class and the Team—were again functioning in public spaces with an emphasis placed on inviting other people to participate and of using literacy as a means of generating awareness. Such a practice resembles community literacy offered by Flower (2008), which is the idea that literacy “emerges as a rhetorical action that calls forth a local public and creates a counterpublic structured around intercultural inquiry” (p. 7). As such, the students’ uses of literacy served as a way to talk with others about a commitment, in this case, service. Moreover, the students’ use of the bulletin board was symbolic because it was the principal’s board. Such a locale recognized the legitimacy of the Design Team’s practice within the school and the important ways that the school had embraced this emergent community of practice.

Conference notes. One of the most important roles of literacy in the Design Team practice was the way it mediated the content and form of the Team member’s presentations.
Below, in Image 17, I have inserted a picture of notes jotted down on a sheet of paper, which were used to inform each of the students’ public presentations. Brendan, one of the senior Design Team members, had written these notes, and afterwards, the Design Team retained it for future presentations. The outline consists of a bulleted points that read\(^\text{12}\),

\begin{itemize}
  \item (Imagine) - physically never mentally
  \item quote: All are mentally independent just like anyone else just not physically.
  \item There is no can’t when it comes to their everyday lives. (They can drive also).
  \item They do also have everyday jobs.
  \item (sports fusion at _____ basketball)
  \item Mike-Athlete
  \item Heather
  \item We want them to feel like their living not existing.
  \item Flat surface pathway\(^\text{13}\)
\end{itemize}

\textit{Image 17. Conference Notes}

\(^{12}\) I have omitted parts of this literacy artifact in order to honor the anonymity of the research participants. \(^{13}\) This refers to the paver patio cement blocks that the students placed around the community garden.
This content was used in conjunction with a presentation outline, which read,

I. **History of garden** ✽ First fun facts outreach
II. What made get involved
III. Personal impact
IV. Impact on others around you. What’s service-learning to you
V. School Relation
VI. Personal Growth
VII. Why you should get involved ✽ Last

Plan A video - 40 mins.

**Image 18.**

*Conference Outline*

These documents (e.g., *Image 17 and Image 18*) were passed from Team member to Team member, and served as a reference for the content and form of the public presentations they gave. Benjamin talked about how these documents helped him to understand how to prepare for public presentations. He said that during his first public presentation (Lines 234-238), “I had um, bullet points and I was just going to fill in the details on what I, on what I thought. And I just wrote down, like, Brendan, Brendan and Sarah made up uh, talking points and it was just up to us, people that were talking what we wanted to talk about.” Barton and Hamilton (2005) asserted that “much spoken language is in the presence of texts and a large amount of spoken language makes reference to texts. The existence of these mediating texts changes what is said and how it is said” (p. 17).
In the excerpt above, Benjamin acknowledged the social ways that text mediated forms of talk during conference presentations. In fact, most Design Team members had adopted this format after some of the members bore witness to, or heard the story about Brendan’s case of stage fright; when stage fright struck, Brendan did not have any notes to turn to; he had planned to offer the audience whatever came to his mind. Not wanting the same fate to befall anyone else on the Team, students used these particular documents regularly to give form and content to what they would share with their audiences.

Among Design Team students these literacy artifacts served as the starting point for speech writing and idea generation. While this was not a traditional use of literacy in these projects in Anne’s classroom, it was one of the practices that emerged among Design Team members as they sought to make their message and their projects more public. Drawing on activity theory, which overlaps in some ways with Lave and Wenger’s (1991) community of practice, Hull and Schultz (2001) argued that participating in certain activities can “serve larger goals and life purposes rather than being ends in themselves” (p. 584). Similarly, engaging Team members in public presentations might have been affording their entry into other larger goals and/or life purposes beyond those traditionally afforded by school or even imagined in the first year of a service-learning project. Toward the end of this chapter, I explore some of the ways students anticipated that their participation in the Team would contribute to life after Liberty.

**Reifications of practice.** At the top of the students’ conference notes, featured above, was a reification of their practice: “physically never mentally.” This phrase was uttered frequently by Design Team members during conference presentations, interviews, and casual conversations, as was the phrase, “they’re just like us.” I approached these phrases as
reifications of the Team because of the way they took on “an independent existence” (p. 58) or had “congeal[ed] this experience into ‘thingness’” (p. 58). These were phrases the Team members were attempting to put into circulation to truly heighten the awareness of their peers around (dis)ability. Conceptualizing these phrases in this way reflected the work of Tusting (2005) and Eckert (2006) who argued for the centrality of language in the meaning making process within communities of practice; Team members were using language to share these phrases that were central to the knowledgeable identities they had constructed within the Team and were central to the mindsets they were trying to foster in the school. In the section below, I explore these two phrases as reifications of Design Team practice—ones that served as symbolic action in disrupting discursive constructions of people with physical impairments, and ones that served as an attempt to change the mindsets around (dis)ability for those witnessing their presentations.

_They’re Just Like Us._ One of the points Design Team students were trying to emphasize is that students with physical impairments are “just like us.” The statement, according to Sarah, was an effort by the Design Team to raise awareness that students in wheelchairs were highly capable. Despite the structural inequalities they faced within the school, they could in fact do the everyday kinds of activities that students who were not in wheelchairs could do. The students coined this phrase based on these observations of their peers and as a response to the deficit framing that asserted otherwise.

Earlier in the chapter, I offered a brief excerpt where Angela was recounting her and Benjamin’s experience with a student in the hallway. She observed a student in a wheelchair being treated like a neutral object on the ground: “Like everybody walked past her.” In one of Benjamin’s written responses, which I offered earlier in this chapter, he noted people
“push people with disabilities to the side.” In an interview with Benjamin, he expanded on the observations he had made inside the school (Lines 790-792):

Like, kids actually make fun of [students in wheelchairs] and I would actually be like, “just don’t make fun of ‘em because why, what’s the reason to make fun of ‘em? Cause they’re not like you? They’re not perfect? That doesn’t mean, just doesn’t mean make fun of ‘em.

Recognition of the deficit perspective that framed students with physical impairments in the school, particularly those in wheelchairs, served as the catalyst for Team members to offer an alternative framing, and to discursively construct this alternative framing afforded by reifications such as, “They’re just like us.” During my interview with Benjamin, he went on to share the way he attempted to challenge the prejudice thinking that surrounded students with physical impairments: “Because they’re, they’re not stupid or anything, that’s a bad word to say, they’re not stupid, they’re just, they can’t, they’re just physically disabled like. I bet half of them are smarter than us” (Lines 801-803). As Benjamin challenged these public perceptions of students in wheelchairs, he revealed one of the deficit framings of these students as “stupid.” Benjamin was attentive to the way this particular word had been used to negatively shape the abilities of students in wheelchairs, hesitating to use the word “stupid”—“that’s a bad word to say”—but continuing to make his point that individuals with physical impairments were intelligent, using “us,” the Design Team—a group of typically developing students—as the point of intellectual comparison.

In her reframing of students with physical impairments at a local conference presentation, which I referenced earlier, Angela used the shared phrase among Design Team students, “they are just like us” (Lines 30-35):

Being in Design Team can help a lot of people, like before doing the um, Angela turns to Jordan and smiles. It looks like she is waiting for him to give her a cue, but he doesn’t say anything the Disability Awareness Campaign and we’re and we, I use
to just walk past the disabled kids at school and now I am able to see that they’re not, they’re just like us and we, we would just be like, and helping them now open doors, picking their stuff up off the ground if they dropped them.

Angela shared with the teachers, students, faculty, staff, and community partners at the conference ways she participated in the service-learning projects. Earlier, Angela noted how her initial connections to the project, and to service-learning, were through Seedfolks and her participation in the garden. Here, though, Angela explained that the Design Team helped her to see that “they’re just like us.”

Participating in the Design Team extended Angela’s opportunities to think about, grapple with, and discuss prevailing framings of students with physical impairments in the school. Reifications of practice, such as “they’re just like us,” had penetrated Angela’s language, but also the way she understood her exchanges with students with physical impairments. Angela noted how this new awareness about students with “disabilities” led to a transformation in the way she approached students with physical impairments, offering ways she has helped to account for the structural inequities in the school building (e.g., opening the door, picking stuff up off the floor).

At the same public presentation, Jordan echoed Angela’s observations. In front of grant stakeholders, educators, community activists, fellow students and graduate students from the local university, Jordan said (Lines 61-66),

when people talk to ‘em, like talk to people in wheelchairs, it’s like they can’t understand. Honestly, I think most of them are smarter than me, but people don’t look at them like that. They look at ‘em like they don’t know nothing, like they don’t know what they’re talkin’ about, even though they’re human beings like everybody else.

In the excerpts above, Benjamin, Jordan, and Angela are discursively disrupting deficit perspectives surrounding impaired bodies—the notion that impaired bodies are less-than,
unproductive, or ill-equipped for productivity in comparison to bodies without physical impairments. Embedded within each of the students’ statements was a counter argument that framed people with physical impairments as capable, not just physically, but also intellectually. The Team members were simultaneously heightening awareness around the rigid distinctions made between disability, capability, and ability, and proposing a more fluid construct that blurs these distinctions (e.g., (dis)(cap)abilities). The Design Team members drew comparisons between their own intellect and ability to those of students with physical impairments (i.e., they’re just like us); they used their own bodies, which have been constructed as normal within the school, as argument and as example to reinforce the capabilities of their fellow students in wheelchairs.

In naming and investigating (dis)ability within their school, the Team members were acting in way that challenged the status quo noted by Rice (2006) and Erevelles (2000)—becoming allies of intellect and ability—while simultaneously developing an awareness of, and acknowledging their own privileges as typically developing students. They were challenging the daily power struggles that existed in the school, which surfaced in students’ language and behavior, but was also embedded in the school structure itself.

In noting, “They’re just like us,” they’re like “everybody else,” and in Benjamin’s case, better than “us,” the students aimed to show that students with mobility devices were not in fact deficient—instead, it was the label “disabled” that misled and misrepresented these students. The students’ participation in the critical service-learning projects had expanded well beyond the forms of participation that had been afforded in Anne’s classroom, but still hearkened back to some of the learning opportunities that they took up in her classroom around generating awareness. In the case of Team members, they were creating a
space to talk about how people are not, in fact, alike; that we are not a melting pot and that
being different is not bad, it is not deficit-based. Instead, being different challenges, directly,
hegemonic notions (grounded in white, middle class norms) related to being, visibility, and
various ways of identifying self. The students had reregistered their new environment and
were actively constructing forms of participation within that environment; they extended
beyond those of the ninth grade classroom due to the collective, cross-grade experiences the
students could share with one another.

