I, Michael Sharp, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in Urban Educational Leadership.

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Critical Curriculum and Just Community: Making Sense of Service Learning in Cincinnati

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Critical Curriculum and Just Community: Making Sense of Service Learning in Cincinnati

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University of Cincinnati
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education

In the department of Urban Educational Leadership
College of Education, Criminal Justice, & Human Services
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Abstract

The goal of this action-oriented case study research is to illuminate and articulate the history and complexity of service learning at the University of Cincinnati as the program has evolved over time. Narrative inquiry and document interrogation were employed to solicit lived experiences and stories from a variety of both campus and community stakeholders, which were then analyzed through the theory of structuration. This study strengthens the existing pool of institutional research of the social structuration of service learning programs in higher education, including how leaders may foster collaborative experiences and broaden subjectivities for all relevant stakeholders. Through detailing key watershed moments that have underscored the program’s evolution, this study illuminates important additions to theory, which may have implications for other service learning programs, for the field of urban education leadership, and for research pertaining to campus-community organizing.
Dedication

This doctoral dissertation is dedicated to the many servant leaders in the ever-evolving field of service learning, sowing seeds in Cincinnati and elsewhere, often without much thanks or recognition. May your growing fields remain organic and naturally nourished through the minding of authentic relationships between the campus and the community, and may you find solace in your tilling by remembering that *the seed never sees the flower.*
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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The following is a doctoral dissertation written for the University of Cincinnati’s Urban Educational Leadership Program. For the most part, it is intentionally written as a first-person narrative, presenting the reader with my research stance and explaining how this stance is intimately shaped by my personal life and non-professional experiences. The chapter will begin with one such experience, which I believe will serve to explain how I have, in part, arrived at a place in my professional career wherein I am focused on the synergy created when the campus and the community interact with one another, particularly in regard to how those with access to resources and power can be made more whole by engaging with those with less access to resources and power.

The manner of interaction that I am most familiar with is service learning, wherein students, faculty, and community reciprocally participate in a collective living, learning, and leading experience. The University of Cincinnati defines service learning as follows:

A specially designed learning experience in which students combine reflection with structured participation in community-based projects to achieve specified learning outcomes as part of an academic course and/or program requirement. By participating in Campus-Community partnerships at the local, national, or international level, students gain a richer mastery of course content, enhance their sense of civic responsibility, and ultimately develop a more integrated approach to understanding the relationship between theory, practice, ideas, values, and community.¹

¹ As found in the University of Cincinnati’s Vision and Mission Statement for the Service Learning Program. http://www.uc.edu/careereducation/experience-based-learning/service-learning.html
The overarching goal of this research project is to understand the history and context of service learning at the University of Cincinnati from multiple perspectives and to implement improvements to the University of Cincinnati’s Service Learning Program moving forward into the future. This study will detail what I and the co-narrators of the study identify as key watershed moments in the program’s evolution, which will span the timeframe of 1921 to the present.

At the time of this writing, I am an assistant professor in the Division of Experienced-Based Learning and Career Education (ELCE) and am the academic director of the University of Cincinnati’s Service Learning Program. The experience described below, however—one that eventually led to this study—occurred much earlier in my life.

After relating this early learning experience, I will turn toward the purpose of this dissertation study and preview questions of inquiry that guided the research. Following the discussion of purpose, I will briefly introduce the theoretical backdrop of this study, structuration theory. I chose this particular theory because it allows the researcher to accept and discuss both the deterministic qualities of the human experience as well as the socially constructed qualities. More often, theoretical discussions privilege one of these perspectives over the other:

**deterministic/structural/systemic ← versus → constructionist/agency/choice**

Structuration theory, the undergirding of this work, intentionally utilizes, and in fact requires, both perspectives.

A brief examination of myself and others have helped to make sense of service learning at the University of Cincinnati. As such, I will first share my research questions and rationale for choosing them. This will include a short discussion of the subject matter for research, which will
require a discussion of my research stance as the leader of the service learning program at the University of Cincinnati.

![Image](https://example.com/image.png)

*Figure 1.1. M.C. Escher's “Drawing Hands” (Hofstadter, 2007)*

**The Strange Loop of Dissertating**

The above image (Fig. 1.1) is a graphic representation that is illustrative of this project. First printed in 1948, “Drawing Hands” is a lithograph by the Dutch artist M. C. Escher depicting “a sheet of paper out of which, from wrists that remain flat on the page, two hands rise, facing each other and in the paradoxical act of drawing one another into existence” (Hofstadter, 2007, p. 363). Escher often used paradoxes in his works. Hofstadter (2007) calls this particular image an example of a *strange loop*, writing that “a strange loop is a cyclic structure that goes through several levels in a hierarchical system. It arises when, by moving only upwards or downwards through the system, one finds oneself back where one started” (p. 363).

I find that the story is writing me as I am writing the story, which could be considered a strange loop of dissertating. The story being told here by me, the lead narrator, has also changed me through the writing process in that the very act of telling *this story* has been intimately linked to the telling and retelling of *my story*. The two are impossible to separate. Therefore, what the reader will observe throughout this dissertation is a cycle of *pulling back* from the subject matter...
to discuss my relationship to it, followed by a closing back in on the subject matter itself. The strange loop of this work has been particularly useful for understanding the motivations underlying my professional journey of research, service, leadership, and teaching. A short description of my reflective practice will bring this section to a close. Chapter One will conclude with a brief discussion of this study’s significance.

Chapter Two will review the scholarly literature related to this study along with the theoretical framework. Chapter Three will detail the research methodology and will include descriptions of chosen methods and how they were executed. Chapter Four begins to lay out the narrative findings gleaned from the data. Chapter Five continues the narrative, particularly what has occurred during my time as a leader in the program. Chapter Six focuses on what the overall findings mean for service learning at the University of Cincinnati and for my personal practice as a university professor and academic director. Limitations of this study will also be discussed in this chapter, along with recommendations for future research.

**The Dissertation’s Significant Context**

The significant context addressed through this dissertation research is to understand the history and context of service learning at the University of Cincinnati from multiple perspectives and to implement improvements to the University of Cincinnati’s Service Learning Program. Using narrative inquiry, structuration theory, and action research, I sought to answer the following research questions:

**RQ1:** How has service learning at the University of Cincinnati developed over time? What have been the key watershed moments?

**RQ2:** How do service learning stakeholders describe the evolution of service learning at the University Cincinnati over time?
RQ3: How can the Service Learning Program at the University of Cincinnati better serve stakeholders?

Here I will briefly introduce these tools and aims, as well as my own positionality in relation to the topic of inquiry.

Service Learning, Reflective Discourse, and Action-Oriented Narrative Inquiry

The notions of “felt difficulty” (Dewey, 1958) and “discursive agency” (Medina, 2006) inspired and informed my decision to begin including an experiential and service learning component in my teaching (2005), which in many ways led to my position as director of service learning (2008) and as assistant professor of experiential learning (2013) at the University of Cincinnati. The overall methodology for this case study is narrative inquiry, in which the story of service learning in Cincinnati will be analyzed through a structuration theory lens geared toward making action-research-oriented improvements to the University of Cincinnati’s Service Learning Program.

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) posit that the process of narrative inquiry is one of living the story while writing it. They state that the process is one “in which we are continually trying to give an account of the multiple levels (which are temporally continuous and socially interactive) at which the inquiry proceeds” (p. 4). They go on to write:

The central task [of narrative inquiry] is evident when it is grasped that people are both living their stories in an ongoing experiential text and telling their stories in words as they reflect upon life and explain themselves to others. For the researcher, this is a portion of the complexity of narrative, because a life is also a matter of growth toward an imagined future and, therefore, involves retelling stories and attempts at reliving stories...Seeing and describing story in the everyday actions of teachers, students, administrators, and...
others requires a subtle twist of mind on behalf of the enquirer. (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4)

This central task of narrative inquiry—illuminating portions of a complex story while in the midst of living that story—is the driver of this case study. In hindsight, it is very easy for me to see why making sense of service learning in Cincinnati has been central to my professional stance as an educator and researcher. In thinking back to my letter of intent submitted to the University of Cincinnati’s Urban Educational Leadership in 2005, I recall writing about how the campus could be and should be a driver for social innovation and the betterment of surrounding communities.

Even at that time, I suppose that I was operating within the strange loop of writing into existence what would eventually result in my current professional role as the director of Service Learning at the University of Cincinnati. Interestingly, however, at the time of drafting that application letter, “service learning” was not a phrase that I had much familiarity with, but I nevertheless was articulating the role that someone could play within dynamic intersections that occur when the campus and the community cooperate. Some twelve years later, I find myself articulating here exactly what that role embodies as a researcher retrospectively making sense of this story.

**The Researcher’s Role**

At the very core of my scholarship and practice is the notion of multiple subjectivities. I believe that we each have points of view, but these are simply views from fixed points. We individually have incomplete pictures of reality, and this is why we need each other to fill in the gaps. We can each offer unique perspectives, but these are inescapably limited by our inability to
be omniscient. Our points of view, then, are understood to be particularly grounded by individual experience and, at best, simply incomplete. At worst, they are fundamentally unjust.

Additionally, I believe that our discourse or language use is that which contains and constrains our reality, but it is one of the only means we have at our disposal through which to share our limited points of view (Sharp, 2005). This understanding is what fuels my pedagogy and research, and thus underscores the research questions. To understand this world, one must be able to see it from multiple subjectivities, and to teach people in this world, one must be able to feel it from multiple subjectivities, express those subjective experiences to others, and remain open as others express their subjectivities as well.

Through my previous work titled “Sensemaking in Cincinnati: Sharing Stories of Racial Discord” (Sharp, 2005), I have come to understand that collectively “making sense” and collaboratively re-structuring cultural reality is possible, but not easy. In fact, doing so makes people uncomfortable, especially when some of the people are operating from a privileged perspective. We must learn to walk in others’ shoes, nevertheless, seeing the world from other vantage points, and we must do so as thinkers, teachers, and social researchers who keep focus on the unfair power imbalances and unequal access to resources found in our culture.

Thus, I believe that deconstructing the privilege–poverty dichotomy through language and experience may be a way to proactively structure a more equitable and socially just world (Sharp, 2005). People need to become uncomfortable if positive change is going to occur, however, and as educators we may be able to situate students, colleagues, and peers into some of those uncomfortable settings, perhaps causing a broadening of their subjectivities through their own moments of felt difficulty—opportunities for being uncomfortable enough to learn something new. This is the impetus for service learning and experiential pedagogy for me; I want
to help campus-community stakeholders find learning experiences that they normally would not encounter, perhaps allowing them to feel uncomfortable enough to need the theories and skills being taught in the class in order to respond to their own moments of felt difficulty. Then, I want them to discuss what they learn and ask them to reflect on why they feel uncomfortable. Finally, I want them to be able to articulate what role they could play in alleviating social injustice, which should include their understandings of social responsibility and how they are motivated to become active change agents within their own communities. In this way, service learning, narrative inquiry, structuration theory, and action research can work towards restructuring a more just and inclusive community in Cincinnati and elsewhere.

My Position of Privilege and Research Stance

I am a White, middle-class, educated heterosexual male from a relatively privileged sector of society. In this culture, these dimensions of identity wield a certain amount of power, and more importantly, they provide comfortable isolation from marginalized groups of people. This is a concern for effective understanding of others, because it causes me to question whether I can truly climb out of my privileged cultural silo and identify with the oppressed and repressed. More specific to my practice, this is a concern in my classroom where I am positioned as professor, and in the academy where I am trying to take on the position of scholar, as each of these identities yields cultural privilege which should not be ignored.

Ideally, and through the lens of Communication Theory, I would like to believe and lay claim to what Fine (1994) called working the hyphens. She wrote, “by working the hyphens, I mean to suggest that researchers probe how we are in relation with the contexts we study and with our informants, understanding that we are all multiple in those relations” (p. 135). While I do fully believe in the multiplicity of relative truths and understandings, as I note above, the
intersections of my identity are relatively privileged, which may make it difficult for me to encounter the standpoints of others. In fact, it would be arrogant to claim that I can truly understand the injustices experienced by others, but at the very least I can understand how my privilege may unintentionally be marginalizing others.