Sarah, who had also discussed these ideas about disability publically, recognized that
the Disability Awareness Campaign was a shift in the community of practice of the Team—a
proposal made by newcomers that was not a part of the original garden project. She reflected
on this realization (Lines 48-55),

- we built the raised beds from ground up. We planted all the flowers, we put dirt into
  the raised beds and it’s just something that’s really grown and now that we’re getting
  ready to leave here, our freshman, my freshman class, which we’re now seniors,
  we’ve worked together, but we really didn’t figure into the program the disability
  part. We didn’t understand that there are kids in our school and in our community
  that can’t bend over and pick things up so. So, I think now that we’re starting this
  campaign to raise more awareness about disability in our schools is something that is
  really terrific.

It is clear in Sarah’s observations of the project that the “disabilities” part of the service-
learning project was not an anticipated part for her; it evolved. As Brown and Duguid (1991)
observed practices within communities of practice are “constantly changing both as
newcomers replace old timers and as the demands of practice force the community to revise
its relationships to its environment” (p. 50). I offer Sarah’s reflections here to illustrate the
dynamic nature of learning and participation among this cross-grade grouping of students and
the way these social practices had changed, and would continue to change over time as a
result of their varied membership. In addition, I offer her reflections to explore the nature of
the fold between Anne’s classroom and the Team. Sarah mentioned that the reason the focus was changing was not because of the power or the influence the ninth graders had acquired, but more so because the seniors were leaving. Their departure again challenged the framing of “community of practice,” not in a way that made it irrelevant, but in a way that extended the conceptual framing. Learning and literacy were dynamic social practices among the students at Liberty; these practices were powerfully shaped by the very context in which the students found themselves: high school. Therefore, their efforts to be innovative, to create, and to generate new practices were simultaneously informed, supported, and constricted by the institution of school.

**Just Physically Not Mentally.** Another reification of the Design Team practice was the phrase, “just physically not mentally.” This phrase was thought to reflect the Design Team so much so that the t-shirt they designed had the phrase scrolled across the front, with all of the signatures of the Design Team members on the back (*See Image 19*).

*Image 19. Design Team T-Shirt*

The “thingness” embodied by this text was reflective of the students’ desire to normalize students with physical impairments—and to disentangle physical impairments from cognitive delays. It was such a defining reification for the Team that Angela refused to wear it since her and Benjamin’s name was not yet on the shirt. She wanted Anne to order new ones so that she could publically be recognized as a Team member and be visibly connected to this
congealed representation of their practice. As the image above demonstrates, beyond language, Team members also used text as a means of publicizing these reifications.

**Dialectic: Locating tension.** Butin (2003) described politically-oriented framings of service-learning as ones that “focus on how service learning affects power relations among and across diverse individuals, group, and institutions” (p. 1682). He cautions that in some instances this is done successfully, and other times, it serves as a platform for reification of stereotypes and prejudices regarding the very issues under focus within the project. For the Design Team members, the phrases “they’re just like us,” and “just physically not mentally” were intended to disrupt deficit perspectives of students with physical impairments. Uttered discursively, and also constructed through text, these phrases embodied the essence of the Design Team practice.

Reflecting on Butin’s (2003) assertion, specifically around these reifications of Design Team practice, potential tensions surface. In the case of “they’re just like us” one of the tensions that surfaced was that such a statement could neutralize important parts of students’ identities who were in wheelchairs—an extension of their bodies that enabled them to navigate physical spaces. The Team members neutralized the physically impaired body by using their own able-bodies as the point of comparison—bodies without dependency on mobility devices. I reflected on the way these efforts paralleled those of young adult novelists writing about LGBT characters in the 1980s whose initial attempts to broaden notions of sexuality in young adult novels actually neutralized the LGBT experience by equating it to the straight experience (Cart & Jenkins, 2006). Cart and Jenkins (2006) termed this literature “gay assimilation.” Drawing this parallel, I considered the possibility that in some ways the students were negating important dimensions of the students’ identities by the
brevity of a statement like, “they’re just like us.” When I shared this finding with Sarah (member check), she told me, quite simply, that I was wrong. She said it was not about denying that these students were in wheelchairs or that their experiences should be neutralized, rather Team members were trying to highlight that being in a wheelchair does not equate to being incapable; students in wheelchairs were highly capable—just like us.

The other reification, “just physically, not mentally,” explored above also embodies tensions. The students intended offered this phrase as a way to interrupt deficit perspectives around the intellectual capacity of students in wheelchairs. The phrase, though, failed to account for students with learning differences and severe developmental delays. Such a finding does not discount the social justice-oriented work of the Team members. It does, however, speak to the multiple and dispersed nature of power operating in the everyday lives of people. The students’ campaign for “awareness” would be an ongoing process of becoming aware of just how embedded power struggles were, and not just external to themselves, but as a part of everyone’s very being (Foucault, 1977).

It is important to note that when these reifications, as boundary objects, meet or intersect with people outside of the community of practice, they are not always interpreted in the way the original community of practice might have intended, as by nature “the process of reification provides a shortcut to communication” (Wenger, 1998, p. 58). So, while the Team members did not intend this phrase to negatively frame students with learning differences or severe developmental delays, the shortcut offered by reification did not fully capture their desire for all students to be respected. Locating this tension served as evidence that the Team members, too, were participating in the gradual process of awareness, or critical
consciousness, around (dis)ability and the complicated nature of what it might mean to generate consciousness or awareness in ourselves and others.

**Despite, or in light of these tensions…** Wenger (1998) argued that boundary objects mark the parameters of communities of practice, and signify, quite simply, who is in and who is out. He defined boundary objects as, “artifacts, documents, terms, concepts, and other forms of reification around which community of practice can organize their connections” (p. 105). He extended this point earlier in his book to name “abstractions, tools, symbols, stories, terms, and concepts” (Wenger, 1998, p. 59) as potential processes and products of reification, which in turn, could serve as boundary objects for the community of practice.

I found that the phrases “they’re just like us” and “just physically not mentally” were boundary objects that the ninth graders had begun to use due to their overlapping membership in the Team. Team members organized their connections with one another, and with those on the periphery of the practice. Like democracy, (Wenger, 1998) these words took on a life of their own in representing the kinds of discursive exchanges, literacy events, and forms of participation in which the Team members took part. They were symbolic representations that connected their practice “with the rest of the world” (p. 106). “They’re just like us” and “just physically not mentally” served as points of intersection between the knowledge and practice that the Design Team students embodied and as a means of connecting with other communities of practice. That is, during public presentations and when students would wear their Design Team t-shirts to school, members of the audience and their peers and teachers within the school were connected, albeit briefly, to a community of practice of which they were not a part (see Wenger, 1998, p. 107). As reifications of Design Team practice, these phrases were objects that had acquired “thingness” (Wenger, 1998) and

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as such, “became a focus for the negotiation of meaning” (Wenger, 1998, p. 59) and as a result, a focus for the negotiation of membership among Team members.

**Constituent Processes: Reification and Participation**

“And people ask me, ‘why you talkin’ to them so much?’ Cause they people. Because they people just the same as us right?” -Jordan

As Wenger (1998) noted, sometimes reifications become empty representations of practices that have ceased to be. Such was the case for many of the students who had since left Anne’s ninth grade English class, and thus stopped participating in any shape or form in the garden and the Disabilities Awareness Campaign. The focal students observed these tensions between the reifications in which they invested, but which their peers had stopped participating. Jordan, for example, referred to the movie *Hotel Rwanda* to make sense of the actions of his class-aged peers who were no longer involved (Lines 717-749):

Jordan: I was watching this movie and it was like, this is what they say, you ever watch *Hotel Rwanda*?

Emily: Yeah.

Jordan: And, alright, I don’t know if you remember this part, he was like, like they had all this feelin’ about like how bad it was and stuff, and they was played up, they was goin’ to play it on the news of the United States and he was like, “I think people don’t even care, I think they just goin’ be like, ‘oh that’s sad, that’s crazy’ and then go back to eatin’ their dinner.” That’s exactly how I think people act like this. Like.

Emily: Mmmm.

Jordan: Like, um. Like, say some people do this when they have freshman year with Ms. Anne and they be all into it and everything. Sophomore year come, they just stop doing it.

Emily: Mmm.

Jordan: They do it because they, they basically have to because Ms. Anne goes out there anyways.
Emily: Yeah.

Jordan: And then, some get it. Jordan stopped, and so I responded,

Emily: They stopped doing it because they didn’t have to do it? Yeah::: So they just kind of went back to=

Jordan: Being their selves=

Emily: the daily routine.

Jordan: Mmm hmm.

Jordan offered a powerful juxtaposition of “texts” by textualizing the film Hotel Rwanda to demonstrate the way the lack of participation of his peers had led to their maintenance of their personal identities—disconnected from the social issues under investigation, and thus, disconnected from collective action in which they had once participated. Like the Americans in the film Hotel Rwanda who could turn off the television and stop their participation, students at Liberty were not obligated to stay engaged in these service-learning projects; they could distance themselves from both the garden and the campaign as they turned their attention to tenth grade. In observing the lack of participation of his peers, similar to the Americans sitting at the dinner table, Jordan illuminated his own forms of participation, and knowledgeable identity, which were deeply connected to Anne’s class and his membership on the Design Team. He contrasted this with his peers, saying they had remained “their selves,” which implied Jordan had in fact changed.

When talking to two oldtimers, Sarah and Brooke, they also lamented the participation of their peers, and like Jordan, localized their participation and reification to membership in the Design Team (Lines 357-389):

Brooke: [disability awareness] is just with us. Everybody else is too, everybody else is too concerned with what they’re doing.
Sarah: You still see people makin’ fun of others. They’re concerned with what they look like.

Brooke: and who they’re hanging out with. What they’re doing.

Emily: What do you think it is that makes the Design Team not do those kinds of things?

Sarah: Maybe because we all have, I don’t want to say that we all have a heart, but our hearts are in this project.

Brooke: You guys raised us to be more mature than that.

Sarah: This project has made us, like okay, they really do struggle. They really don’t have it as easy as we do.

Emily: Yeah.

Sarah: I think that’s why we’re, as a Design Team, can say, we see somebody, like in a wheelchair that falls, we’re gonna help ‘em. Whereas somebody else wouldn’t because they haven’t had the experience we’ve had. It’s all about experience.

Emily: Yeah.

Sarah: And what you’ve been immune to.

Like Jordan, Sarah and Brooke drew a connection between their membership on the Design Team and the way they treated students with physical impairments. Through participation in the Design Team, they had worked to align their own ways of being and talking with what they had come to understand about students with physical impairments (i.e., “they really do struggle. They don’t have it as easy as we do”). The focal students’ new practices, discourses, and ways of thinking contrasted with those they had observed in their school; a struggle over language, but more broadly, ways of being. Also, as Foucault (1977) suggested, the students’ realized that power was connected to knowledge and became the catalyst behind their actions—sharing new knowledge with fellow students and public audiences would dismantle the ideologies that had traditionally shaped behavior and
discourse around (dis)ability. Foucault’s (1977) proposal, though, would suggest that the students’ identities were in a constant state of development, or rather “construction, destruction, and reconstruction” (Butin, 2003, p. 1684). In Sarah’s critical reflection, she recognized the knowledge she had generated as directly connected to the experiences she had in the service-learning projects.

Sarah embedded within her statement an epistemological claim about knowledge construction and one that is line with Lave and Wenger’s (1991) communities of practice—she has seen that her own understanding of students with physical impairments is inextricably connected to her participation in the Team: “It’s all about experience…and what you’ve been immune to.” Sarah’s use of the word “immune” has a complex meaning in the context of the Disability Awareness Campaign. First, it served to undergird her epistemological claim that knowledge is connected to practice; the lack of participation, or being protected from participation, lessens what someone can know. In addition, Sarah’s use of the word immune, particularly in a critical service-learning project that is interrogating ableism spoke to the medical framing of disability documented by Erevelles (2000) and Rice (2006). Whether it was intentional or not, Sarah’s use of the word immune was fitting in terms of one of the prevailing medical narratives of disability as disease—something to be fixed, or cured. Sarah assigned the status of “immune” to those students who were not physically impaired, and who were not participating in the Disability Awareness Campaign. Participating in the Design Team, though, Sarah had not been immunized. In fact, the opposite was true—her knowledgeable identity was deeply connected to issues of (dis)ability in her school.

Angela and Benjamin recognized the importance of continued participation, even as newcomers. In the excerpt below, Angela was talking with another student about a Team
member who claimed membership in the Design Team, but did not participate in meaningful ways. In this particular excerpt, Angela was discussing the Global Youth Service Day event, which I discussed above, with another student. The event, which took place during lunchtime, required each Team member to take a shift sitting at a table collecting students’ stories about service to their communities. Angela and Franklin are talking about the student who skipped her turn (Lines 753-796):

*Franklin:* Mayeeka, she’s sittin’ there with her friends again.

*Angela:* See, I told her.

*Franklin:* I told her to sit by me and she said she ain’t got time for that and then she left=

*Another student:* Isn’t she on the Design Team?

*Angela:* *Angela speaks up with frustration—her tone is higher.* See, see that is the Design Team.

*Emily:* What?

*Angela:* When you on the Design Team, you’re not supposed to just tell the person you’re workin’ with, “I’m with my friends. I don’t got time for this.” Don’t waste our time then. Don’t come in meetings and want to be a part of somethin’ if you’re not gonna put your all into it. If you’re not gonna do it. That’s part of, what you’re doin’ is part of helpin’ other people, not just to be with your friends.

*Emily:* Why do you think she reacted like that?

*Angela:* I don’t even know.

*Emily:* So you’re saying the Design Team people wouldn’t act like that?

*Angela:* Nao! I wouldn’t. I mean, okay, they’re your friends, you sit with them every day. Why not take a day out to recruit some people to do something that’s gonna benefit, benefit, the, what is it, the week?

*Emily:* Oh this week?

*Angela:* Yeah
Emily: Global Youth=

Another student: Global, yeeah.

Emily: Global Youth Service Day?

Angela: Yeah, why not do something that’s gonna benefit the Global Youth?

Emily: Yeah.

Angela: You could have took your time out just to help people get it done. I did it yesterday.

Here, Angela illuminated values embedded within the Team including investment of time in the well-being of others (e.g., “[taking] time out just to help people get it done” and to benefit the Global Youth”) and investment of personal energy in the way that Franklin “put [his] all into it.” Angela was also highlighting the importance of participation—of actually taking up the roles afforded within the community of practice.

Benjamin was also attentive to the importance of practice. In the excerpt below, he emphasized “caring” and “doing” as central to the Design Team. I asked him, “what is the Design Team?” and he responded (Lines 713-721),

Benjamin: Um, not just service-learning, but like caring because we do so much with uh, the handicap kids. We do so much with that. Like that’s a big focus of ours, but like, like busy and caring, at the same time because we do so much with the kids, the handicap kids. But then, so busy because we’re always doing different projects. Like this week it’s been the board, uh, the other week it was me creating those cards for the raffle. Now it’s the board for the raffle. And then a couple other weeks we were doin’, in October I remember we were doing, what was it, uh, National, it was disabilities month or something like that that we were workin’ on.

Emily: The National Disabilities=

Benjamin: Yeah, we were doing that. But we’ve done so much this year. We always stay busy. Caring and busy I’d have to stay.

For some of the students, who were in Anne’s ninth grade English class, the garden was not a reification of their practice, nor were the phrases, “they’re just like us” or “just physically,
not mentally.” These reifications that still reflected practice of many of the ninth graders, and most of the Design Team, no longer reflected the practices of some students at Liberty who had once participated in the project, but had since removed themselves from those roles. As Wenger (1998) asserted, participation and reification are two constituent processes in meaning making and communities of practice. Given that the students stopped participating, it might have also served as the end of the students’ learning opportunities associated with the garden and the campaign. With that said, though, as the data above have demonstrated learning opportunities were generative within these service-learning projects in that many of the opportunities were created in context by the students and Anne as the projects evolved; and so what might have been possible within this fertile space for innovation? In other words, I wondered as I looked through my data, were there other communities of practice that emerged from the critical service-learning projects in Anne’s ninth grade English class?

In this dissertation study, I have focused on one emergent community of practice, the Design Team. While the Design Team students above claimed that other students were not participating in the reifications they had established, there are data points that will go unexplored in this study, but which are important to note in order to shed light on the possibility that other communities of practice may have emerged from the project. Two data points in particular suggest that this may have happened. The first is that one of the community partners from the church, Hannah, had observed that up until the garden project, the church had been vandalized annually: “Spray painted pentagram on the side of the church kind of stuff. Like ridiculous kind of stuff.” However, since the first year of the service-learning project, Hannah observed, “We haven’t had one problem in five years. Not one. You can’t tell me that’s a coincidence. It’s the same timeframe! You know” (Lines 925-928).
Questions that were raised for me from Hannah’s observations were: Who was vandalizing the church before the service-learning project? Had they participated in the project? Did their forms of participation shift because of the learning opportunities afforded by service-learning? In many ways the garden had become a projection of practice (Tusting, 2005) that was bigger than ninth grade English; it was a meaningful representation of positive community transformation and an embodiment of collective action. Was there another community of practice that reregistered this new environment and shifted their practices accordingly?

The other data point that raised questions for me was one offered during a conversation with another teacher in the building, Carla Franks. Carla, who taught eleventh and twelfth grade English, as well as advanced college preparatory courses, shared that she would draw on the students’ experiences in the garden once they arrived in her class to provoke collaborative action in her classroom. She hoped students still recalled the forms of participation that had been required of them out in the garden, which were rooted in collective action and collaboration. Since most of the students in her class had started high school English with Anne, she would ask those who were struggling to work together, “Do you remember how you worked with [Ms. Anne] and your classmates in the community garden? I want you to think about that and think about how you could work in this classroom” (Personal communication, Carla Franks). Pleased by the kinds practice this question would prompt, Carla kept it in her back pocket as a way to support group work. Again, her reflections made me wonder in what ways other students continued to participate in the practices offered by the service-learning projects.
Some of the longer-term implications of service-learning projects have escaped service-learning research (Yamauchi, Billig, Meyer & Hofschire, 2006). In fact, Yamauchi, Billig, Meyer and Hofschire (2006) who conducted a study of a service-learning project at a culturally relevant high school in Hawaii, argued, “prospective longitudinal research is needed to determine how student outcomes develop over time and whether these outcomes endure after students leave the program” (p. 162). Yamauchi et al.’s (2006) call for longitudinal research on student learning outcomes speaks to the questions I am posing above around the possibility of other, emergent communities of practice: who was participating in vandalism at the church and why did it stop, and how was it that Carla was able to pose questions about the garden in eleventh and twelfth grade English and elicit a response from her students who had once been in Anne’s class? Melchior and Bailis (2002) suggested, “we need to invest more in learning about the impacts of long-term involvement in service-learning (how do the impacts from multiyear sequence differ from those of short-term programs) and the longer-term results of service-learning itself (to what extent do impacts persist, grow, or fade over time)” (p. 219). Working with Jordan and Sarah allowed me to explore some of these longer-term learning opportunities and forms of participation afforded within these particular service-learning projects, but the data points I mention above suggest that there may have been others.

**Imagined Selves.** In the section above, Team members made a case for the importance of participation in constructing knowledgeable identities, and in this case, knowledgeable identities connected to the Design Team, which offered continued participation in the critical service-learning projects. In this section, I discuss a finding that
participation in the service-learning projects, particularly over time, contributed to Team members’ aspirations for the future.

In Image 20, four of the oldtimers discuss how long-term engagement in the service-learning project has impacted their educational and social lives. This image was pulled from the same pamphlet that detailed the accomplishments and plans of the Design Team, discussed earlier in this chapter (See Images 13 and 14). These testimonies are reflective of discussions in the previous section about the way knowledgeable identities became linked to practice.

Image 20.
Testimonies of Change

In the image above, Sarah, Brendan, Tanya, and Todd (top to bottom) collectively speak to academic achievement, career aspirations, personal growth, and social action, connected to their participation in the Design Team. Sarah, one of my focal students, specifically recognized the service-learning projects as “show[ing] me what I want to be when I graduate.” Brendan, offered, the projects “made me realize I needed to do something with my
life.” Tanya reflected that she “came to school more and got good grades” and Todd argued that it had moved him to action.

In Hart’s (2006) conceptualization of critical service-learning, he quoted McLaren (2002) arguing “schools cannot remake society, but they must find ways of ‘making themselves vital places for all students, places where students can be empowered to gain a sense of control over their destinies rather than feel trapped by their social status’ (McLaren, 2002, p. 154)” (p. 29). As I further considered Yamauchi et al.’s (2006) and Melchior and Bailis (2002) charge to understand the long-term impacts of service-learning, it became evident through recursive analysis that the critical service-learning projects at Liberty High School were used as a space and a time for students to consider who they were, and for some, who they wanted to be after high school. The Team was a particularly generative space for this kind of imagining in that it offered Team members new experiences to participate in activities and conversations that overlapped with potential careers after school. For example, both Angela and Sarah credited the project with their interest in teaching; Sarah wanted to be a teacher and Angela wanted to be a special education teacher. Earlier in the chapter, I noted Sarah’s point about public speaking being a form of participation she had taken up within the Design Team. Here, at a service learning conference, she talked about the insight she gained from this learning opportunity (Lines 79-83):

And, it’s made me become more outgoing because before I would sit in the back of the classroom and just keep to myself, but now, I’ve presented in front of the church members. I’ve presented in front of all the principals of [the school district]. I’ve presented in front of Ms. Kinloch’s, um, both of her classes that we attended. Um, this has also helped me realize what I want to be when I’m older. I want to be a teacher.