Toward this end, I have written that members of the dominant culture must first discursively acknowledge the role they play in perpetuating social injustices (Sharp, 2005). I fully understand that before we can deconstruct social injustices, we must each acknowledge to what degree we feed them. As I say above, however, people typically have difficulty doing this because it is challenging and often unpleasant, and it makes them uncomfortable. It has been my experience, in fact, that many people seem to be unwilling or unable to acknowledge their own oppressive tendencies, including the consequences of those tendencies, which makes me very aware of the difficulty that privileged individuals face when trying to become self-critically conscious. But as human communication and discourse structures identity and reality, both individually and collectively, becoming self-critically conscious (Freire, 1970) is necessary for change. Without feeling the difficulty created when one is forced to identify with the plights and indignities of others, little will change. We need to engage in those moments of uncomfortable reflection, understanding that cultural identity is always a work in process. This informs my current positions as a doctoral student attempting to become a teacher-researcher and as an urban educational leader of service learning at the University of Cincinnati, both of which require critical reflection and an openness to community. Anders (2000) wrote:

________________________

2 Critical consciousness, conscientization, or conscientização (Portuguese), is a popular education and social concept developed by Brazilian pedagogue and educational theorist Paulo Freire (1970), grounded in post-Marxist critical theory. Critical consciousness focuses on achieving an in-depth understanding of the world, allowing for the perception and exposure of social and political contradictions. Critical consciousness also includes taking action against the oppressive elements in one's life that are illuminated by that understanding.
Dewey felt that education must address the notion of reflective thought. Reflective thought begins with an ambiguous situation that in some way represents a dilemma to an individual. From this “felt difficulty,” the individual locates and defines the problem. (p. 211)

Much of literature views humans as *culture-ING beings* (Barley & Tolbert, 1997). As such, we understand that human beings can construct new and different meanings, understandings, and practices amid ongoing experience (Rodriguez, 2001). Diggs (1996), for example, advanced the “Evolving-Developmental-Interactional perspective” that captured this “becoming” notion in the following way:

> Who I am, as I claim it or speak it, is a combination of biology and construction of my past and becomes the central or pivotal framework for my interaction in living or the person I am becoming. These selves or identities are inexorably intertwined; the one, who I am, is stable and has been determined by biology and history, which I embrace as a necessity for survival of my well-being. The other, who I am becoming, is affected subtly and directly. As I evolve, interactions become chronicled as recognitions that fuel reflection that will help to construct the becoming “self.” (p. 373)

This reminds me of the crucial link between the individual and the collective, between the teacher and the learner, between the researcher and the researched, in that the culture we are becoming is made up of our individual experiences as those experiences are connected to others. We have agency to choose which discursive structures we will reinforce and which we will deconstruct and re-structure.
Complex Dichotomy

It should be noted, however, that the seeming dichotomy between privilege and poverty is complicated. In fact, it should be understood that those people and communities who are often portrayed as lacking material resources are often rich in other, often more important, ways. Conversely, those peoples and communities who are often seen as being rich in material resources are often poor in those same ways. Understanding and respecting this complexity is what drives successful service learning, and when this complexity is oversimplified and forced into a one-sided relational flow of interaction, service learning can often do more harm than good.

The key is found in understanding the nuanced ways in which all people, regardless of socio-economic status, have assets and deficits that, when shared within the flow of authentic relationships, can mutually reinforce one another in a reciprocal and holistic way. In their book, *The Abundant Community: Awakening the Power of Families and Neighborhoods*, Block and McKnight (2010) discuss this complexity, including how we often fail to leverage it in any meaningful way. They discuss how communities often exist in isolation from one another, and how the value of the potential synergy between communities is ignored due to the larger structural system in which we are forced to operate. They write:

> Systems that are constructed for order cannot provide satisfaction in domains that require a unique and personal human solution. They are unable to provide the satisfaction that they promise because of their very nature. This is not a critique of any individual’s leadership or method of operation. It is that systems have a limit; by their nature, they cannot provide prosperity or peace of mind or a life of satisfaction. (p. 37)
When done well, service learning can actively dissolve the barriers that exist between peoples and communities, thus tapping into and leveraging the potential synergy of diverse lived experiences. Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), for example, believed that the fundamental idea of action learning is bringing people together to learn from each other’s experience, and this reminds me of Genor and Schulte (2002), who wrote about cultural disparity that it “lives—it morphs its way through the structures and system that shape our lives. We need to be shaping back, all the time” (p. 342). This is my goal as an educator, as a researcher, as a leader, and perhaps most importantly as a human being.

**Significance of the Study and Institutional Change**

It is my hope that this study will strengthen the existing pool of research of the social structuration of Service Learning Programs, both off- and on-campus, including how leaders may foster collaborative experiences and broadened subjectivities for all stakeholders. More specifically, I hope to *tell the story* of service learning in Cincinnati, including how key watershed moments and fresh acts have helped to intentionally and unintentionally evolve the program into, not only what it is today, but also into what the program is becoming.

While the narrative detailed in the forthcoming pages is focused narrowly on the University of Cincinnati, and even more narrowly on the service learning program therein, it is anticipated that what has been learned through this study will be transferable to other universities and organizations. Perhaps the most relevant findings are best suited to other service learning programs, however many of the findings may be applicable to many types of campus-community partnerships, whether service learning or other types of experiential learning.

This chapter has introduced the research questions and why this topic is personally and socially relevant for further study in the field of Urban Educational Leadership. The next chapter
presents a review of relevant literature on the topic, as well as my theoretical frames and methodological selections.
Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

This chapter presents a review of several types of literature, all of which have informed this study. First, I will discuss literature pertaining to service learning, addressing personal outcomes, social outcomes, learning outcomes, and other related outcomes for students. Also included in this section is a review of service learning literature that focuses on outcomes for faculty, universities, and communities. Second, I will briefly review the literature pertaining to the theoretical framework for this study, structuration theory, which will include a focus on empowerment and language, as well as structures and agency. Third, I will explain existing work with the tool used for this study, narrative inquiry. And finally, I will present literature to illuminate the research philosophy that undergirds this study, action research.

It is my hope that the literature review begins to weave together the driver of this study in that the topic of research, service learning in Cincinnati, can be understood through the framework of structuration and told through the method of narrative inquiry, all for the purpose of conducting action research at the University of Cincinnati in order to improve the Service Learning Program.

**Service Learning: The Topic**

Some trace the connection of service and learning to Dewey (1902), whose work for both education and democracy laid the foundation for rebuilding the connections between school and community. Dewey’s classic works (1916; 1938) provide the intellectual underpinnings critical to service learning, shifting responsibility to the educator to provide experiences that prompt meaningful learning. Ehrlich (1996) points to Dewey in writing that service learning is the various pedagogies that link community service and academic study such that each strengthens the other. Ehrlich writes:
The basic theory of service-learning is Dewey’s: the interaction of knowledge and skills with experience is key to learning. Students learn best not by reading the Great Books in a closed room but by opening the doors and windows of experience. Learning starts with a problem and continues with the application of increasingly complex ideas and increasingly sophisticated skills to increasingly complicated problems. (p. xi)

Some of these underpinnings include (as found in the University of Cincinnati’s Vision and Mission statement for the Service Learning Program, 2008):

- Student involvement in the construction of learning objectives
- Collaborative learning rather than learning done in isolation
- Connecting what is being learned with personal experience
- The focus on not just intellectual development, but social development as well
- The ever-present valuing of actions directed toward the welfare of others

In 1969, the Southern Regional Educational Board (1973) coined the term *service learning* to describe “programs [that] emphasize the accomplishment of tasks which meet human needs in combination with conscious educational growth” (p. 4). Since that time, the term has taken on many new and expanded meanings:

- The Corporation for National Service (1993) developed a definition of service learning that includes the teaching of citizenship, academics, values, and skills through active learning.
- The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) (1995) defines service learning as educational experiences that integrate service to the community with academic instruction focused on critical thinking, reflective practice, and civic responsibility.
• Jacoby (1996) locates service learning within the larger field of experiential education in writing that service learning is a form of experiential education in which students actively experience activities that address community needs with organized opportunities to promote student learning.

• Kendall (1990) uses the term service learning to denote an educational philosophy that embraces engaged learning focused on social responsibility.

• Bringle and Hatcher (1996) view service learning as a credit-bearing educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and then reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility.

While there are many variations within these definitions, most agree that service learning is a form of experiential education in which students are immersed in a course-related service activity and then required to reflect on that experience. Many also agree on the fundamental tenets of service learning. Sigmon (1994) writes that students and community partners should be considered both teachers and learners when entering into a service learning relationship with the goal of leveraging the dynamism between the campus and the community. Driscoll, Holland, Gelmon, and Kerrigan (1996) add that students and community should both be made to understand the connection between the student learning objectives for the course and the service being provided to the community. Jacoby (1996) goes further, arguing that reflection and reciprocity must occur for authentic service learning.

Applying course concepts to serve the community enhances classroom teaching and learning. Service learning opportunities allow students to help solve local, national, and global
problems by reflectively applying what they are learning in the classroom to their lived experiences while serving. Service learning expands learning opportunities for students by expanding the place where learning happens. Through coordinated reflective activities, students reflect on issues in ways that allow them to apply their skills to the community, transforming them from passive absorbers of information into active learners. For the purposes of this study, service learning will be defined as:

A specially designed learning experience in which students combine reflection with structured participation in community-based projects to achieve specified learning outcomes as part of an academic course and/or program requirement. By participating in Campus-Community partnerships at the local, national, or international level, students gain a richer mastery of course content, enhance their sense of civic responsibility, and ultimately develop a more integrated approach to understanding the relationship between theory, practice, ideas, values, and community.³

Service Learning and Students

There is an extensive amount of literature pertaining to the effect of service learning on students, faculty, institutions, and community. The following portion of this review will discuss the impact of service learning on students’ personal, social, and learning outcomes, students’ career development, and students’ relationships with their universities.

Much research has shown that service learning has a positive effect on students’ personal development, such their sense of personal efficacy, personal identity, spiritual growth, and moral development (Astin & Sax, 1998; Astin, Sax, & Avalos, 1999; Boss, 1994; Driscoll et al., 1996; ³ As drafted by the University of Cincinnati’s Service Learning Advisory Council, 2008, and found at http://www.uc.edu/careereducation/experience-based-learning/service-learning.html.
Eyler, Giles, & Braxton, 1997; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Fenzel & Leary, 1997; Freidus, 1997; Giles & Eyler, 1994; Gorman, 1994; Gray et al., 1998; Keen, & Keen, 1998; Kendrick, 1996; Markus, Howard, & King 1993; McMahon, 1998; Ostrow, 1995; Peterson, 1998; Rhoads, 1997; Rockquemore & Schaffer 2000; Schmidt, 2000; Sledge, Shelburne, & Jones, 1993; Vogelgesang & Astin, 2000; VCU, 1997; Wade & Yarborough, 1996; Wang, 2000; Western Washington University, 1994). Service learning has also been shown to have a positive effect on leadership and communication skills and to improve students’ ability to work well with others (Astin & Sax, 1998; Dalton & Petrie, 1997; Driscoll et al., 1996; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Freidus, 1997; Giles & Eyler, 1994; Gray, et al., 1998; Juhn et al., 1999; Keen, & Keen, 1998; Mabry, 1998; McMahon, 1998; Raskoff, 1997; Rhoads, 1997; Sledge, Shelburne, & Jones, 1993; Peterson, 1998; Vogelgesang & Astin, 2000; Wade & Yarborough, 1996). The impact of service learning on students’ cognitive moral development is mixed. Some studies do find that service learning contributes to their moral development (Boss, 1994; Gorman, 1994), while other studies show no difference in moral development between service-learning and non-service-learning control groups (Cram, 1998; Fenzel & Leary, 1997; Greene, 1996).