In this excerpt, Sarah was describing the experiences that led to her wanting to be a teacher: presenting in front of students—both high school and college students—presenting alongside
her teacher and a university professor, and participating in official meetings of school personnel. She was learning a particular way of being; appropriating Collectively, these experiences allowed Sarah to imagine, peripherally, what it would be like to be a teacher. In addition, it was in these spaces where teachers, principals, and students offered Sarah affirmations via questions and applause that they approved of the way she was participating in this practice.

Angela shared that she wanted to work with students with physical disabilities. In the excerpt below, she describes how the Design Team broadened her social network and contributed to her next steps (Lines 681-686):

To me the Design Team is like, it would be good for everybody. Like, like, seein’ as how I’m a freshman, I talk to like like, Jordan, he a sophomore, Tanya, she a senior, like I met new people and being on the Design Team, like it helped me talk to other people and help with the disabilities. Like, I probably would have never thought I would be, I would wanna be as close to a disabilities person as I did. Now considerin’ like when I get older, I think I wanna work with disability kids.

In this excerpt, like Sarah, Angela is pointing to the actual forms of participation afforded by the project.

Anne also shared, “One of my students [Brendan] actually decided that he may want to actually enter the field of public speaking because he’s had to do so much of it with the different presentations that we did” (Lines 301-303). Thus, forms of participation afforded to students within these communities of practice were overlapping with larger communities of practice, ones in which Team members were gaining peripheral experiences (e.g., being a teacher, working with students with disabilities, becoming a public speaker) while in school. Beyond their participation in school, though, the focal students also imagined ways of becoming fuller participants in those practices.
One of the findings captured by the analysis above was that the focal students were presented with diverse learning opportunities and forms of participation in this overlapping space of the Design Team. Such a finding conflicted somewhat with Lave and Wenger’s (1991) communities of practice, which suggests a more stable community of oldtimers and newcomers participating in more routinized, stabilized practices. In line with Butin’s (2003) work, though, the boundaries of the practice were not so clearly delineated nor were the practices so neatly defined. Learning among Design Team members was an unstable venture; not predicted by, nor consistently a product of Anne’s teaching. Given the analysis above, and this finding, it is unlikely that practitioners and researchers of service-learning will be able to consistently predict particular learning outcomes, nor will they be able to cause them (e.g., an increase of majors in a particular field); instead, learning, which privileges participation, context, and local knowledges, will be much more dynamic.

The findings in this chapter reinforce Butin’s (2003/2010) claim that learning in service-learning is fluid, unstable, and emergent in nature. While Butin’s work has largely been theoretical in nature, this chapter offers empirical evidence to support an antifoundational, or poststructuralist framing in terms of learning, literacy and participation in service-learning projects. I return to my venn diagram (See Image 21) here to capture learning opportunities and literacy practices that were unique to Anne’s classroom and the Design Team, but more importantly, the overlap of these social networks, which was the focus of this dissertation study:
The image above (Image 21) is an important visual representation of social practices, including literacy practices, that existed in the overlap between Anne’s classroom and the Team. As is indicated by the venn diagram, the overlap was a social space where students negotiated and exchanged information, where newcomers learned from oldtimers, and where the focal students were able to build connections with community members beyond their classroom and school walls. The findings in this chapter have captured the social nature of literacy and learning in critical service-learning projects within and across two overlapping communities of practice, Anne’s ninth grade English class and the Design Team. The sociocultural approach to literacy and learning (i.e., COP and NLS) enabled me to explore the literacy practices, discourses, and social exchanges the students had with one another as they worked across these intersecting communities of practices.
Butin’s (2003/2010) work, which has insisted on a poststructural analysis of learning and participation in service-learning projects, has afforded an even deeper understanding of the data in this chapter. One of the productive tensions between the sociocultural framing of this dissertation study and Butin’s proposal was that I was able to attend to the local language and literacy practices of the students, but also not lose sight of the larger structural forces operating within the students’ lives and the power struggles they embodied. This chapter has illuminated the ways literacy and learning are informed by the rich contextual resources found in schools and communities, the broadening notions of text and audience that happen in service-learning projects, and the acknowledgment and inclusions of student interest that happens in student-centered and community-focused teaching and learning.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I aimed to conceptualize Anne’s classroom and the Design Team as two distinct, yet overlapping communities of practice. At the center of the analysis in this chapter was an attempt to understand the learning opportunities and forms of participation afforded within these communities of practice. In this exploration, I used the data to understand how these forms of participation and learning opportunities were informed, fostered, and mediated by literacy, and then, speak in broader terms about the nature of the literacy practices across these communities of practice. By analyzing these data, I also attended to the way that cross-grade engagements affords unique learning opportunities for students to learn from one another, as newcomers and oldtimers, and to learn in the context of shared practice.

In the next chapter, I turn to the implications of this dissertation study. Specifically, I give careful consideration to what has been afforded by bringing a social theory of learning
and literacy to bear on service-learning research. In addition, I discuss practical implications from this study in terms of classroom practice and education policy. I will draw on the findings from this chapter to make these claims.
Chapter 5: Discussion and Implications

Introduction

The goal of this dissertation study was to explore learning and literacy as social practices in critical service-learning projects at Liberty High School. As I discussed in the statement of the problem in Chapter 1, student learning in service-learning literature has largely been dominated by evaluative studies (Abernathy & Obenchain, 2001; Billig, 2000; Giles & Eyler, 1994) and the field has not fully captured how learning occurs, narrowly conceiving of the learning process as a stable (Butin, 2003). In addition to the lack of attention paid to how learning occurs, the literature revealed that little is known about learning over time in service-learning projects (Melchior & Bailis, 2002; Yamauchi et al. 2006), and equally less is known about what happens after students leave the project (Yamauchi, et al., 2006). In an attempt to document these gaps in the literature through this dissertation study, I turned my attention to sociocultural theories of learning and literacy—that is communities of practice and New Literacy Studies—which allowed me to account for learning and literacy as social practices within the projects at Liberty. In addition, I drew on Butin’s (2003/2010) work to speak to a productive tension between a sociocultural framing and a poststructuralist framing of these data.

My focus at Liberty High School was the learning and participation of four focal students, Angela and Benjamin, who were ninth graders in Anne’s English class, and Jordan
and Sarah, who were in tenth and twelfth grade, respectively. The students were all members of a cross-grade student leadership group, the Design Team, which was a community of practice that had emerged from the service-learning projects in Anne’s classroom. Working with these four focal students, as I outlined in Chapter 3, afforded me the opportunity to collect data in the form of interview transcripts, literacy artifacts, video and audio-taped Design Team meetings and conference presentations, and fieldnotes, which I analyzed in Chapter 4 to explore the following three research questions:

1. What happens when students and their teacher participate in a critical service-learning project?

2. What learning opportunities and forms of participation emerge in a critical service-learning project and how are they taken up by the students?

3. What is the role of literacy in these learning opportunities and forms of participation?

**Summary of Findings**

I explored each of the research questions outlined above throughout Chapter 4. I started to answer the first research question at the beginning of Chapter 4 by first explaining how I had taken up “critical” in this dissertation study. Drawing on the work of Hart (2006), I illustrated the gradation in “critical” as projects move closer or further away from the students’ everyday experiences. The Good Seeds Community Garden, for instance, was less critical than the Disability Awareness Campaign because the Campaign focused more intimately on the students’ daily experiences, including language use and social practices surrounding (dis)ability in their own school. This project was also about changing the mindsets of their peers, which took up critical elements of service-learning noted by Mitchell (2008), Daigre (2000) and Maybach (1996) around challenging the status quo and normalized
ways of being. Using Hart’s (2006) notion of “us doing for us,” the proximity of these issues to the students’ daily lives was considered as playing an important role in conceptualizing these projects as critical. As such, the Good Seeds Community Garden, given that it was slightly more removed from the students’ daily interactions, I categorized it as less critical than the Campaign.

Conceptualizing these projects as critical had important implications for the forms of participation afforded to students in that participation fostered connections between their classroom experiences, their school community, and their neighborhood. Such connections meant that even when students (e.g., Sarah and Jordan) left Anne’s ninth grade English at the end of the academic school year, they were still immersed in the contexts that had given rise to their service focus. As such, Jordan and Sarah could stay connected to the projects in meaningful and tangible ways. I argue that this is one of the reasons critical service-learning projects could give rise to an emergent community of practice like the Design Team—students did not leave the community, and thus, they could continue to participate as active community members. Both Sarah and Jordan continued to participate in the projects, but their forms of participation and learning opportunities with the Team—while overlapping with those in Anne’s classroom—were innovative and unique to the community of practice and the new contexts in which they found themselves. In Chapter 4, I aimed to document how forms of participation varied for Design Team members (e.g., public speaking, leadership) and how literacy practices evolved to function on behalf of the Team’s shared goals (e.g., literacy as a means of witnessing and as a means of generating public awareness).

In order to address the second and third research questions, I analyzed Anne’s classroom and the Design Team as two divergent, yet overlapping communities of practice. I
used communities of practice and New Literacy Studies as theoretical frames through which to make sense of learning and literacy as social practices across these social groups. I began by exploring forms of participation and learning opportunities afforded within the service-learning project in Anne’s classroom and considered the semiotic modes that mediated learning for Angela and Benjamin, specifically in terms of literacy and language. I also considered the spatial disruptions afforded by the particularities of the service focus (e.g., a community garden with a direct service component versus an awareness campaign with an advocacy/research component), and discovered that these contextual resources fostered learning opportunities and forms of participation unique to each of the service-learning projects. Specifically, in terms of literacy, I looked at particular events to identify the way literacy was used in Anne’s classroom to mediate learning opportunities at the intersection of classroom and community, and the way that texts expanded to include the community as a learning resource. Exploring students’ journal reflections was less about capturing this best practice in service-learning pedagogy, and more about documenting how Angela and Benjamin were textualizing their experiences dealing with the service focus and how they understood their own learning within these projects.