In addition to research that illustrates personal outcomes for service learning students, there is also a large amount of research the focuses on the social outcomes for students. For example, service learning has a positive effect on reducing stereotypes and facilitating cultural and racial understanding (Astin & Sax, 1998; Astin, Sax, & Avalos, 1999; Balazadeh, 1996; Barber et al., 1997; Boyle-Baise, 1998; Boyle-Baise & Kilbane, 2000; Bringle & Kremer, 1993; Driscoll et al., 1996; Dunlap, 1997; Dunlap, 1998; Eyler, Giles, & Braxton, 1997; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Fenzel & Leary, 1997; Giles & Eyler, 1994; Gray et al., 1998; Greene & Diehm, 1995; Hones, 1997; Keen & Keen, 1998; Kendrick, 1996; Myers-Lipton, 1996a; Myers-Lipton, 1996b;
Ostrow, 1995; Potthoff et al., 2000; Rhoads, 1997; Virginia Commonwealth University, 1997; Vogelgesang & Astin, 2000; Western Washington University, 1994). Additionally, service learning may support course goals of reducing stereotyped thinking and facilitating cultural and racial understanding (Curran, 1999; Grady, 1998) and have a positive effect on sense of social responsibility and citizenship skills (Astin & Sax, 1998; Astin, Sax, & Avalos, 1999; Barber et al., 1997; Batchelder & Root, 1994; Dalton & Petrie, 1997; Driscoll et al., 1996; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Eyler, Giles & Braxton, 1997; Fenzel & Leary, 1997; Giles & Eyler, 1994; Gray, et al. 1998; Johnson & Bozeman, 1998; Keen, & Keen, 1998; Kendrick, 1996; Mabry, 1998; Myers-Lipton, 1998; Nnakwe, 1999; Ostrow, 1995; Rhoads, 1997; Rice & Brown, 1998; Sledge, Shelburne, & Jones, 1993; VCU, 1997). Other research demonstrates that service learning positively influences students’ life-long commitment to service (Astin & Sax, 1998; Astin, Sax, & Avalos, 1999; Driscoll et al., 1996; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Eyler, Giles & Braxton, 1997; Fenzel & Leary, 1997; Giles & Eyler, 1994; Keen & Keen, 1998; Kolcross, Markus, Howard, King, 1993; Nnakwe, 1999; Oliver, 1997; Payne, 2000; Payne, & Bennett, 1999; Potthoff et al., 2000; Rhoads, 1997; Stukas & Clary, 1998; Tartter, 1996; Vogelgesang & Astin, 2000; Western Washington University, 1994), and the desire to volunteer in college is associated with involvement in community service after graduation (Astin, Sax, & Avalos, 1999).

While the research clearly supports both personal and social outcomes for service learning students, there is also an abundance of research that demonstrates impacts on learning. Faculty report that service learning has a positive impact on students’ academic learning (Astin & Sax, 1998; Balazadeh, 1996; Boss, 1994; Cohen & Kinsey, 1994; Driscoll et al., 1996; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Eyler, Root, & Giles, 1998; Fenzel & Leary, 1997; Foreman, 1996; Gelmon, Holland, & Shinnamon, 1998; Hesser, 1995; Knee, 1999; Markus, Howard, & King, 1993;
McMahon, 1998; Miller, 1994; Oliver, 1997; Schmiede, 1995; Sledge, Shelburne, & Jones, 1993; Soukup, 1999; Strage, 2000; VCU, 1997; Vogelgesang & Astin, 2000; S. Ward, 2000; Western Washington University, 1994), while students report that service learning improves their ability to apply what they have learned in “the real world” (Balazadeh, 1996; Cohen & Kinsey 1994; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Fenzel & Leary, 1997; Foreman, 1996; Gelmon, Holland, and Shinnamom, 1998; Gray, et al., 1998; Juhn et al., 1999; Kendrick, 1996; Oliver, 1997; Markus, Howard, & King, 1993; McMahon, 1998; Miller, 1994; Nigro & Wortham, 1998; VCU, 1997). However, the impact of service learning on student academic learning as measured by course grades or GPA is mixed. Some studies have shown a positive impact of community service on academic learning (Astin & Sax, 1998; Tartter, 1996; Vogelgesang & Astin, 2000) while other studies have shown a positive impact of service-learning on academic learning (Gray et al., 1998; Markus, Howard, & King, 1993; Strage, 2000; Vogelgesang & Astin, 2000). Several studies show differences in academic learning between service-learning and non-service-learning students (Balazadah, 1996; Berson & Youkin, 1998; Shastri, 1999). Other studies show no difference between service-learning and non-service-learning control groups in academic learning (Boss, 1994; Hudson, 1996; Kendrick, 1996; Miller, 1994; Parker-Gwin & Mabry, 1998). With that said, service learning participation has been shown to have an impact on such academic outcomes as demonstrated complexity of understanding, problem analysis, critical thinking, and cognitive development (Batchelder & Root, 1994; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Eyler, Root, & Giles, 1998; Osborne, Hammerich, Hensley, 1998).

Research does indicate that service learning contributes to career development (Astin & Sax, 1998; Astin, Sax, & Avalos, 1999; Driscoll et al., 1996; Fenzel & Leary, 1997; Greene & Diehm, 1995; Juhn et al., 1999; Keen, & Keen, 1998; Sledge, Shelburne, & Jones, 1993; Tartter,
1996; VCU, 1997; Vogelgesang & Astin, 2000; Western Washington University, 1994), as well as to students’ relationship with the university. For example, it is shown that students engaged in Service Learning report stronger faculty relationships than those who are not involved in service learning (Astin & Sax, 1998; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Gray et al, 1998), and that service learning improves student satisfaction with college (Astin & Sax, 1998; Berson & Younkin, 1998; Gray, et al., 1998) and their likelihood to graduate (Astin & Sax, 1998; Roose et al., 1997).

There is a growing body of case studies that describe service learning processes and contexts, exploring themes such as citizenship development (Dalton & Petrie, 1997; Smith, 1994), dealing with diversity (Boyle-Baise, 1998; Boyle-Baise & Kilbane 2000; Dunlap, 1998a; Hones, 1997; Rockquemore & Schaffer, 2000; Skilton-Silvester & Erwin, 2000), institutional support and cohesion (K. Ward, 1996), transformations in orientations toward service and community (Dunlap 1998b; Ostrow, 1995; Rockquemore & Schaffer, 2000; Wade & Yarborough, 1996.), reflection and instructional processes (Freidus, 1997; Hones, 1997; Ikeda, 2000; Schmiede, 1995), as well as self and identity (Dunlap, 1997; Rhoads, 1997; Wang, 2000). In addition to impacting students, service learning also has implications for faculty.

**Faculty and Service Learning**

While there is an abundance of literature pertaining to the impact of service learning on students, there is also substantial literature discussing the impact of service learning on faculty. First, faculty using service learning convey satisfaction with the quality of student learning (Balazadeh, 1996; Berson & Younkin, 1998; Cohen & Kinsey, 1994; Fenzel & Leary, 1997; Gelmon, Holland, & Shinnamon, 1998; Hesser, 1995; McMahon, 1998; Sero, 1996; Stanton, 1994; S. Ward, 2000). They also report commitment to research (Driscoll et al., 1996) and a growing integration of service learning into their courses.
With that said, it has been shown that lack of faculty rewards (Euster & Weinbach, 1994) and lack of resources (Gray, et al., 1998; Hammond, 1994; National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges, 1995; Robinson & Barnett, 1996; Stanton, 1994; Wade & Yarborough, 1997; K. Ward, 1996) are barriers to faculty implementing service and service-learning partnerships in their courses.

**Universities and Service Learning**

Research has also been conducted to study how service learning impacts universities. Colleges and universities report institutional commitment to service learning curriculum (Bringle & Hatcher, 1997; Campus Contact, 1998; Gray et al., 1998; National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges, 1995; Oliver, 1997; Robinson & Barnett, 1996; Sagaria & Burrows, 1995; Scott & Ludwigh, 1995; Sellnow & Oster, 1997; Serow, Calleson, & Parker, 1996) and a growing availability of service learning programs (Bringle & Hatcher, 1997; Campus Contact; 1998; Gray et al., 1998; National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges, 1995; Robinson & Barnett, 1996; Sagaria & Burrows, 1995; Scott & Ludwigh, 1995; Sellnow & Oster, 1997; Serow, Calleson, & Parker, 1996). And while few colleges and universities require service learning in the academic core (Antonio, Astin, & Cress, 2000; Gray et al., 1998; Sagaria & Burrows, 1995), it is reported that service learning positively impacts student retention (Astin & Sax, 1998; Roose et al., 1997) and enhances community relations (Driscoll et al., 1996; Gray et al., 1998).

**Community and Service Learning**

Service learning has also been shown to have positive impacts on communities. Research demonstrates community satisfaction with service-learning student participation (Cohen &
Kinsey, 1994; Driscoll et al., 1996; Ferrari & Worrall, 2000; Foreman, 1996; Gelmon, Holland, & Shinnamon, 1998; Gray et al., 1998; Greene & Diehm, 1995; National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges, 1995; Nigro & Wortham, 1998; Ward & Vernon, 1999), and that service learning provides useful service in communities (Bringle & Kremer, 1993; Cohen & Kinsey, 1994; Driscoll et al., 1996; Gelmon, Holland, & Shinnamon, 1998; Gray et al., 1998; Henderson & Brookhart, 1997; Nigro & Wortham, 1998; Ward & Vernon, 1999; Western Washington University, 1994). In addition, communities report enhanced campus-community relations (Driscoll et al., 1996; Gray, et al., 1998).

Now that the literature review pertaining to the topic of study—service learning—has been shared, the review will turn to the theoretical framework—structuration theory. It will be discussed how the evolution of service learning at the University of Cincinnati can be understood through this lens.

**Structuration Theory: The Framework**

Structuration is defined as the production, reproduction, and transformation of social environments through rules and resources in relationships (Giddens, 1984). Structurational perspectives hold that individuals actively shape organizational structure, but it is understood that the organizational structure more readily shapes the individual. Thus, evolving structures usually tend toward reaffirming existing social rules and norms as opposed to changing them (Giddens, 1984). Yet, critically examining the active, reflexive process of constructing structure and forming identity allows for emancipatory power of agents that shape and are shaped by that process. In other words, it is seen through the lens of structuration that people have the power to deconstruct and re-structure the interactional milieu into which they are socialized. Through the recursive relationship between the individual and the collective, people have power to shape and
re-shape the larger organizational structure. Therefore, what Giddens terms the *production and reproduction of social life* is an important idea for this and similar case study research. It is understood that individuals within organizations use rules not only to guide them and others but also to allow them to maintain or change an organization. The three assumptions to structuration theory are that (1) groups and organizations are produced and reproduced through the use of rules and resources; (2) communication rules serve as both the medium for, and an outcome of, interactions; and (3) power structures are present in organizations and guide the decision-making process. In this section, I will briefly discuss several theoretical terms, *structure, agency, duality of structure, routinization, rules and resources, power, frames,* and *fresh acts,* which will be followed by a discussion of how structuration theory can be used to understand service learning at the University of Cincinnati. This section will conclude with a proposed addition to theory in a discussion of a nuanced understanding of agency through *fresh acts.*

**Structure**

Structure is defined as the rules and resources used to sustain an organization (Giddens, 1984). It should be understood, however, that structure varies from a system. A system is the organization itself and the behaviors that a group engages in to complete its goals, while a structure refers to the actual rules and resources members use to create and sustain the system. The actual concept of structuration can be defined as a “the process by which systems are produced and reproduced through members’ use of rules and resources” (Poole, Seibold & McPhee, 1996).

Structures are the rules and resources embedded in agents’ memory traces in that agents call upon their memory traces, of which they are knowledgeable, to perform social actions. Knowledgeability refers to “what agents know about what they do, and why they do it”
(Giddens, 1984, p. 26). Giddens writes that “structures exist paradigmatically, as an absent set of differences, temporally ‘present’ only in their instantiation, in the constituting moments of social systems” (Giddens, 1979, p. 64).

Agency

In structuration theory, agency is defined as behaviors or activities used in social environments (Giddens, 1984). Agency is the agent's activity within the social system and “can be understood as the fitful yet routinized occurrence of encounters, fading away in time and space, yet constantly reconstituted within different areas of time-space” (Giddens, 1984, p. 87).

Structural stability and order is not permanent, however, because agents always possess a discursive control, which allows them to break away from normative actions and shift the structure, this, depending on the social factors present.

Duality of Structure

In structuration theory, the duality of structure refers to the idea that a structure enters “simultaneously into the constitution of the agent and social practices, and ‘exists’ in the generating moments of this constitution” (Giddens, 1979, p. 5). The duality of structure is essentially a feedback–feedforward process whereby agents and structures mutually enact social systems, and social systems in turn become part of that duality.