As I explored literacy, learning, and participation in the context of Anne’s classroom, I aimed to document the ways Benjamin and Angela were also participating on the periphery of the Design Team. In particular, I analyzed data from my fieldnotes and from their interviews and writings to highlight how learning opportunities and forms of participation overlapped with those of the Design Team. Exploring this overlap revealed that in both communities of practice students were interrogating their own understandings, their language use, and their mindsets around (dis)ability; they were using literacy as advocacy in the way
they would use writing to document issues in their school; they were broadening notions of text to include reading and writing of the service focuses; and they were building connections with people beyond the school walls.

Shifting my analysis to this overlap between Anne’s classroom and the Design Team also allowed me to explore the ways learning opportunities and forms of participation were expanded in this emergent community of practice. As Brown and Duguid (1991) argued, emergent communities of practice are often innovative spaces where members have the opportunity to reregister their environment and generate practices around these new understandings. The Design Team proved to be an innovative space where forms of participation (e.g., public speaking), learning opportunities (e.g., learning from oldtimers), and literacy practices (e.g., literacy as a means of witnessing and as a means of generating public awareness) were emergent and took shape not just around the service focus, but also their new context and social network. Interestingly, within the Design Team, members more explicitly aligned their knowledgeable identities to the Team, noting particular actions and mindsets as a reflection of their membership on the Team.

Broadening my analysis to include Jordan and Sarah, these data also afforded an understanding of service-learning engagement over time. In their review of three different service learning programs, Melchior and Bailis (2002) argued that “we need to invest more in learning about the impacts of long-term involvement in service-learning (how do the impacts from a multiyear sequence differ from those of short-term programs) and the longer-term results of service-learning itself (to what extent do impacts persist, grow, or fade over time)” (p. 219). While the researchers’ suggestion implies more of a quantitative analysis and this is a qualitative study, the inquiry is still worthy of consideration and speaks to importance of
understanding how students like Jordan and Sarah participate over time. Much of what these two students did with literacy was authentic in nature, particularly Sarah, in that it was geared toward an actual audience, rather than completed for an assignment. Specifically, I explored the Rotary competition, the advocacy efforts initiated by Design Team members, and the conference notes as uses of literacy that functioned on behalf of the Design Team goals. In his study, which looked at youth involvement and apprenticeship learning, Kirshner (2006) documented a similar use of “authentic assessment, in which new skills were ‘tested’ in real-world, practical contexts” (p. 48). The adolescents in his study, who participated in Youth Rising, “a multiracial youth organizing group housed in a larger youth advocacy nonprofit agency” (p. 41) had the opportunity to present in front of policy makers. Kirshner’s (2006) study offered a nice comparison to the experiences of Team members who presented in front of grant stakeholders, union representatives, teachers, principals, policy makers, university faculty and students, philanthropists, and a number of other people with various affiliations. In addition, Design Team members used literacy in authentic ways—shaping their narratives into persuasive arguments to attempt to change perceptions about, and language surrounding students with physical impairments. Such authentic audiences prompted innovative uses of literacy and language unique to the project focus.

In light of these findings from the service-learning projects at Liberty, I will use the next section to discuss the implications for practice, theory and research. I begin by exploring implications for classroom practice and education policy. Then, I turn to implications for theory and research and speak to new research questions that might be pursued as service-learning researchers take up a sociocultural approach to learning and literacy. Finally, I offer a conclusion to this chapter and to this dissertation study.
Implications

The findings in Chapter 4 speak to implications for practice in a number of different ways, including classroom practice around literacy and learning, and education policy, specifically dealing with funding and the support of classroom-community connections. In this first section, I speak to these implications for practice. The findings also speak to implications for theory and research and offer new avenues for understanding learning, participation, and literacy in service-learning engagements. I turn to implications for theory and research following the discussion on implications for practice.

Implications for Practice

Classroom Practice: Literacy and Learning

Framing this dissertation study using New Literacy Studies (e.g., Barton, 1991; Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Gee, 2000; Street, 1984/1995/2003) and communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) meant that I was unabashedly positioning myself as someone who recognizes learning and literacy as social practices. Further, it meant that I could use these theoretical lenses to uncover how learning happened in service-learning projects as students and their teacher interacted with one another around community issues, and that I could account for the social role literacy played in learning. Given the findings discussed above and more thoroughly in Chapter 4, one of the implications offered by this dissertation study is that because literacy and learning are social practices, the focus of a service project, its proximity to the students’ daily lives, and the action component privileged by the project profoundly shape forms of participation and learning opportunities afforded through critical service-learning projects. In other words, one of the affordances of the
flexible nature—or as Butin (2003/2010) would argue, unstable nature—of service-learning is that students will take up, and participate in the project in various ways and, thus, equally variant will be the knowledgeable identities that emerge from the project. As a result, students will present as learners in diverse ways, and learning in service-learning is reframed as not purely measurable.

**Text selection.** The symbiotic relationship between the texts Anne selected for her classroom (e.g., *Seedfolks* and *Stoner and Spaz*) also has important implications for classroom practice. Of the two young adult novels I explored in Chapter 4, I found that the first afforded meaningful connections with the service focus, and the second afforded meaningful disconnections. In this chapter, I focus specifically on the value of disconnected reading opportunities and the importance of creating dialectical tensions for students engaged in critical service-learning projects.

Reading texts that are disconnected from students’ lived realities—yet community relevant—one could argue, produces cognitive dissonance: for Angela between the lived world in which she found herself, and the imagined, fictional world of Ben and Colleen. The learning opportunity afforded in this disconnection might be one that encourages students to see alternatives to certain situations or experiences, and/or deepen a student’s understanding of that situation or experience. Angela, for instance, noted the dialectical tension between the positive interactions between Ben and Colleen in *Stoner and Spaz*, observing that such an interaction—a cool student interacting with a student with a disability—would not happen in the context of Liberty. Serving as a disruptive force, this narrative gave Angela pause as she located the contradiction between lived and fictional realities. Reading and writing with service-learning projects as disruptive, disconnected activities, yet still focused on the
community issue under investigation, might offer students alternative ways of being, or interacting that move beyond the status quo conditions of their lived realities.

**Authentic audience.** Another important implication for literacy grounded in the findings is that literacy practices fostered in these service-learning projects invited students to write to, and communicate with authentic audiences, which in turn, depending on the service-learning focus, located the students’ voices and forms of participation in larger goals and social roles. The four focal students in this study used writing to expose issues within their school that were deeply impacting their peers’ experience in the school, namely students with physical impairments. They used writing to publicize their agenda and to make visible their commitments to fellow students, teachers, grant stakeholders, union representatives, and university faculty and students. In his study of adolescent youth who participated in two summer seminars with UCLA, Morrell (2006), observed the power of such programs to “develop the capacity of youth to be researchers, leaders, and agents of change in the struggle for social and educational justice” (p. 127). Hull and Schultz (2001) asked, how “do we keep youth involved in school when their adult lives hold small promise of work or civic activity or personal fulfillment that draws strongly on school-based literacy?” I answer Hull and Schultz’s (2001) question with another question: what if the literacy practices in the classroom support these activities of civic activity and personal fulfillment to be realized later in life?

**Democratic participation.** The literacy practices that took shape in these critical service-learning projects at Liberty, particularly in terms of the way the students learned to use writing to function on behalf of their project goals invited students to engage in the kinds of practices required for democratic participation. They resemble those practices
documented by Flower (2008) which she conceptualized as community literacy, which emerge in relationship with strangers around a site of struggle. For example, with a desire to change the mindset of the people in the school around (dis)ability, the students saw importance in crafting arguments that reframed students with physical impairments—countering the medical framing of disability—and putting out into circulation, in the school and more broadly, reifications of their practice that they hoped would shift the language surrounding and treatment of students with physical impairments.

According to Rose (2009) “the traditional purposes of education” include “intellectual, civic, and moral development” (p. 25). The social practices of the students and Anne explored throughout Chapter 4 are reflective of these traditional purposes of education noted by Rose (2009), and not in a prescribed way, but in an emergent way that took shape around the particular community issue under investigation. Hull and Schultz (2001) asked, “how much…should the workplace influence the curriculum” as they talked about the way literacy functions in school and how that contrasts with expectations that exist in the workplace. Their question has recently been approached by the creation and adoption of the Common Core State Standards, which are touted as standards committed to college and career readiness. Such a move raises a parallel question to that of Hull and Schultz (2001), which is, how much should our democracy influence the curriculum? In the critical service-learning projects at Liberty High School, the students spoke in front of a number of crowds (e.g., district principals, stakeholders of the grant, university faculty) about what they had learned and why it was important, crafting each speech to meet the interests and backgrounds of the individuals in the room. Such practices overlap with those anticipated, some day, when
the students reach voting age, but more importantly, they recognize students as agentive beings in their communities in real time.

**Supporting emergent communities of practice.** The forms of participation and learning opportunities afforded within the service-learning project at Liberty High School recognize the complexity of students’ lives and the social issues embedded within school-community contexts. Specifically, Angela, Benjamin, Jordan, and Sarah had observed the way students with disabilities were marginalized within the school due to narrow understandings of who these students were, and what they were capable of doing. One of the products of this realization had been the first wheelchair accessible community garden in the Hadley Park community. The data in Chapter 4 highlight the ways in which Design Team students were documenting these issues in and around the school, and the ways in which they were exploring their own values, beliefs and ideas around the issue. An explicit goal of the Design Team students was raising awareness in their school about students with physical impairments. Through public presentations, signs, posters, bulletin boards, t-shirts, and pamphlets, the Design Team students were disrupting the power of oppression that renders the differently abled body invisible, and therefore, invaluable. What is the potential, then, of critical service-learning to not just operate as the strategic pairing of community service and classroom learning, but to also foster forms of participation and learning opportunities for young people to enter the political sphere of civic engagement, to take agentive roles in their own communities, and to engage in discursive and written construction of argument in an attempt to shift policies, attitudes, and structural inequalities that underserve certain populations of students?
Documenting the important ways the four focal students were contributing to the service-learning project served as a counter narrative to the deficit perspectives marking urban educational spaces and urban youth (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002). The four focal students in this study have been written about, talked about, and targeted with deficit narratives because of the identity categories to which they belong: students of color, students who are speakers of varieties of English, students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds—and two categories shared by all of the students: adolescents from urban communities. Ginwright, Noguera, and Cammarota (2006) wrote, “deeply embedded in our understanding of America’s urban youth is the notion that young people are disinterested or disengaged from civic affairs. The idea particularly applies to poor youth of color, who, many have argued, ‘need fixed’ before they enter the fray of civic life” (p. 1). Moreover, these youth are viewed as creating “more problems than possibilities” (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002, p. 82), “as threats to civil society…and passive consumers of civic life” (Ginwright, Cammarota & Noguera, 2005, p. 25), and “have been relegated to positions of academic underperformance and blamed for their ‘own’ failure” (Jocson & Cooks, 2011, p. 145). The students in this study, though, were clearly participating in the civic life of their school and the neighborhood surrounding their school. But it required the active contributions of educators, principals, and policymakers to make this happen. Such a realization begs the question, to what extent does the framing of “disengaged urban youth” actually serve as commentary on the public spaces that have traditionally been restricted or made available to urban youth? Who, then, needs to make a concerted effort to expand the public spaces available to young people?
As Hart (2006) explored in his reconceptualization of service-learning as critical service-learning, high school-oriented service-learning partnerships differ from those found in higher education because more often than not, students are from the very communities with whom they have partnered. Therefore, it becomes an exercise of us doing for us, us making sense of our own lived conditions, our context, our social practices. Chapter 4 offered data that spoke to this notion of “us doing for us,” particularly in the way students were focused on the community garden, which was situated in the neighborhood surrounding their school, and the Disability Awareness Campaign, which addressed the language, practices, and mindsets around (dis)ability in their own school community. The situated nature of learning and participation in these service-learning projects had direct implications for how they saw themselves (e.g., active community members) and how they acted (e.g., Angela and Benjamin helping the student in the hallway) within Liberty and the Hadley Park community. Anne’s explicit support of the Design Team, an emergent community of practice, offers a clear example of how a teacher might intentionally expand the public spaces made available to adolescents, but also emphasizes the importance of vigilantly watching for the emergence of such social networks. Such a move may generate important forms of participation for students in the very communities where they live.

I received a text (See Image 22) from Brooke the year after this dissertation study. She had remained in the Hadley Park area after graduation. The text had two images of the garden, which captured the ailing plants that had been zapped by a November frost. Her caption read, “Not lookin to hot:( ”
These two photos and the accompanying caption illustrate Brooke’s continued concern for the garden, and her desire to remain connected to the practice. Her continued participation speaks to what Brown and Duguid (1991) observed about communities of practice in the workplace: “workplace learning is best understood, then, in terms of the communities being formed or joined and personal identities being changed. The central issue in learning is becoming a practitioner not learning about practice” (p. 48). In other words, an individual’s knowledgeable identity becomes linked to the practice. Even though Brooke was no longer a Liberty High School student nor was she participating in the Design Team, she still felt responsible for the wellbeing of this service-learning project. Such a moment provokes us to consider how these kinds of engagements might further prepare young people to contribute to the civic health of their communities. In what ways do these forms of participation mirror those required of a citizen in a democracy? In what ways do these literacy practices poise young people like Angela, Benjamin, Jordan and Sarah for the kind of work necessary to tackle pressing social issues? In other words, how might these forms of participation contribute to students’ capacity not just to think about, but to also act, and contribute to
necessary changes in their communities? How might service-learning reengage the supposed disengaged adolescent youth and provide a counter narrative to the stories assigned to urban youth of color and urban youth from lower socioeconomic backgrounds? By asking these questions, my intent is not to advocate for the implementation of service-learning in all classrooms—the replacement of one absolute for another. As Butin (2010) noted, “all forms of pedagogy have their own internal constraints and subversions” (p. 45). Instead, my goal is to again highlight the learning opportunities, forms of participation, and literacy engagements fostered by service-learning that might contribute to knowledgeable identities that encourage perspective-taking, collaborative problem-solving, and innovative literacy practices.

Another question that Brooke’s text raises is how the role and more importantly, the concept of community partner might be defined in critical service-learning projects in high school settings. As Hart (2006) noted, service-learning projects grounded in students’ own communities begin to shift the nature of the relationship between the service-learner and the community issue/service-recipient; in essence, the learner and the recipient are not mutually exclusive in these kinds of projects because the student is a part of the community. Brooke, for instance, was both a Liberty High School alumna and a resident of the Hadley Park community when she sent this text; the year prior, she was a student and a resident. Given the fluidity of Brooke’s position across these spaces, an important question that faces critical service-learning scholars is again, who and what makes a community partner, and can this role narrowly be conceived of by student-status versus non-student-status, in the way that traditional service-learning literature has suggested? Careful consideration of what we mean by “community partner” and who can be a community partner will be an important question.
for service-learning scholars working with students who are from the very communities
where their service is taking place.

**Education Policy**

**Funding.** Darling-Hammond (2013) observed that one of the elements contributing
to the success of schools in Finland, South Korea and Singapore is the notable resources
being fed directly into the schools. It cannot go without saying that the resources used to
support the service-learning project in which Angela, Benjamin, Jordan and Sarah
participated went beyond those offered by the school or by the state budget. The project was
supplemented by a grant from the National Education Association, a grant from Donor’s
Choose, and another grant from Whole Foods. The most current, high-tech pieces of
technology used within the service-learning project came from these grants, which were
sharply contrasted with the computer lab adjacent to Anne’s classroom, which was full of
outdated, and underserviced computers. The sets of young adult novels in Anne’s classroom
were a function of these grants—not of resources provided to Anne by the state or the school.
To these points, I turn to Morrell (2006) who argued: “Give the schools a lot more money—a
whole lot more money!” (p. 126).

Ravitch (2010) so compellingly noted the significance money has had in successful
reform efforts like Geoffrey Canada’s Harlem Children’s Zone. The resources that were
funneled into Anne’s classroom, and more broadly, the service-learning project provided the
students with access to additional technology, offered students the opportunity to travel
locally and nationally to conference presentations, and provided food and supplies, should
not go unnoted. During this dissertation year, we took four students from Liberty—Jordan
and Sarah among them—to Colorado for a conference. The registration alone was $275,
which did not include flight, hotel stay, or food. Carla, the other English teacher I mention in Chapter 4, inquired about a reduction in the cost of the conference for Title I schools. The conference planner, unaware of what a Title I school was, offered a slight discount of 5 percent to each of the students.

What if Anne had not been awarded a grant to purchase new books and supplies for her classroom? What if these resources had not been available to extend students’ learning and forms of participation? How would these learning opportunities and forms of participation change shape, or in some instances, disappear, if the money had never come? A serious implication of this study is that funding matters. The state in which this dissertation study took place has maintained an unconstitutional funding system since 1997. The tension generated here, then, begs the question: is the money given to schools sufficient for the needs facing the twenty-first century educator and students, or are the student-learning needs surpassing available resources? And if needs are surpassing resources, what does this mean for addressing inadequate funding streams?

**Supporting classroom and community connections.** We are living in an increasingly diverse, globalized society and the need to engage in dialogue across linguistic, cultural, and geographical borders is becoming paramount in addressing pressing concerns around the world, such as poverty, war, famine, genocide, disease, and economic downturns. The New London Group (1996) asserted, “effective citizenship and productive work now require that we interact effectively using multiple languages, multiple Englishes, and communication patterns that more frequently cross cultural, community, and national boundaries” (p. 64). In light of these global changes and increasing levels of connectivity across borders, learning how to engage and work with multiple voices and opinions is an
important experience for students to have if they are to be “effective citizens in democratic
multicultural societies” (Banks et al., 2007, p. 11). Banks et al. (2007) argue that students
must “have the knowledge and skills needed to live in a complex and diverse world, to
participate in deliberation with other groups, and to take action to create a more just and
caring world” (p. 11). As we prepare youth for their working lives beyond school, they will
need to be equipped with the skills that will allow them to participate in these diverse circles
service-learning projects, such as the one at Liberty High School, invited students to
participate in these kinds of conversations imagined by Banks et al., (2007), like in the way
Angela and Benjamin formed new social networks when addressing a social issue with their
classmates and in the way the Team took shape around these social issues.

Campbell (2000) made a useful contrast in charting the rate of involvement of high
school students over the course of two decades (i.e. 1976-1996) in community service and
political activities. Concerned by their decreasing levels of involvement, Campbell (2000)
was most concerned about the civic health of America. Campbell (2000) wondered about the
civic potential of classrooms that embrace service learning, premised on his findings of the
positive correlation between community service in childhood and subsequent involvement in
political activities in adulthood. I am reminded of a conversation I had with Sarah following a
conference session in Denver. Anne and I had taken the students there to present and we were
attending a session with other high school students, educators, and community leaders who
were involved in service-learning around the country. We were walking out of a meeting
room at the end of the session when Sarah said, “Ms. Emily, I didn’t realize this was
political.” I asked her what she meant. She responded, “like service-learning, I’m realizing
it’s political.” Sarah and I continued to walk and talk about the political nature of service-learning. She was struck by the opposing viewpoints regarding whether or not change was necessary in communities; she was referring to the project back at Liberty, as well as the projects she learned about during the conference (e.g., climate change, environmental justice, food deserts).

Sarah’s realization spoke to her deepening understanding about the situated nature of community change amidst normalized ways of being and knowing. Attempting to change or improve the human condition was not a one sided issue. Instead, there were people who held opposing viewpoints, whose privileges were woven into the maintenance—not the transformation—of the issue at hand. Cammarota and Noguera (2005) desired to “facilitate the creation of public policies that promote and support young people’s political agency so that they may challenge and transform the oppressive conditions impeding their healthy transition into adulthood” (p. 36). Here I call for such policies, ones that recognize that in order to learn how to be politically engaged, opportunities must be created for students to participate on the periphery of such practices, in official ways, where they can also observe and speak with oldtimers.

**Career aspirations.** The development of career aspirations through service-learning has been documented by service-learning scholars (e.g. RMC Research Corporation, 2005; Yamauchi, et al., 2006). Therefore, the location of these connections in this dissertation study is not new, rather it affirms work that has already been done. In Chapter 4 I offered examples of students who drew connections between the forms of participation and learning opportunities in the service-learning project and their future career aspirations. Sarah, for example, shared that she wanted to become a teacher, and Angela shared her desire to work...
with people with disabilities. Brendan—another oldtimer who was involved in the Design Team, but not a focal student in this study—contemplated a career in public speaking and Brooke, another oldtimer, who was charged with filming and photographing the project, shared that her work on the service-learning project strengthened these skills, which would be life-long pursuits. In fact, the year after this dissertation study, Brooke sent me a link to her second documentary film—the first being one of the community garden at Liberty and the new one was “coming out stories” of LGBTQ youth.

In the recent State of the State, the governor of this state called for increased efforts to be paid to exposing students to potential career paths. One of his proposals was an investment in vocational education, dipping as far down as seventh grade. He suggested that if students have the opportunity to participate in vocational education, they might then realize the importance of mathematics, reading, or writing, and then reinvest themselves in the traditional curriculum. I will not talk at length about the State of the State, but I do take up the governor’s words here to think about the potential for service-learning projects to rival the kinds of learning opportunities and forms of participation the governor attributed to vocational education. Both this study, and others (e.g., Yamauchi et al., 2006) demonstrate that service-learning projects might also invite students to imagine possible career paths, and perhaps reengage them with other disciplines with which they have disengaged.