Structuration theory is based on the premise that the classic agent/structure (individual/collective) binary should be reconceptualized as a duality: the duality of structure. Giddens’s (1984) main claim for the theory is that it draws together the two principal strands of social thinking. In the structuralist tradition, the emphasis is on deterministic structure, whereas, in the phenomenological, hermeneutic, and social constructionist traditions, the human agent, and what the agent is capable of enacting, is of primary focus. Structuration theory attempts to
recast structure and agency as a mutually dependent duality (Rose, 1999). Through the lens of this duality, behavior and structure are intertwined, wherein people go through a process to become seemingly determined by the existing social structures, but, at the same time, any and all social structures can be altered by the behaviors of people. One can see, then, that social structures not only determine behavior but also create possibilities for different behaviors within those structures. Rose (1999) points to Giddens (1984) writing:

The structural properties of social systems exist only insofar as forms of social conduct are reproduced chronically across time and space. The structuration of institutions can be understood in terms of how it comes about that social activities become “stretched” across wide spans of time-space. Incorporating time-space in the heart of social theory means thinking again about some of the disciplinary divisions, which separate sociology from history, and from geography. In structuration theory “structure” is regarded as rules and resources recursively implicated in social reproduction; institutionalized features of social systems have structural properties in the sense that relationships are stabilized across time and space. “Structure” can be conceptualized abstractly as two aspects of rules—normative elements and codes of signification. Resources are also of two kinds: authoritative resources, which derive from the co-ordination of the activity of human agents, and allocative resources, which stem from control of material products or of aspects of the material world. (p. xxxi)
In the model of structuration by Rose (1999) (Fig. 2.1), there are several key assumptions to consider. First, agency and structure are interdependent. Second, structure is the medium through which agency is produced and constrained. Third, duality of structures means that social structures are both constructed by human agency and at the same time are the very medium and constrainers of this construction. Fourth, agents always exist within structure. We use practical understanding and the resources of the social structure to construct social reality and make sense of it. Finally, the duality of structure and agency is observable over time as all structures are always in a state of change.

Routinization

Routinization in structuration theory is defined as institutionalized action that is foundational in the establishment of social order and the reproduction of social systems (Giddens, 1984). Routine interactions become institutionalized features of social systems via traditions, customs, and/or habits of the individuals within the structure. The routinized character of most interactions within the structure is something that must be developed continually by those who sustain it in their day-to-day behaviors and interactions. Therefore, routinized social
practices do not stem from coincidence, “but by the skilled accomplishments of knowledgeable agents” (Stones, 2005, p. 26). Trust and tact are essential for the existence of a

basic security system, the sustaining (in praxis) of a sense of ontological security, and

[thus] the routine nature of social reproduction which agents skillfully organize. Most

minor or trivial forms of social action conform to the structural properties of the overall

system over long stretches of historical time. (Giddens, 1984, p. 24)

Thus, even the smallest social actions contribute to the alteration or reproduction of social systems and structure.

Rules, Resources, Power, and Frames

Rules in structuration theory are the general routines that the organization follows in accomplishing goals (Giddens, 1984), though the rules of any structure may restrict behavior and they also enable agents to interact with each other. There are two types of rules—explicit and implicit—where explicit rules are clearly stated (similar to an instruction manual that comes with a new automobile), while implicit rules are assumed or learned through experience (raising your hand when you want to speak in class). Rules, whether explicit or implicit, are typically learned from the organization and are passed on, unless the group decides to change them.

Resources in structuration theory are attributes or material goods that can be used to exert power in a group. Resources can be defined as the attributes or material goods that can be used to exert power in an organization, and they are important because they establish power between individuals. Power in structuration theory can be understood as the imposition of personal will on others (Giddens, 1984). Different types of power can be used within an organization, and this power is what establishes communication and enables understanding among structural agents.
In each interaction, a sense of power is established. Every agent in a structure has a certain amount of power, but some agents (like supervisors) can have more power than others. With that said, no single agent can have absolute power. Power is always leveraged through two types of resources, authoritative and allocative. In structuration theory, agents can control other agents through authoritative resources, and agents control material objects through allocative resources. Structural resources can be broken down into five types of powers: (1) reward power is the perception that another person has the ability to provide positive outcomes; (2) coercive power is the perception that another person has the ability to enact punishment; (3) referent power is the perception that another person has the ability to achieve compliance because of established personal relationships; (4) legitimate power is the perception that another person has the ability to exert influence because of a certain title or position; and (5) expert power is the perception that another person has the ability to exert influence because of special knowledge or expertise.

Frames in structuration theory are “clusters of rules which help to constitute and regulate activities, defining them as activities of a certain sort and as subject to a given range of sanctions” (Giddens, 1984, p. 87). Frames are necessary for agents to trust that everyday actions have some degree of predictability. Framing is the practice by which agents make sense of what they are doing (Giddens, 1984).

Why Structuration?

Of particular interest to this study is how structurational perspectives can account for the ever-evolving structure of service learning at the University of Cincinnati. From a structurational perspective, norms are structural conventions that govern what are considered legitimate behaviors and meanings (Giddens, 1984). Of interest here is the fact that an institution’s
practical consciousness can be examined through the externalized discursive consciousness or the language-use of the institutional stakeholders. When institutional stakeholders—or agents as described through a structurational lens—symbolically interact within structure of the institution, they create and recreate the ordered elements of the structured institution (Giddens, 1984; 1991).

Individual agents usually reaffirm the existing structure of the institution through their interactions. Often to hegemonic ends, these everyday, taken-for-granted discursive themes used by institutional agents are also those that constrain them; the existing structure constrains their thinking and contains their reality. There always exists the possibility, however, for agents to change the structures in which they find themselves (Giddens, 1984).

When the existing disproportion of resources is discursively reaffirmed—when language use and behaviors suggest that the institutional structure is normal—the structure of domination is reproduced. It is only when the existing disproportion of resources is discursively opposed—when the structure is assumed to be abnormal and needing change—that the structure of domination is shifted. Thus, the ongoing dualism of institutional members’ agency within institutional structure accounts for the reproduction of the existing institutional structure, but, more importantly, it also leaves room for the possibility of deconstructing and reproducing a new institutional structure (Giddens, 1984). In short, institutional stakeholders have agency to structure, de-structure, and/or re-structure the social system by drawing on novel sets of discursive consciousness, sometimes tapping into and creating new forms of practical consciousness of the institution.

Structure, Agency, and Language

Individuals within an institution—structural agents—use observations, experiences, and social interactions as constructs from which to model social beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors
(Berger & Luckman, 1966). This is significant in that these social constructs often become reified over time, meaning the symbolically created constructs become tangible structural truths. Through agent interaction, social constructions are affirmed, adopted, and fortified through the institution’s system of symbols—the institution’s language.

Over time, institutional structures become taken-for-granted parts of the institutional ideology in that they are subsequently reaffirmed, refortified, and maintained in all symbolic interactions (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Blumer, 1969; Burke, 1937; Giddens, 1984). These cemented reifications are slow to change, remaining as long-standing institutional anchors. Language, though, being the center from which all structural reifications are maintained, can change the reality of a structure (Derrida, 1989).

According to Giddens (1984), discursive consciousness is “what actors are able to say, or to give verbal expression to, about social conditions, including especially the conditions of their own action” (p. 374). Giddens defined practical consciousness as “what actors know (believe) about social conditions, including especially the conditions of their own actions, but cannot express discursively” (p. 374). In other words, discursive consciousness refers to those elements of reality that are known and are able to be described, to discursively construct and substantiate. Practical consciousness refers to those elements of a culture’s reality that the culture knows and lives by, but that do not need to be actively maintained through language use. The latter refers to cultural assumptions that go unchallenged as normalized structural truths.

It is important to understand that practical consciousness is influenced by discursive consciousness as institutional agents communicate and interact with one another. Practical consciousness results, in part, from the discursive consciousness—the institutional ideology that is produced and maintained through language. The process of assigning value to meaning is
structured by and through the institution’s discursive consciousness. This discursive system is a reservoir of cultural meaning, and, for Giddens (1979), meaning is drawn “from the procedures which agents use in the course of practical action to reach interpretations of what they and others do” (p. 59).

To go a bit deeper, practical consciousness is the common, general, and assumed reality that is structured through the discursive consciousness of the institution’s agents (Giddens, 1984). Consistent with the symbolic interactionist and constructionist positions, institutional identities are then ordered according to the existing institution’s hierarchy. As the practical consciousness is repeatedly accessed through the discursive consciousness, the existing hierarchy of the institution is maintained, sustained, and perpetuated over time. The statement *we shape the rules and they in turn shape us* rings true here, and thus, discursive structures that are actively being created within an institution can be analyzed.

Furthermore, it is understood that institutional agents do not generally *act outside of* the institution’s practical consciousness, or the everyday, taken-for-granted rules. If some do, their behaviors are many times considered abnormal, and it is easy to see how power and privilege within an institution need not be forcefully maintained, because most agents hegemonically reinforce the institution’s hierarchy by taking part in, and abiding by, its discursive structuring.

While traditional social constructionist perspectives offer a description of how institutional structures develop and are maintained, structuration’s critical perspective gives room for re-shaping institutional structures. Further, with structuration’s critical reliance on the discursive power to transform (i.e., transformative power), actively interrogating unfair structures can help marginalized and dominant groups to collectively move away from
imbalanced, unfair institutional structures and move instead toward mutually empowering institutional structures (Poulos & Allen, 2003).

**Structuring Experience and Identity**

Much research has been published focusing on the issue of individual identity within institutional structures, and the bulk of this research is based on the theoretical frameworks of *symbolic interaction* and *social construction*. For example, in researching individual identity within institutional structure, Creswell (2003) cites social construction (Berger & Luckmann, 1967) as the groundwork perspective holding that individuals seek to interpret and comprehend the world in which they live, work, and play as it is shown that people construct subjective meanings of their experiences through interpreting their symbolic interaction with others. Consequently, these interpretations will vary widely from culture to culture, from institution to institution, and from person to person within those institutions.

The structural outcome of agents symbolically interacting is a complex bundle of meanings that are multiple, overlapping, and many times, contradictory. Especially for the purposes of this project, this complexity of service learning at the University of Cincinnati is intriguing because the social constructing capacity of symbol exchange is observable in the discourse of agents (Burke, 1941). Thus, narrative inquiry can illuminate the process of interpreting interactions and constructing institutional identity within institutional structure as language-users negotiate subjective meanings within certain and specific historical contexts (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Blumer, 1969).

Some of the more recent scholarship has begun to unravel the social construction of identity within institutional structure in a complex, nuanced, and sophisticated manner. Cassel (1993), for example, cites Giddens (1984) in stating that the construction of culture is a dynamic,
reflexive, and recursive process. While the social constructionist position claims that agents operate in a web of cultural meaning constructed by interactions with members of the institutional culture, Giddens’s structuration focuses specifically on the process of the ongoing “spinning” of that institutional web. As such, it is believed that individuals (agents) working within an institution (structure) often take an active, although often unconscious, role in spinning the webs. Individuals often step into a socially structured life-world of their respective institution, the hierarchical meanings of which are passed down through the discursive system of the institution, and they are in some ways locked-into roles to play which are always relative to that larger institutional structure. But it is in this very space that the idea of agency comes to light.

As institutional discourse is key for social constructionist and symbolic interactionist frameworks, it is equally important to the theoretical framework of structuration because it is through discourse that agency occurs. Being a critical perspective, however, structuration’s focus on individual agency is always understood to be relative to specific, power-laden contexts as structuration occurs over time. For this reason, institutional discourse and individual agency are strong concepts for structuration as the focus is always on the ongoing, evolving social construction of identity as that identity exists relative to institutional power (Giddens, 1984).

As for agency, while the structuration perspective does hold that individuals can actively shape institutional structures, it is more often the case the institution shapes the individual (Giddens, 1984). Yet, critically examining the active, reflexive process of constructing institutional structure, and forming identity for stakeholders therein, allows for the emancipatory power of agents that shape, and are shaped by, that process. In other words, through the lens of structuration, individual agents possess the power to mitigate the institutional structure within
which they work. Through the recursive relationship between the individual and the institution (agency-structure duality), the agent has power to shape and re-shape the institutional structure. Therefore, what Giddens terms the discursive production and reproduction of social life will be one of the most important concepts for this project.

While traditional social constructionist perspectives offer a description of how institutional structure develops, structuration’s critical perspective allows room for agents to re-shape existing institutional structures. Further, with structuration’s critical reliance on the discursive power to transform (i.e. transformative power), discursive and reflexive leadership may be a way that individual actions can transform the institutional structure in formative ways. The following sections will briefly describe these concepts as they relate to the topic of study—service learning at the University of Cincinnati.

**Structure and service learning in Cincinnati.** The nexus between the individual and institution has been of particular focus for many social researchers spanning several disciplines. George Herbert Mead (1934), for one, questioned how the collective society, including all the values, norms, and ideals that comprise it, get into the individual. His work helped pioneer a significant pedagogical shift that many have built upon. The central task for Mead, as it is for his contemporaries, is in unraveling how an individual’s beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors are products of the surrounding cultural contexts, institutions, and social systems (Baldwin, 1986; Goffman, 1959; Gronbeck, 1988; Harter, 1999).

Symbolic interaction suggests that we all are naïve scientists constantly seeking to understand our environment and reduce our uncertainty in it (Berger & Luckman, 1966), and this suggests that people understand themselves and their behaviors through interacting and
associating with others. Therefore, individual agents do not exist without the basic organizing unit of institutional processes—*culture* (Ting & Toomey, 1999).

Institutional members use observations, experiences, and social interactions as constructs from which they model their own social beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors (Berger & Luckman, 1966), which is significant in that these social constructs many times become reified over time. Meanings behind the symbolically created institutional constructs become tangible and hard institutional truths. It is through institutional stakeholder interactions that social constructions are affirmed, adopted, and fortified through the institution’s system of symbols.

Over time, these institutional social constructs become taken-for-granted parts of the institutional ideology and are subsequently reaffirmed, refortified, and maintained in all symbolic interactions (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Blumer, 1969; Burke, 1937; Giddens, 1984). These cemented reifications are slow to change and remain as long-standing institutional anchors. However, language use—being the center from which all social reifications are maintained—is transient and ephemeral, and the trajectory of an institution is only altered by and through the use (and meaning) of our symbols (Derrida, 1989). Yet, as mentioned above, we must not neglect that the reifying power of discourse lends power to some groups over others (Mumby, 1998).

**Identity and service learning in Cincinnati.** Over time, an institution’s discursively constructed *truths* become steadfastly *just the way things are*. The beliefs are usually unchallenged, and when they are, the challenger is typically met with stiff, systemic resistance (Giddens, 1984). As such, we discursively co-construct our realities, and our attitudes, beliefs, opinions, actions, and perhaps most importantly, our *identities* are thus contained and constrained by the institutional structure. Therefore, one can see the forming of identity to be
intimately linked to the social construction of institutional culture, meaning one is understandable only in relation to the other.

Hecht, Jackson, and Ribeau (2003) understand identity to be active and changing, and constructed during an individual’s interactions with other individuals in the institutional structure. Diggs and Clark (2002) discuss how many have utilized Mead’s Symbolic Interaction Theory to describe how identity is created and sustained over time. Generally, identity construction is described as dynamic and changing, meaning it is always in flux, where one’s personal notion of self is a product of social interaction within the institution.

Research by Baldwin (1986), Hill (1999), and Nobles (1972) uses Mead’s conceptualization of this process of identity construction comprised of two distinct parts, the I and the Me. The I is explained as being the unique, personal, spontaneous, and unreflective part of self that we are born with, whereas the Me is the social, collective, reflective, cultural part that is constructed over time. Accordingly, when interacting with people in a specific institutional structure, we create and negotiate subjective meanings from the bulk of messages that we receive. Not every message receives equal attention, however, because as active interactants with distinct experiences with other people and things, we make choices about what is significant, meaningful, and salient to us, ignoring other messages and possible meanings (Blumer, 1969). These choices, while active, seem to be at least partially subconscious, meaning we choose and frame interactions in certain ways depending on the role our identity takes relative to the broader, encompassing institutional structure. In other words, who we already are influences who we are becoming because of what is salient to our personal identity as it relates to the institutional structure (Berger & Luckman, 1969, Giddens, 1984; Mead, 1934).
Apparent here is the process linking *outside phenomena* and *individual identity*, one being a product of the other. Unander (2000) articulates this concept by understanding the term *identity* to mean one’s *self* as this self interacts with others’ *selves*. Ting-Toomey (1999) along with Hecht, Jackson, and Ribeau (2003) take this idea a bit further in describing that when individuals interact with others they are constructing and communicating their personal identities, and are thus framing their experiences of the world. They add that other individuals are simultaneously constructing and communicating their own personal identities (Hecht, Jackson, & Ribeau, 2003; Ting-Toomey, 1999).

Related literature indicates that we compare ourselves to *significant others* that we perceive as close to us (in relational interaction and/or affection), and also to *generalized others* who are part of the larger community (Diggs & Clark, 2002; Mead, 1934). Thus, the *personal* is an outcome of the *social as identity* is the product of *culture*, whether those we are interacting with are significant (of the familiar and proximal institutional sphere) or generalized (of the greater social sphere outside of the institution). To say this differently, our individually institutionalized identity is defined as we interact with the identities of people within the institution as well as with the general population surrounding us (Mead, 1934).

In short, much of the literature posits that the institutional structure appears to be the strongest determinant of a person’s professional identity (Berger & Luckman, 1969; Blumer, 1969; Giddens, 1984; Mead, 1934). With this general understanding of how personal identity is constructed, I will now move toward a more specific discussion of how *agency* interplays with identity and institutional structure.

**Agency and service learning in Cincinnati.** As reviewed earlier in this chapter, one cannot make sense of the social context without lending ear to the individual, and for this reason
researchers must link the external (commonly shared) and internal (personal) symbolic components of institutional reality. And further, to attempt to understand the structuring of institutional identity post-construction, or as it is after-fact, is shortsighted and incomplete (Rodriguez, 2001). Thus, many are calling for a moving-beyond of the foundations of social construction, especially as it relates to the issue of individual agency within institutional structure.

To illustrate, much research has focused on the co-construction of reality through what has been termed micro-forms of social interaction, while neglecting the effect of larger, macro-forms of institutional structural constraint (Squires, 2002). When the focus is on the institutional structure or larger systemic elements, little room is given for the discussion of agency, or the micro-forms (personal/individual) of identity construction (Baker, 1995). Indeed, the social sciences have quite effectively been able to describe the social arena through either of these perspectives (through macro-systemic determinants or through micro-agency constructions), but the time has come to move ahead with these two perspectives jointed (Bailyn, 2002).

In addition, many have moved to understand such processes as an active reality-construction as it is occurring, as opposed to retrospectively understanding the link between identity and culture. A good illustration of this is found in Mendozo, Halualini, and Drzewiecka (2002). They write:

The move from static, essentialist conceptualizations of the construct to a more dynamic one recognizing shifts in significations within diverse contexts is most welcome, [but] there remains a need to analyze both ends of [social] construction, namely, its structural determinations, on the one hand, and its open-ended, unforeclosed, re-creation and re-construction, on the other. (p. 313)
In other words, it has been charged that where the focus is on the dynamism or changing nature of social construction, the more static, structural determinants are for the most part ignored, and this occurs vice-versa. Mendoza, Halualini, and Drzewiecka (2002) among others have called for a dualistic perspective to analyze both ends of social construction, which again, seems to welcome Anthony Giddens’s Structuration Theory. As such, this project will look at both structural determinants and individual agency to understand institutional culture and individual identity over time.

This approach will offer a more complete understanding of service learning at the University of Cincinnati in that it dualistically analyzes and accounts for the dynamic and ever-changing construction of individual identity and agency within the institutional framework. This is beneficial as the literature challenges the commonly held perspective that institutional cultures are stable and homogenous (Bailyn, 2002; Belay, 1993; Casmir, 1993; Derwin, 1991; Martin & Nakayama, 1999; McPhail, 1996; Rodriguez, 2002; Said, 2000; Shuter, 1993; Starosta, 1991). The assumption held within the more dynamic perspective is dualistic, where the structure of the institution is created by and through the agency of institutional stakeholders. Yet perhaps more importantly, the agency of stakeholders is always constrained and ordered by the structure of the institution (Giddens, 1984).

Figure 2. 2. Dualistic nature of agency and structure.
Institutional Normativity and the Language Game

From a structurational perspective, norms are institutional conventions that govern what legitimate behaviors and meanings are (Giddens, 1984). Thus, all interactions within an institution are usually constituted by normative sanctions, as expressed through the unarticulated practical consciousness and articulated discursive consciousness. Therefore, a university’s norms and beliefs steadfastly become institutionalized. They are systemically structured through practical consciousness, as well as normative sanctions, which are subsequently created and sustained with everyday common discourse, or in other words, the institution’s discursive consciousness. What results is a social order where the institutional structure is articulated, maintained, reaffirmed, and fortified by common rituals, discursive practices, and institutional tradition (Giddens, 1984). The individual agents within the institution grasp the rule-governed language-game, or the “distinctly constrained range of possible moves and outcomes” (Boucher, 2008, p. 4) and are thus constrained by them. Their reality is then anchored by and through their own use of discourse.

Of intrigue is the fact that an institution’s practical consciousness can be examined through the externalized discursive consciousness, or in other words, the language-use of the institution’s agents. When individuals symbolically interact within an institution, they create and recreate the ordered elements of the institution (Giddens, 1984; 1991). Therefore, researchers can examine this process by analyzing the process of structuring agents as they are playing the language game (Boland & Tenkasi, 1995).

In playing the language game, individuals usually reaffirm the existing structure. And to hegemonic ends, these everyday, taken-for-granted discursive themes used by individuals are also those which constrain them. The language game constrains their thinking and constrains
their reality. However, there always exists the possibility for agents to change the structures of domination in which they find themselves (Giddens, 1984). All forms of institutional domination offer agents some resources whereby those who are marginalized can influence the activities of the larger institutional culture (Giddens, 1984).

**Individual Agency and Institutional Power**

Within all interactions, collective meaning and practical consciousness are created by and through discursive agency. Mendoza, Halualani, and Drzweicka (2002) allude to Hall (1980) in positing that “identity, although structured for us through many contexts, is double sided, re-signifiable, and never foreclosed” (p. 320). Thus, identity is created through structural constraints while at the same time always having the ability for re-creation, or the breaking of constraints, in other words.

This is a key point in theorizing about institutionalized identity because it allows for the examining of structural contexts of identities, and the potentially changing function of individual agency (Mendoza, Halualani, & Drzweicka, 2002) within the larger institutional identity. To explain how this may occur, it is when the existing institutional structure is discursively reaffirmed (assumed to be normal through language) that the structure of domination is reproduced. It is only when existing institutional structure is discursively opposed (assumed to be abnormal and needing remedy) that the structure of domination is changed. The ongoing dualism of human agency within social structure allows agents, then, the ability to reproduce the existing structure, but more importantly it also leaves room for the possibility to deconstruct and re-produce a new institutional structure (Giddens, 1984). Individual agents, even with evolving institutionalized identities, can structure, de-structure and/or re-structure the institution by
drawing on novel sets of discursive consciousness, sometimes tapping into and creating some new sets of practical consciousness.

Agency Through Fresh Acts: Adding to Theory

In the previous section, I have briefly described the duality of structure and agency, which included a discussion of routinization, rules, resources, and power. The reason for why structuration was selected as the theoretical underpinning for this study was shared, which specifically tied structuration theory to the topic of study, service learning at the University of Cincinnati. The section discussed specifically how language-use is tied to the duality of structure and agency, which was connected further to an understanding of how professional identity is ordered through language within institutional structure. It is now time to humbly propose an addition to theory by describing nuanced ways that institutional agents may shift institutional structure.

In a deep description of structuration theory, Carlstein (1981) writes:

The concept of structuration involves that of the duality of structure…relates to the fundamentally recursive character of social life and expresses the mutual dependence of structure and agency…. We may agree that every process of action is a production of something new, a fresh act…. Structure thus is not to be conceptualized as a barrier to action, but as essentially involved in its production. (p. 122–123)

The question of how agency develops emerged continually throughout this study, and it is proposed here that the idea of fresh acts can be further conceptualized. Throughout the study, the reader will encounter several types of fresh acts that were described by the participants as being important. These different types of fresh acts include what I will call (1) discursive fresh acts, (2)
structural fresh acts, (3) intrapersonal fresh acts, (4) interpersonal fresh acts, and (5) passive-resistance fresh acts.