**Implications for Theory and Research**

In this dissertation study, I aimed to bring a theory of learning and literacy to bear on students’ participation in a service-learning project that recognized both learning and literacy as social practice. Given the problem statement outlined in Chapter 1, and the gaps in the literature revealed in Chapter 2, one of the most significant theoretical implications of this
study is that it has afforded a way to think about learning in service-learning as social practice, rather than purely a measurable outcome of teaching, or a product of a particular service-learning model. Bringing such a theory of learning to bear on service-learning literature has important theoretical implications for the field. Given that the pedagogy of service-learning and critical service-learning emphasize context, in that the focus is on a social issue, so must the theory of learning operating within these kinds of engagements. As Brown and Duguid (1991) argued, “like a magpie with a nest, learning is built out of the materials to hand and in relation to the structuring resources of local conditions…what is learned is profoundly connected to the conditions in which it is learned” (pp. 47-48).

Grounded in the logic of the magpie’s nest, service-learning must take up a socially situated theory of learning that attends to these important contextual dimensions of the project. In the case of the two projects at Liberty, both of the contexts emphasized by the projects—the Good Seeds Community Garden and the Disability Awareness Campaign—contributed to the forms of participation, learning opportunities, and literacy practices afforded to the four focal students.

Recognizing and identifying ways that learning is structured and privileged as a social practice serves two, interrelated implications for theory and research. The first is that it illuminates the theoretical assumptions embedded in methodological approaches like pre and post-tests and evaluative studies, which have narrowly attended to the truly dynamic nature of context, forms of participation, and literacy practices that emerge in unique ways from differing service focuses. This point leads to the second implication for theory and research, which is that given the field is dominated by such approaches, the findings in this dissertation as well as the calls made by service-learning scholars (e.g., Butin, 2003/2010) obligate us to
broaden such approaches if we desire to capture the complexities of learning, participation, and literacy happening throughout service-learning engagements. Service-learning studies that document learning outcomes without attending to the social practices within the project itself are not fully capturing the learning opportunities, forms of participation, and literacy practices that were being generated within the project. In recognizing learning and literacy as social practices, then, new opportunities exist to explore the dynamic nature of those social practices.

Using communities of practice as a theoretical frame also has important implications for research questions and design in service-learning research. The data from Chapter 4 captured the experiences of four focal students who participated in a service-learning project over time. The nature of their schooling experiences, their forms of participation, and the literacy practices in which they participated were fundamentally different than those of other students who had ceased participation. Given that these experiences differed from their peers, it is also likely that through participating in legitimate ways within this particular community of practice, that learning outcomes also differed. In terms of research questions, this means that the question around whether or not service-learning influences students’ learning outcomes needs to shift to one that asks, more broadly, about the hows and why learning occurs within service-learning projects and how learning evolves and changes. And rather than going in with pre-determined outcomes to measure, being open to context-based forms of participation and learning opportunities. This theoretical frame speaks to the value of discovery—of documenting learning as a process and capturing these moments across time. Yamauchi, Billig, Meyer and Hofschire (2006) noted a limitation of their study as “although the results are consistent with previously cited studies that systematically demonstrate the
benefits of service-learning, the extent to which differences between HSP and non-HSP students were due to the effects of the service-learning program or to pre-existing differences between the two groups is inconclusive” (p. 162). In the same piece, though, the researchers privilege a sociocultural theoretical framework which highlights that not only does context matter, but so do pre-existing differences—people learn through interacting with one another. Thus, privileging a learning theory in service-learning not only shifts how we ask the questions, but should also shift the language around outcomes, implications and limitations. Angela, Benjamin, Jordan and Sarah’s stories reveal that both who they were as people, and the learning opportunities they took up in the service-learning projects had significance in terms of the way they talked about, and defined their experience. In summary, the weight of this implication lies on the shoulders of researchers to explore learning in service-learning not only as quantifiable outcomes, but also as highly complex, participatory engagements that require researchers to account for learning in process. Thus, framing service-learning as a failsafe measure to promote a particular objective is a misuse of the approach to teaching and learning.

**Conclusion**

There is a concern that economic discourse is co-opting educational and pedagogical discourse, viewing students as no more than future workers (e.g., Erevelles, 2000; Ravitch, 2010; The New London Group, 1996), and limiting their participation in the work place based on their perceived levels of productivity (Erevelles, 2000). This reality begs the question, then, about what kinds of communities of practice do schools support, and what overlapping communities of practice do we aim to prepare our students to enter in terms of full participation? If in fact an economic discourse has co-opted educational and pedagogical
discourse, and the metaphor of business has begun to shape the forms of engagements and learning opportunities within schools, how might institutionalizing service-learning and locating support for these projects combat this narrowing approach and slanted discourse?

As Heath and Street (2008) noted, “classrooms, like all sanctioned sites of formal education, receive their identities, spaces, times, and instructional goals primarily from power sources beyond local participants. Pace, methods, and artifacts for display of skills and information, as well as standards of achievement (rarely referred to as “expertise”), derive from the core parameters of formal education (e.g., time, space, and role specifications)” (p. 17). I hope that the findings in Chapter 4, and my discussion of implications here in this chapter have affirmed Heath and Street’s (2008) claim, but also addressed the potential for purposeful expansion of learning, literacy and participation for students’ educational and civic lives.

The four focal students in this dissertation study, Angela, Benjamin, Jordan and Sarah, were participating in overlapping communities of practice, which had important influence on their knowledgeable identities. Essentially, participating in this social network enabled them to shift across formal and social boundaries that constructed their schooling experience and offered learning opportunities and forms of participation that extended beyond the classroom. On the broadest scale, the project did not have a clear beginning or end—the timescale of this project was not limited to an academic school or a class period. Instead, it could last as long as the students wanted to participate, and/or as long as these forms of participation were institutionally supported. Thus, as this dissertation study supports, purposeful effort to foster such forms of participation and learning opportunities
within service-learning projects could yield promising dialogue with youth around life beyond school.
References


Appendix A: My Heritage: Seedfolks

My Heritage
Seedfolks

Talk to your family to find out about your heritage. Make sure to talk to extended family (grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, etc). Consider questions such as:

- What is our nationality?
- When did our family come to America?

Once you have this information, create a journal entry which includes family origins, immigration dates, family names, points of origin etc.
Appendix B: Experts\Spinal Cord Injury 101

Experts \ Spinal Cord Injury 101
What is a spinal cord injury?

What is a spinal cord injury?

Share this video
http://www.facingdisability.com/expert-top

David Chen, MD
Medical Director, Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation Program
Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago

Transcript
When we think about spinal cord injuries, we most commonly think about a traumatic injury—someone who has been either in an auto crash, has had a fall or perhaps a victim of an act of violence. And in all these different instances, what has happened is a tremendous amount of energy has been transmitted to the body, which is also felt by the spine and the spinal cord. So what happens is, the spinal cord is injured—like a bruising injury. That's the most common type of spinal cord injury. If I were to go up to an individual and give him in a punch in the arm—if I hit him hard enough, they would see a bruise on their arm. Similarly, a person who has had a spinal cord injury, it's as if their spinal cord, that structure, has taken a punch. What happens, like any part of the body that sustains that type of injury, is they develop a small amount of bleeding and bruising. And that bleeding and bruising, in addition to the swelling that occurs after an injury, can cause the nerves not to function normally, and block the signals to and from the body. That is a spinal cord injury.

Related Experts

Lawrence Vogel, MD
Experts: How does the spinal cord work?

David Chen, MD
Medical Director, Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation Program, Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago

Transcript

You can think of the spinal cord sort of like telephone cable or like T.V. cable. It's a structure at its widest is only a quarter in diameter, and its greatest length maybe about a foot, a foot-and-a-half in length. And through it carries all the vital nerves that carry signals from the brain to and from the different parts of the body. So it's sort of the conduit that carries the signals to the different organs of the body, to the muscles, and the extremities, and the hands and feet. So it's the important structure that carries the nervous signals to and from the brain.

Related Experts

Robin Dorman, PsyD
T. George Hornby, PhD, PT
Lawrence Vogel, MD
Lisa Rosen, MS Other Videos By This Expert

What is a spinal cord injury? What role does "compression" play in a spinal cord injury? Why is the level of a spinal cord injury important? What is meant by an
Appendix C: Quadriplegia: What Does it Mean?

QUADRIPLEGIA: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

While a student at Temple University in 1963, Dick sustaining a spinal cord injury while playing intramural football. As a quadriplegic, he completed his bachelor's degree in business administration. After graduation he worked as a patient services coordinator at the University Hospital complex for several years. He retired as an Assistant Director of Disabilities Services for the University.

In 1970, Dick addressed a national medical meeting in New York and the national convention of his fraternity Phi Delta Theta. The speech was published in the May-June 1971 issue of the Journal of Rehabilitation.

What It Means Personally

Could you answer the question, "What is a quadriplegic?" beyond the oversimplified statement, "He is paralyzed from the neck down."? Basically, it means that once the spinal cord is severed or severely damaged, all nerve control of the body, both sensory and motor, is lost below that point and cannot be repaired. For the quadriplegic, his injury or spinal cord disorder has occurred high on the spinal column and the resulting paralysis affects all four of his body's extremities, hence the prefix "quad," meaning four, and suffix "plegia," meaning paralysis. Fifteen years ago the medical profession was unable to save the lives of patients with high spinal cord injuries; there were just too many complications to overcome. More recently, with the advanced techniques and new procedures of modern medicine the quadriplegic is saved. Through intensive rehabilitation programs, he is then trained to utilize all of his unaffected muscular control above the injured cord level, but the fact remains that he will be paralyzed for the rest of his life.

Physical Dependency

Yes, it means he is paralyzed, but it means much more. It means he is entirely dependent on others for the rest of his life, for every physical activity. He is a mentally independent individual who has lost all of his physical independence. It means that for the rest of his life he will see the world from either a sitting or lying position. He cannot dress himself, wash his face, brush his hair or eliminate his body wastes without someone else's help. It means he cannot hold the hand of someone he loves, because he cannot grasp. And if a loved one holds his hand, he cannot feel her touch. He cannot straighten a magazine if its crooked position on a table bothers him. It means that if he is ill he cannot cough or sneeze because he has no muscular contraction in his chest. When someone extends a hand in greeting, all he can do is look, smile and hope the person will drop his hand. He cannot get over a curb, do his own shopping for a gift or go to the library to study. It means near emotional destruction for himself and his family. It means that if he wants a date, a friend has to look up the number, dial the phone and hold the receiver. When the date is made, someone else has to drive, pick up his date and take her home. He cannot adjust the television, open a newspaper, fill his drinking glass, unwrap a piece
of gum or light a cigarette. It means that if there is a draft, he cannot close the window, and if he is warm, he cannot open it.