Generally speaking, fresh acts should be understood as something new being developed through agency, which shifts the institutional structure in some way. The existing literature, however, has failed to succinctly describe the nuanced ways in which these fresh acts occur. Based on what I have observed during this study, the following descriptions aim to do just that.

A discursive fresh act is understood here as occurring when something new is articulated by agents within a structure that alters or shifts the structure. For example, a supervisor within an institution may propose the hiring or firing of an individual and/or may propose a new program or endeavor. In these examples, what is said by institutional agents will not only serve to shift, in some way, the structure, but will also provide opportunities for new types of agency for other institutional members.

A structural fresh act is understood here as occurring when the larger institutional structure shifts, which provides opportunities for agents within that structure to draw upon new sets of agency and choice. For example, an institution may take the monumental steps to transition from a 10-week long quarter system to a 15-week long semester system, as was the case at the University of Cincinnati. In this example, when the larger structure processes through a monumental shift, opportunities for individual members of that institution to enact agency are opened.

An intrapersonal fresh act is understood here as occurring when individual agents within an institutional structure reflectively reframe their potential agency and choice. For example, an institutional member may choose to think differently about their relationship to the larger structure, which opens up new choices and potential agency. In this example, individual agents
reframe their understanding of the structure and their place in it, providing different approaches to how they may go about impacting the larger structure. The ways in which agents mentally organize and prioritize the happenings in the structure can fundamentally shift potential agency within that structure.

*An interpersonal fresh act* is understood here as occurring when individual agents within an institutional structure form new relationships with other agents, which serves to shift the structure and provide new types of agency and choice. These relational fresh acts are developed through forming new relationships.

A more detailed application of these nuanced types of fresh acts will be shared in chapter four. In particular, the reader will encounter the historical timeline of service learning at the University of Cincinnati, as that narrative has been co-authored by myself and the case study's participants. The narrative will be punctuated by these different types of fresh acts. Each of the different types of fresh acts, it will be explained, has served to fundamentally shift the larger evolving structure of the program.
Chapter 3: Research Methods

This chapter describes the research methodology for this dissertation study. I begin by explaining the tool, narrative inquiry, and my purpose of action research. What follows is a brief discussion of the qualitative paradigm and the case study approach, after which I will explain the data collection and analysis methods and the service learning listening tour. The chapter will conclude with a brief discussion of trustworthiness in a case study such as this, as the study moves beyond the traditional notions of reliability, validity, and generalizability.

Narrative Inquiry: The Tool

The methodological tool used for this dissertation study is narrative inquiry. My sense has always been to tell the story of service learning in Cincinnati, but I had trouble finding a tool that would be considered theoretically-grounded enough to rise to the expectations of a doctoral dissertation. After consultation with mentors and advisors, I arrived at the narrative inquiry tool as a way to analyze the research data and share findings with the reader.

Narrative inquiry has deep roots in the social sciences. Boyce’s (1996) work, for example, discusses three foundational perspectives used to study story and storytelling in organizations—constructivism, interpretive symbolism, and critical theory—all of which undergird a large amount of qualitative research.

The narrative approach is an active process of inquiry, underscoring the importance of storytelling in meaning making within organizations (Josselson & Lieblich, 1999), which is supported by Snowden’s (2001) discussions of how narrative and story can reveal culture within organizations. Narrative is a meaning-making process and explains how stories can help organizational members better understand how decisions occur (O’Connor, 1997). Vane (1991) relates how storytelling is being recognized as having a powerful influence in educational
organizations, which is echoed by Wood (2000) regarding the process of using narrative inquiry as a tool for professional development for members within organizations.

The following section will briefly outline literature pertaining to the narrative inquiry tool, and will include a brief discussion of why stories are important. This will be followed by literature discussing organizational stories and applying narrative inquiry to lived experience. The section will conclude with a brief literature review of how organizations and members in those organizations can change through stories.

**Why Stories?**

People are storytelling animals in that almost all forms of human communication are fundamentally narrative in nature. Collison and Mackenzie (1999) discuss that storytelling is one of the earliest forms of communication. For Fisher (1984; 1995; 1997; 1999), storytelling epitomizes our human nature in that all forms of human communication that appeal to our sense of belonging come in the form of stories. Cortazzi (2001) takes this idea a bit further in stating that narrative is the fundamental way that humans organize their understanding of the world and their place in it. For Linde (2001), narrative is a key aspect in conveying knowledge and meaning between members of an organization, while Watson (1995) argues that stories are crucial for organizational members’ understanding of where they belong.

Lieblich and Tuval-Mashiach (1998) discuss the narrative revolution that occurred in response to the long-standing privileging of the positivist paradigm for social science research. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) also write about how narrative inquiry has deep intellectual roots in the humanities and other fields. In the last few decades, narrative and inquiry into those narratives have seen an emergence in the humanities and social sciences, with many different articulations towards the approach and use of story-telling (Gergen, 1998). Humans live-out
stories, telling these stories of lived experience to others (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). These lived and told stories construct meaning within the lives of the story-teller and those hearing the told story. It is understood, then, that stories construct meaning for individuals and institutions. Bruner (2002) sums this up nicely in writing, “Telling stories is an astonishing thing. We are a species whose main purpose is to tell each other about the expected and the surprises that upset the expected, and we do that through the stories we tell” (p. 8).

Organizational Stories. In addition to individual stories, it is important to also focus on the story of the organization to which the individual belongs. Work by Moss (2001) discusses how organizations are conceived as complex and moving systems and Barry (1997) discusses how the narrative approach can be appropriate for the study of organizational complexity. Boje (1991) views organizations as storytelling systems, which is picked-up by Choo (1998) discussing how organizations behave as information-seeking, information-creating, and information-using communities. Czarniawska (1997) discusses how narrative inquiry is useful to understanding the cultures of organizations while Gabriel (1998) examines the sensemaking of the organization’s members as they seek to generate and sustain meanings.

In 2001, Gabriel’s work with organizational storytelling illustrated how understanding individual and collective narratives can improve the life of the organization and its members. Hansen Kahnweiler (1993) discuss how organizational storytelling is a vehicle for studying and understanding organizational culture, and Morgan and Dennehy (1997) go further in describing how stories are powerful tools in organizational member development, discussing how leaders can use narrative inquiry to enhance their own lived experiences.

Organizational change through stories. While narrative inquiry is useful for understanding individual’s lived experiences as well as that of the organization, it is also useful
for understanding how organizations can change. Dervin (1999) discusses organizational sensemaking in terms of gaps in the collective story. It is argued that the reality organizational members construct has gaps that stem from differences in power but also differences in time, place, and culture. Dervin (1999) goes on to state that the only way to address these gaps is through communication and story-telling, and Flemming (2001) presents a view that storytelling, when used effectively in organizations, has the potential to assist in change efforts in that it provides the narrative needed for individual belonging and collective change.

Similarly, Faber (1998) introduces a discursive model of organizational change, taking the view that organizations are discursive products developed through interactions between members. Gill (2001) echoes this work, stating that narrative inquiry provides the framework to facilitate conversations that develop organizational change processes, including the social construction of reality by organizational members.

Story-telling and narrative inquiry are powerful tools for understanding leaders and members of an organization going through change (Denning, 2000). In particular, by trying to understand the complexity of organizations through narrative inquiry, storytelling is a valuable approach to understanding and leveraging change for individual members and, thus, the organization itself (Denning, 2000).

**Applying Narrative Inquiry to Lived Experience**

In writing about narrative inquiry, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) focus on Dewey’s view of experience, drawing on his understandings of interaction and continuity that underscore those experiences. They discuss that an individual’s lived experience is always occurring through interactions with others, and these interactions are always occurring through the continuum of space and time. They write:
Experiences grow out of other experiences, and experiences lead to further experiences. Wherever one positions oneself in that continuum—the imagined now, some imagined past, or some imagined future—each point has a past experiential base and leads to an experiential future. (p. 2)

Abma (2000) echoes this understanding in discussing how groups gain knowledge and understanding of issues by telling the stories of their lived experiences. It should be noted, however, that the story-teller and narrative inquirer are included in the melee of experiences, as narrative inquiry is

a way of understanding experience. It is collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in the same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experiences that made up people’s lives, both individual and social. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20)

Therefore, I, as the researcher in this project, am also simply another story-teller who is living the experience with others. The story being told here includes my own subjective experiences, but these are simultaneously tethered to the lived experiences of others, which is echoed in Ochs (1997) focusing on the co-authoring of narrative that includes collaboratively constructed history and a sensemaking of experiences. Clandinin and Rosiek (2006) articulate this understanding well in stating that narrative inquiry is

an exploration of the social, cultural and institutional narratives within which individual’s experiences are constituted, shaped, expressed and enacted—but in a way that begins and ends that inquiry in the storied lives of the people involved. Narrative inquirers study an
individual’s experience in the world and, through the study, seek ways of enriching and transforming that experience for themselves and others. (p. 42)

Narrative Inquiry as Methodology

Narrative inquirers working within the time-space continuum can begin their inquiries either by engaging with participants through telling stories or through coming alongside participants in the living out of stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). Whether the narrative inquiry researcher begins with telling stories or living stories, it is understood that we enter the research project in the midst of ongoing lived-stories. Stories of the researcher and those of the research participants are combined with the many, often overlapping and sometimes contradictory, institutional stories, and these are all occurring simultaneously. Therefore, being in the field and engaging with participants of the study is seen as walking into the midst of ongoing stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). As the researcher co-operates in the field with the research participants, there is a recursiveness; as inquirers compose research notes, analyze interview texts, and interrogate institutional documentation, the researcher negotiates her/his narrative understandings while in the midst of the lived-experience of participants.

Tensions will emerge and re-emerge as narrative inquirers attend to their experiences of moving from close relational work with participants to beginning to represent their inquiries for a larger audience (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). Researchers must be able to answer the so what? and who cares? questions that all researchers need to answer in their work, and they must do so by living the story while telling it. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) discuss how the narrative is both phenomenon and method:

Narrative names the structured quality of experience to be studied, and it names the pattern of inquiry for its study. Thus, we say that people by nature lead storied lives and
tell stories of those lives, whereas narrative researchers describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience. (p. 2)

Now that I have discussed literature pertaining to the topic, framework, and method for this project, I will discuss the purpose of the project—action research.

**Action Research: The Purpose**

In the 1940s, Kurt Lewin and his colleagues introduced the action research model as a form of research inquiry that could potentially solve real-world societal problems. Some of the very early action research projects were used to address issues in the for-profit world, where researchers collected data to incorporate large-scale change and improve organizational problem solving (Coch & French, 1948; Likert, 1967; Whyte & Hamilton, 1964), but action research has also been used to implement reform to educational systems on a large scale and to develop improved curricula in the classroom.

McKernan (1991) discusses that the action research approach was employed for redesigning curriculum to address multifaceted social problems such as inter-group conflicts and prejudice in the school systems, but per Masters (1995), this type of research was typically done by external researchers in collaboration with schools, including the teachers and administrators in those schools. Columbia University’s Stephen Corey is recognized as one of the earliest champions of action research in the field of education, writing that “the scientific method in education would bring about change because educators would be involved in both research and the application of information” (Gilbert, 2009, p. 312).

Despite the growing prominence of action research, the paradigm did have its early critics. In the 1950s, for example, action research was criticized as being the work of amateurs and unscientific (McFarland & Stansell, 1993), which perhaps underscored the then-emerging
dichotomy between research and practice. The positivist approaches to social science and quantitative methodologies have been privileged as being more effective in making change to schools and communities (Ferrance, 2000; Masters, 1995), but since the 1970s, the tide has begun to shift, in part due to action research’s effectiveness for bridging the divide between theory and practice.

The revival of action research in the 1970’s took several forms. It was incorporated in large part in the work of Argyris and Schon (1978; 1996) focusing on organizational learning. Following this line of research, Senge (1990) incorporated the action research paradigm into his work with mental models, and on other fronts, the undergirding of action research was helpful in the growth of evaluation research methods in both quantitative (Rossi, Freeman, & Wright, 1979; Rossi & Freeman, 1993) and qualitative (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) forms. In more recent phases of action research, many have focused on empowerment evaluation as an effective approach for actively involving stakeholders in needed research to improve their programs (Fetterman & Eiler, 2001). Per Fetterman and Eiler (2001), empowerment evaluation is designed to help people help themselves through self-evaluation and reflection.

The action research model continues to be used in educational settings (Brydon-Miller & Maguire, 2009; Hatch, 2002; McKernan, 2013; Mertler, 2008; Rector-Aranda, 2017). In recent years, it has been used, for example, to increase understandings of classroom dynamics and improve teaching and learning (Cook-Sather, 2010; Harwood, 1991), for evaluating inclusive school programs (Dymond, 2001), and in examining concerns relevant for school principals striving to work with children and their families to implement successful programs (Brotherson, Sheriff, Milburn, & Schertz, 2001). It has also been used toward improving reading programs for impoverished children (Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Cammarota & Romero, 2009; Cook-Sather,
2010; Griffiths, 2009; Rodriguez & Brown, 2009; Torre & Fine, 2008; Griffiths, 2009; Flanagan & Nombuyiselo, 1993), and in managing change in an interdisciplinary understanding of a large organization (Barker & Barker, 1994).

In their seminal work, “Why Action Research?” Brydon-Miller, Greenwood, and Maguire (2003) define the action research model and advocate for its importance in many fields. Action research, they write, has deep footing in many different traditions, but there are strong elements of action research in the work of Dewey, “both in his philosophical work and in his studies and experiments in education” (p. 11). To emphasize the vast reach of action research, they discuss Kurt Lewin’s notion of collaborative research, along with Sol Tax’s notion of action anthropology. They describe the Tavistock Institute’s efforts to promote action research from multiple countries, and they point to Myles Horton’s work in promoting social justice, civil rights, and democracy at the Highlander Center. In addition, they highlight the work of Paulo Freire, Budd Hall, Marja-Liisa Swantz, Orlando Fals-Borda, and others, all of whom focused on action research to oppose oppression and invigorate change. They further describe the works of Chris Argyris, Donald Schön, Reg Revans, William Torbert, Peter Reason, and John Heron, who demonstrated a wide-ranging focus on multiple organizations and industries, both in the public and private sectors.

While the founding traditions of the model do appear distinct, there are clear and key guiding principles of action research that link them together. For Brydon-Miller, Greenwood, and Maguire (2003), the key and uniting focus of action research is in “how we go about generating knowledge that is both valid and vital to the well-being of individuals, communities, and for the promotion of larger-scale democratic social change” (p. 11). They go on to write that
action research challenges the claims of a positivistic view of knowledge which holds that in order to be credible, research must remain objective and value-free. Instead, we embrace the notion of knowledge as socially constructed and recognized that all research is embedded within a system of values and promotes some model of human interaction. (Brydon-Miller, Greenwood, & Maguire, 2003, p. 11)

Here we see the key opposition to the positivist paradigm assumptions that authentic research is value-free and objective. Rather, Brydon-Miller, Greenwood, and Maguire champion the fact that most authentic research is embedded within pre-existing systems of understanding and filtered through the lenses of the human condition. Further, they propose that action research could be a more authentic form of research because it is grounded in democratic decision making, mutual accountability, and a participatory world view. Therefore, while sharing the many varying definitions of action research, they point to the definition of action research as proposed by Reason and Bradbury (2001):

[Action Research is] a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview which we believe is emerging at this historical moment. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities. (p. 1)

In addition to rejecting the flawed assumptions of the positivist worldview, Brydon-Miller, Greenwood, and Maguire (2003) write that action research links seemingly disparate fields by adhering to a shared commitment to democratic social change and the integration of theory and practice. They discuss this commitment to democratic social change by stressing the
importance of valuing the experiences of all research stakeholders. In fact, they propose that the traditionally understood *researchers* and *researched* should have equal footing. “A key value shared by action researchers, then, is this abiding respect for people’s knowledge and for their ability to understand and address the issues confronting them and their communities” (p. 14).

Brydon-Miller, Greenwood, and Maguire (2003) note that many action researchers are fond of Kurt Lewin’s (1951) believing that “there is nothing so practical as a good theory” (p. 169), but they go further to say that this works both ways.

Action research goes beyond the notion that theory can inform practice, to a recognition that theory can and should be generated through practice, and, as the earlier discussion of values would suggest, that theory is really only useful insofar as it is put in the service of a practice focused on achieving positive social change. (p. 15)

In many ways, the purpose of this project, action research, is interwoven with and supported by the topic—service learning—and the method—narrative inquiry. Giddens’s (1984) work and that of the many service learning researchers discussed above are very much tied to the underpinnings of action research in that the relationship between individuals, and between individuals and larger organizations, can only be understood in the contexts of these relationships.

**The Qualitative Paradigm**

While this dissertation is grounded in the discipline of Urban Educational Leadership, this work was conducted from the standpoint of my identity as a perpetually-evolving student of *communication theory* and the philosophies undergirding a *communication approach* to research and practice. Overviewing the corpus of communication theory, however, would quickly reveal a discipline that reflects a wide array of methodological approaches, desired outcomes, and levels
of scholarly investigation. Scholars in the field of communication theory span the continuum of theories grounded both in the behavioral sciences and interpretive scholarship, with many shades of gray in between.

Behavioral scientists will often approach the human condition through the scientific method, while theorists grounded in the humanities will often approach the human condition through interpreting texts. In the field, it is found that the objective approach and the interpretative approach to theory differ in starting point, method, and conclusion, where scholars who do objective studies consider their work to be science, while scholars who do interpretive study are more concerned with meanings that reflect a range of ideological and methodological positions. Thus, there is no single unifying lens for communication theory, much less for interpretive scholars of communication theory.

To take this discussion a bit further, social scientists in the field of communication theory value objectivity where personal values should not alter the research outcomes. Interpretive scholars, on the other hand, seek to expand the understanding that knowledge is never neutral. While social scientists pursue universal laws, test theories, and seek prediction, interpretive scholars strive to interpret individual texts, explore the web of meaning constituting human existence, and strive for deep and nuanced understandings about humanity.

For social scientists, a good objective theory seeks certain goals—explanation of the data, prediction of future events, relative simplicity of theoretical explanations, testing of hypotheses, and pursuit of practical utility. They often use quantitative research methods to achieve these goals. Interpretive scholars, on the other end of the continuum, seek different goals—new understandings of people, a clarification of human values, aesthetic appeal of theoretical
explanations, communities of agreement around theoretical understandings, and societal reform. Social scientists often use qualitative research methods to pursue these goals.

While there is certainly an active debate in the field about the value of scientific versus interpretive approaches to understanding the human condition, it is argued that there exists much overlap between the two camps. In looking at the goals of both scientific and interpretive scholars, Griffin (2009) argues that a good scientific explanation can, indeed, further a qualitative understanding of human motives. The scientific goal of prediction and the interpretive goal of value clarification both seek to look into the future of the human condition. Simplicity, a goal of the scientific scholar, also upholds the goal of aesthetic appeal, a key goal of the interpretive scholar. The hypotheses-testing of the scientist is certainly also a way of achieving the interpretive goal of creating communities of agreement. Theories that reform, a goal of interpretive study, are often practical, a goal of scientific study, and both qualitative and quantitative research reflect a commitment to learning more about the past, present, and future of the human condition, albeit in different ways and for different reasons.

In his work, *Metatheory*, Craig (2009) suggests that communication theory could be viewed as a practical discipline where theory is developed to solve real world problems, and he identifies several established research traditions that are used by both interpretive and scientific scholars, which are summarized in the following ways:

- *The socio-psychological tradition* observes interpersonal interaction and influence between individuals. This tradition epitomizes the scientific perspective in that scholars believe that communication truths can be discovered by careful, systematic observation that predict cause-and-effect relationships. Researchers in this tradition
focus on what is without their personal bias of what ought to be and often collect data through surveys, controlled experiments, and longitudinal empirical studies.

- **The cybernetic tradition** observes human communication and interaction as a system of information processing between and among individuals. Coined by Norbert Wiener, the term cybernetics is often used to describe the field of artificial intelligence where the concept of feedback is a moor. For this tradition, human interaction is the link separating the different parts of any social system, and theorists here seek to answer questions such as How does the system work? What could change it?

- **The semiotic tradition** observes human interaction and communication as the process of sharing meaning through signs where words and discourse are a special kind of signs known as symbols. The early scholar, I. A. Richards, discussed the mistaken belief that words have a precise meaning—proper meaning superstition—and he believed that meanings do not reside in words or other symbols, but in people that use them.

- **The socio-cultural tradition** observes human interaction as the creation and enactment of social reality wherein communication produces and reproduces culture. Two early pioneers of this tradition, Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf, believed that the structure of a culture's language system works to shape what people think and do. Their understandings counter the idea that language and discourse are neutral conduits of meaning and rather see language as the mechanism through which social reality is produced, maintained, repaired, and transformed.
• *The critical tradition* is focused on power, observing human interaction and communication as a reflective challenge of unjust discourse. Deriving from the German Frankfurt School, where Marx’s economic determinism was rejected but the pursuit of critiquing society was embraced, the critical tradition actively pursues and challenges three features of human culture and society: (1) the control of language to perpetuate power imbalances; (2) the role of mass media in dulling sensitivity to repression; and (3) blind reliance on the scientific method and an uncritical and blind acceptance of empirical findings.

• *The phenomenological tradition* observes human interaction and communication as the experience of understanding the self and others through dialogue. Phenomenology refers to the intentional analysis of everyday life from the standpoint of the person who is living it and places great emphasis on people’s perceptions and interpretations of their own subjective experiences. Scholars in the phenomenological tradition seek to answer two questions: (1) Why is it so difficult to establish and sustain authentic human relationships? (2) How can this problem be overcome?

These traditions have deep roots in communication theory, and they each can be mapped out with respect to the objective/interpretive continuum discussed above. It should be noted that theoretical hybrids are possible across traditions, which can help to illuminate the human condition. However, Griffin (2012) argues that even overlapping or hybridizing traditions may not cover every approach to theory and understanding the human condition. Therefore, he calls for another potential tradition—*the ethical tradition*—which calls for people to interact in just
and beneficial ways. It should also be noted that concern for ethics, indeed, spreads across the objective-interpretive continuum, but these concerns are often fueled by differing motives.

**Single Case Study**

This doctoral dissertation is a single case study focused on the development and evolution of service learning at the University of Cincinnati. Of focus here is the study of a case—*Service Learning*—within a real-life contemporary context or setting—*The University of Cincinnati*. Trainor and Graue (2013) provide several definitions of the case study from the literature (pp. 54–55), citing:

- “Case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances” (Stake, 1995, p. xi).
- “Case studies are rich, empirical descriptions of particular instances of a phenomenon that are typically based on a variety of data sources” (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007, p. 25).
- “A case study is a study based upon evidence of a case in progress. This involves the gathering of evidence, its criticism, and its interpretation” (Stenhouse, 1978, p. 31).
- “Case studies are constructed, not found, as researchers make decisions about how to angle their vision on places overflowing with potential stories of human experience” (Dyson & Genishi, 2005, p. 2).

Of the case study approach, Creswell (2007) explains that case study research is a specific methodology in qualitative research that may be an object of study, as well as a product of inquiry. Case studies have bounded systems, are detailed, and use multiple sources of information, and the critical element of the case study approach “is to define a case that can be bounded or described within certain parameters, such as a specific place and time” (Cresswell,
2003, p. 97). Components of the case study research method include its reliance on in-depth understanding and its utilization of case descriptions, themes or specific situations (Cresswell, 2003). Researchers typically conclude case studies with assertions from their learning. Some of the challenges of case study research are determining the scope of the research, deciding on the bounded system, and determining whether to study the case itself or how the case illustrates an issue (Cresswell, 2003).

Congruent with the expectations of the case study approach, this study’s data has been collected through the lenses of three distinct yet intersecting frameworks—structuration theory, narrative inquiry, and action research—all of which are tied to a communication theory approach to understanding.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

The overall design of this case study includes using field notes of shared experiences and interviews with service learning stakeholders (both past and present), story-telling, historical record analysis, and open-ended conversations to illuminate the narrative (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; 1998). Discourse analysis (Yang, 2001) has been used to manifest a space for narrative construction and *sensemaking*. In all of the information compiled, I looked for common themes to emerge from discourse between the researcher and participants by employing comparative thematic analysis of the texts. The narrative approach is supported by Bird (2002), who wrote, “local narratives tell us how people construct their sense of place and identity” (p. 519).