In short, and this point cannot be overemphasized too much, the quadriplegic is a thinking individual who has his own needs and desires and who must depend on a faceless "someone else" every minute of the day. That someone else may take the form of a nurse, orderly, parent or friend, but they all have to be asked, and thanked, for every normal activity they perform for him. The feeling of dependence is a constant in his life. It means he cannot afford to alienate anyone within his environment, no matter what type of personality conflict is involved. How frustrating would it be for you if you had to direct the movements of someone else's hands and feet as if they were your own to perform the simplest task?

Emotional Destruction

With time you adjust to the physical disability and accept it as something that cannot change, but the most damming consequence is the constant emotional destruction resulting from dependence on others. The mind is whole and working, having needs and desires, but they must be fulfilled by other hands. This is possible most of the time, but you cannot put another's arms around someone you love. It means that even simple wants, such as where the trouser crease should be, or how a collar should lay, or how a tie should be tied must be explained again and again. It means that every time you come into contact with someone new, all the explanations that have been repeated a thousand times must be told again. It is a life with a longing, burning desire for independence and individuality, with the horribly real fact that it is constantly impossible.

There is an almost unlimited number of things a quadriplegic cannot do, but he can study, think and communicate. I would hypothesize that, ultimately, the only unique quality man possesses is his mind and what it produces. This means that a quadriplegic can be a functioning and contributing part of the society upon which he depends. There are many tasks that can be performed with the use of the mind and speech and without the use of arms and legs.

Inadequate Facilities

Now arises the question, "Where is the quadriplegic to live?" Before a quadriplegic can be a functioning and contributing part of society he must have an adequate facility and environment in which to live. Financially, it is almost impossible for an individual to live by himself or with his family, and maximum welfare is a meager amount that does not approach the cost of nursing home care. At the present time, a young quadriplegic has two choices. He can either mentally and emotionally vegetate at home, or in an institution that provides adequate care for the aged but certainly not an adequate environment for a young person. If the environment is depressing and desperately unstimulating, it is impossible for a person to grow as an individual or contribute anything to the society of which he is a part. This is the problem the young quadriplegic faces. He has the potential to be a functioning part of his society. But, at the present, there exists no facility that has a positive working, continuing program and environment for the young paralyzed person.
If this type of facility did exist, perhaps when the question was asked, "What is a quadriplegic?" the answer would not be, "He is paralyzed from the neck down." but rather, "He is a person who is active and very much alive from the shoulders up."

POST SCRIPT:

The Center has existed since 1974 thanks to Dick and five other Founders. There are 34 HUD subsidized apartments in two complexes located on the edge of The Ohio State University campus.

As the mission states:

The Center exists as a non-profit organization to encourage independent living for adults with severe physical disabilities by providing wheelchair-accessible housing and assistance and by creating an environment for people in which to learn, work, live and contribute to the community.
Appendix D: Cerebral Palsy

KidsHealth.org
The most-visited site devoted to children's health and development

Cerebral Palsy

Cerebral palsy (CP) is a disorder that affects muscle tone, movement, and motor skills (the ability to move in a coordinated and purposeful way). CP is usually caused by brain damage that occurs before or during a child’s birth, or during the first 3 to 5 years of a child’s life.

The brain damage that leads to cerebral palsy can also lead to other health issues, including vision, hearing, and speech problems, and learning disabilities.

There is no cure for CP, but treatment, therapy, special equipment, and, in some cases, surgery can help a child who is living with the condition.

About Cerebral Palsy

Cerebral palsy is one of the most common congenital (existing before birth or at birth) disorders of childhood. About 500,000 children and adults of all ages in the United States have the condition.

The three types of CP are:

1. spastic cerebral palsy — causes stiffness and movement difficulties
2. athetoid cerebral palsy — leads to involuntary and uncontrolled movements
3. ataxic cerebral palsy — causes a disturbed sense of balance and depth perception

Cerebral palsy affects muscle control and coordination, so even simple movements — like standing still — are difficult. Other vital functions that also involve motor skills and muscles — such as breathing, bladder and bowel control, eating, and learning — may also be affected when a child has CP. Cerebral palsy does not get worse over time.

Causes of Cerebral Palsy

The exact causes of most cases of CP are unknown, but many are the result of problems during pregnancy in which the brain is either damaged or doesn’t develop normally. This can be due to infections, maternal health problems, a genetic disorder, or something else that interferes with normal brain development. Problems during labor and delivery can cause CP in some cases, but this is the exception.

Premature babies — particularly those who weigh less than 3.3 pounds (1,510 grams) — have a higher risk of CP than babies that are carried full-term, as are other low birth weight babies and multiple births, such as twins and triplets.
Brain damage in infancy or early childhood can also lead to CP. A baby or toddler might suffer this damage because of lead poisoning, bacterial meningitis, malnutrition, being shaken as an infant (shaken baby syndrome), or being in a car accident while not properly restrained.

**Diagnosing Cerebral Palsy**

CP may be diagnosed very early in an infant known to be at risk for developing the condition because of premature birth or other health problems. Doctors, such as pediatricians and developmental and neurological specialists, usually follow these kids closely from birth so that they can identify and address any developmental delays or problems with muscle function that might indicate CP.

In a baby carried to term with no other obvious risk factors for CP, it may be difficult to diagnose the disorder in the first year of life. Often doctors aren’t able to diagnose CP until they see a delay in normal developmental milestones (such as reaching for toys by 4 months or sitting up by 7 months), which can be a sign of CP.

Abnormal muscle tone, poorly coordinated movements, and the persistence of infant reflexes beyond the age at which they are expected to disappear also can be signs. If these developmental milestones are only mildly delayed, the diagnosis of CP may not be made until the child is a toddler.

**Preventing Cerebral Palsy**

In many cases the causes of CP are unknown, so there’s no way to prevent it. But if you’re having a baby, you can take steps to ensure a healthy pregnancy and carry the baby to term, thus lowering the risk that your baby will have CP.

Before becoming pregnant, it’s important to maintain a healthy diet and make sure that any medical problems are managed properly. As soon as you know you’re pregnant, proper prenatal medical care (including prenatal vitamins and avoiding alcohol and illegal drugs) is vital. If you are taking any medications, review these with your doctor and clarify if there are any side effects that can cause birth defects.

Controlling diabetes, anemia, hypertension, seizures, and nutritional deficiencies during pregnancy can help prevent some premature births and, as a result, some cases of cerebral palsy.

Once your baby is born there are actions you can take to lower the risk of brain damage, which could lead to CP. Never shake an infant, as this can lead to shaken baby syndrome and brain damage. If you’re riding in a car, make sure your baby is properly strapped into an infant car seat that’s correctly installed — if an accident occurs, the baby will be as protected as possible.

Be aware of lead exposure in your house, as lead poisoning can lead to brain damage. Remember to have your child get his or her immunizations on time — these shots protect against serious infections, some of which can cause brain damage resulting in CP.

**How Cerebral Palsy Affects Development**

Kids with CP have varying degrees of physical disability. Some have only mild impairment, while others are severely affected. This depends on the extent of the damage to the brain. For example, brain damage
can be very limited, affecting only the part of the brain that controls walking, or can be much more extensive, affecting muscle control of the entire body.

The brain damage that causes CP can also affect other brain functions, and can lead to other medical issues. Associated medical problems may include visual impairment or blindness, hearing loss, food aspiration (the sucking of food or fluid into the lungs), gastroesophageal reflux (spitting up), speech problems, drooling, tooth decay, sleep disorders, osteoporosis (weak, brittle bones), and behavior problems.

Seizures, speech and communication problems, and mental retardation are more common among kids with the most severe forms of CP. Many have problems that may require ongoing therapy and devices such as braces or wheelchairs.

**Treatment of Cerebral Palsy**
Currently there’s no cure for cerebral palsy, but a variety of resources and therapies can provide help and improve the quality of life for kids with CP.

Different kinds of therapy can help them achieve maximum potential in growth and development. As soon as CP is diagnosed, a child can begin therapy for movement, learning, speech, hearing, and social and emotional development.

In addition, medication, surgery, or braces can help improve muscle function. Orthopedic surgery can help repair dislocated hips and scoliosis (curvature of the spine), which are common problems associated with CP. Severe muscle spasticity can sometimes be helped with medication taken by mouth or administered via a pump (the backof pump) implanted under the skin.

A variety of medical specialists might be needed to treat the different medical conditions. (For example, a neurologist might be needed to treat seizures or a pulmonologist might be needed to treat breathing difficulties.) If several medical specialists are needed, it’s important to have a primary care doctor or a CP specialist help you coordinate the care of your child.

A team of professionals will work with you to meet your child’s needs. That team may include therapists, psychologists, educators, nurses, and social workers.

Many resources are available to help and support you in caring for your child. Talk to your doctor about finding those in your area.

Reviewed by: Steven J. Bachrach, MD
Date reviewed: July 2012

Note: All information on KidsHealth® is for educational purposes only. For specific medical advice,
Appendix E: Rotary Club Competition Tri-Fold Board Requirements

Rotary ‘Service Above Self’ Fair

Outline for Tri-Board

Pull pictures that are clear and have a variety of students.
(No repeat-people, please!)

Use an easy-to-read font type like: Times Roman, Comic Sans MS, Arial, Courier.

DO NOT USE ANY HAND-WRITTEN WORDS OR LETTERS!

Everything must be computer-generated.

Include printouts/pictures of:
1. Name of your school
2. Name of your project- large letters, in color
3. List of all participants that worked on this project.
4. Number of total hours devoted to this project by everyone.
5. Name of partners you worked with that are NOT in your group.
6. Describe your goal- keep it short
7. Names of groups who were served by your project (i.e.- school, neighborhoods, Columbus city)

You need to create captions underneath your pictures to identify what is going on in the photograph.

“Example”

On Thanksgiving, we organized the silvers with...
Appendix F: Rotary Club Competition Opening Statement Requirement

3-Minute Opening Statement to the Judges

Introduce yourselves with a smile and a handshake to each judge.
Give each adult a copy of your type-written opening statement. (6 copies)
Tell them the name of your project, and why you picked this project.
Describe the purpose of your project.
What was the impact of your project?
How did the project make you feel?
What did you learn from your project?
Thank the judges for their time and interest in your project.
Shake hands again.