**Data: The Service Learning Listening Tour**

Starting in 2015, after serving for seven years in a leadership position at the University of Cincinnati, I began conducting a *Service Learning Listening Tour*, wherein I spent many months meeting with stakeholders and having discussions via telephone. While informal feedback and
data has been continually collected since shortly after being hired as the Associate Director of Academic–Community Partnerships, the data collected in earnest during this tour (2015–present) is the fodder for this dissertation. The resulting narrative of this dissertation will detail the evolution of service learning at the University of Cincinnati, which in every way, began before my birth.

The narrative includes not only my voice, but the many voices of stakeholders who have been instrumental in the evolution of the program over time. These include stories from professor emeriti, the director of the university’s Center for Community Engagement, the original funding agency of my position, the director of the university’s First Year Experience and Learning Communities program, the vice provost for International Programs, the Public Relations Director at the University of Cincinnati several professors of Experiential Learning and Career Education, along with several university faculty who have employed a service-learning approach to their teaching. In addition, this narrative will include the voices of the archivist for the university, several educational partners, the director of Ohio Campus Compact, the Vice Provost for Enrollment Management, and the Senior Academic Researcher at the university.

To solicit narrative feedback, I have utilized the following questions during the narrative inquiry:

1. How would you describe the history of service learning in Cincinnati?
2. How would you summarize the success, or lack of success, of the initiative over time?
3. What ideals from the original framing of the initiative have been met, and what ideals have not been met?
4. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me today?
To best share this story, these individual narratives have been combined and punctuated by what I am calling different “watershed moments of unfreezing” that the co-narrators and I agreed have been illustrative of the program over time. These watershed moments of unfreezing are those moments that myself and the co-narrators discussed as being particularly important to different turning points in the evolution of the program. There is much to this story that is not being told, as is the case with all stories, but what the reader will receive is the story of service learning at the University of Cincinnati as it has been experienced by myself and the participants of this narrative inquiry.

With support from the university’s Institutional Review Board (IRB), this study has been categorized as exempt for the following reasons: (1) the research was conducted in an established educational setting involving normal educational practices; (2) the research involved the study of existing data, documents, and records, which are all publicly available; and (3) the research was conducted with the approval of university department heads, and is designed to study, evaluate, or otherwise examine benefits and possible changes to the program.

Data Analysis

Participants in this study took part in informal discussions and follow-up discussions over the past year. The specific purpose was to observe how members discursively made sense of service learning in Cincinnati. At the heart of the research process, I used the method of constant comparative analysis (Boeiji, 2002; Glasser, 1965; Hewitt-Taylor, 2001; Glasser, 1965). After conducting the Service Learning Listening Tour, I searched for recurring patterns to develop in the discourse. Following these steps, I compared the discursive data coding, looking for themes to emerge and further develop. Once several dominant themes emerged, I was then able to use them as lenses through which to view and review the notes from the Listening Tour. From here, I
was able to further memo what data helped support the major themes and highlight data that contradicted them. The processes of data collecting, coding, and memoing occurred simultaneously. Following this, I further sorted the coded data and began to write out the findings into paragraph form to be later analyzed and shared in Chapter Four.

After all data was collected and analyzed, I created an historical timeline that has been separated into six distinct stages, and which will be narrated through the metaphor of farming. The reason for choosing this metaphor is that I have always considered my professional role as leader of service learning at the University of Cincinnati to be that of a grower or farmer of service learning partnerships and pedagogies, and have often experimented with different ways to yield a positive “crop” for the university and the community. I often failed, as farmers do, but I learned much through those failings. In addition to telling my story and our story through this metaphor, I have taken the liberty to extend-back that metaphor to include the other caretakers of forerunners of the program.

During all of the discussions, conversations, and textual analyses conducted during the Service Learning Listening Tour, I used the matrix below as a way to organize the data and notes. After completing the last interview, I began to share with the narrative participants my findings to ensure that the story was being told in a collective way.

Table 3. 1. Data organizing matrix.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEARS</th>
<th>STAGES</th>
<th>STRUCTURE</th>
<th>AGENCY THROUGH FRESH ACTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>The Ground Thaws</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>The Ground is Tilled</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>The Seeds are Obtained</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>A New Farmer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Trustworthiness: Beyond Reliability, Validity, and Generalizability

The findings from this study will serve to construct meanings that will be naturally validated, internally, by the participants and myself. Within the contexts of initial face-to-face and telephone discussions, follow-up interviews, critical self-reflection, and textual analysis of existing documents, I have strived to remain open to a story that is not entirely my own while at the same time working to confirm my perceptions with the narrative participants. While this approach suggests that my findings will not necessarily be generalizable to other groups in other situations, the study has truth value (internal validity) in that the findings will be an accurate representation of the phenomena at hand. Further, the findings will allow me to draw plausible conclusions that are confirmed by the narrative participants. While I hope that the findings will be applicable to the sensemaking of similar learning contexts (external validity), this is not my explicit intent.

In addition, I have chosen an appropriate site (a university campus) and appropriate service learning stakeholders) in order to create trustworthy findings. I hope that the narrative will help offer a thick description (Geertz, 1973) and information-rich responses in order to improve the trustworthiness of the work. My interpretive community and faculty advisors have contributed, and will continue to contribute, to the peer examination of the project, which will also help bolster the study’s trustworthiness.

According to work by Anderson and Herr (2005):
there are five validity criteria linked to the goals of action research. These include: (1) the generation of new knowledge, (2) the achievement of action-oriented outcomes, (3) the education of both researcher and participants, (4) results that are relevant to the local setting, and (5) a sound and appropriate research methodology. Based on these goals, we have identified indicators of quality for action research studies. (p. 54)


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals of Action Research</th>
<th>Quality/Validity Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) The generation of new knowledge</td>
<td>Dialogic and process validity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) The achievement of action-oriented outcomes</td>
<td>Outcome validity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) The education of both researcher and participants</td>
<td>Catalytic validity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Results that are relevant to the local setting</td>
<td>Democratic validity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) A sound and appropriate research methodology</td>
<td>Process validity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This dissertation meets all five criteria proposed by Anderson and Herr (2005): (1) according to the dialogic and process criterion, there is new knowledge about the service learning program being generated through the research; (2) according to the outcome validity criterion, the results of this project are geared toward making action-oriented improvements to the service learning program at the University of Cincinnati; (3) according to the catalytic criterion, both myself (as lead narrator) and the other narrative participants will be edified by the project; (4) according to the democratic validity criterion, the results of this work are very relevant to the local setting of the University of Cincinnati; and (5) according to the process validity criterion, it has been agreed upon by the narrative participants and research advisors that the action-oriented narrative approach is an appropriate methodology for this project.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have overviewed the qualitative paradigm in order to contextualize the theoretical and methodological framework for this study. Included is a description of data
collection and analysis, which includes a brief discussion of the Service Learning Listening Tour which informed this case study. Finally, this chapter discusses the trustworthiness of this work in that the findings are beyond reliability, validity, and generalizability. In the next chapter, I will be moving to the findings of the study.
Chapter 4: Narrative Findings

The following chapters include the research findings of the Narrative Inquiry study, which amounts to a multi-faceted and collectively told story about the evolution of the University of Cincinnati’s Service Learning Program. This story will be punctuated by moments of unfreezing that have not only impacted the program but have formed my own identity within that of the larger, evolving institutional structure of the university’s Service Learning Program. More specifically, the story here is one in which who I am becoming is intimately linked to the becomingness of the Service Learning Program at UC, and a great deal of detail will be shared from this personal perspective and substantiated by a wide array of narrative chronicled by others.

Within the scope of this study, structure is understood to mean the larger organization of the University of Cincinnati while agency refers to the individual and often collective actions taken by individuals or groups of individuals. Agency often confirms and conforms to the existing structure, with individuals reaffirming the existing rules and resources used to sustain the university structure, but there are moments when fresh acts occur, which is agency enacted to shift the institutional structure in some way. It is here where we see the duality of structure and agency in that the structure exists because of individual agency, but it is also altered through the same.

The findings will be separated into six distinct stages, narrated through the metaphor of farming, as discussed in Chapter Three. The first three stages will be discussed in this chapter, setting up the historical backdrop of the narrative. Stage four will be included in the following chapter, and stages five and six will be illuminated in the final chapter. My personal role in the farming story begins in stage four, which is where I will share narrative findings relating to how
making sense of Service learning in Cincinnati has evolved under my practice of Urban Educational Leadership. In stage five of the narrative, “Listening to the Ground,” I will share with the reader important and often painful learning experiences in a section titled “Critical Findings and Making Sense of Service Learning in Cincinnati,” which will bring the reader to where we are in the narrative today. In the sixth and final narrative stage, “Hand on the Plow,” I will share with the reader several key next-steps that are guiding the latest evolutions of service learning at the University of Cincinnati, including shifts in institutional structure and my agency within it.

There are several key terms that I will repeatedly use throughout the narrative, as discussed in chapter two (See Table 4.1 below). It is my hope that understanding the narrative through these terms will illuminate how service learning at the University of Cincinnati has evolved over time. As previously discussed, this study has also provided the opportunity to add to the existing structuration theory literature by introducing nuanced modalities of fresh acts. The reader is urged to journey through the narrative with the following key terms in mind:

Table 4.1. Definitions of key terms used throughout the narrative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DUALITY OF STRUCTURATION</td>
<td>The production, reproduction, and transformation of the institutional structure through rules and resources in relationships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRUCTURE</td>
<td>The rules and resources used to sustain the institutional structure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGENCY</td>
<td>Behaviors or activities used in the institutional structure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRESH ACT</td>
<td>Something new developed in the institutional structure through agency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discursive Fresh Act</td>
<td>Something new is articulated by an agent within the structure, which shifts the structure and provides new opportunities for agency</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- Structural Fresh Act: The larger structure shifts, which provides new opportunities for agency for agents within the structure.
- Intrapersonal Fresh Act: Agents reflectively reframe their understandings of the structure, providing new opportunities for agency.
- Interpersonal Fresh Act: New relationships are formed by agents in the structure, shifting the structure and providing new opportunities for agency.

**Complicated History**

I will now move toward the meat of this project—making sense of service learning in Cincinnati. I will remind the reader here that much of the story, and my individual agency within it, is very much tied to the story of the larger structure of the university. I have chosen those events that I and others believe are the most illustrative of this narrative, punctuating them with key fresh acts that are considered watershed moments for the program—moments that may be understood through the *duality of structure and agency*.

My goal is that the following narrative adequately captures the dualistic complexity of service learning at the University of Cincinnati by taking into account both the structural elements as well as those elements illustrated through agency. Taking inspiration from Theado (2013), this narrative will acknowledge the smoothing over effect that results from the processes of narration and historicization, but it will also account for the un-discoursed histories that unfold alongside the more official or authorized (that is, the “discoursed”) accounts of events happening over time.
Historical Timeline and Narrative Punctuated by Fresh Acts

The following includes a timeline derived from several places. Formal and informal conversations, artifact research, story archeology, extensive internet searches, asking many questions, and having many discussions with the co-narrators—the participants in this case study. All of these forms of data have helped to create this narrative. The reader will notice that there are many events included, but the most salient are those where the duality of structure and agency is most noticeable.

Before moving further, it should be noted that if another narrator were to tell this story, perhaps other key watershed events would be chosen, which is perhaps a strength of the narrative inquiry method. With that said, this is the story as I have lived it, and it is also the story which has been passed on to me by others. The reader will process through stages of the story, moving from times before my birth and the reader’s birth all the way through to where the ongoing story is today. In this story of service learning in Cincinnati, I am one of many farmers that have been instrumental in the building and maintaining of program, but the story is filtered through my point-of-view and substantiated by the fellow story-tellers.

As I embark in the telling of this story, I find myself inspired by the words of J.J. Hendricks in a jointly written paper titled “Symposium: The Role of the Theorist in Facilitating Voice” (Hendricks & Vickers, 2003). In the piece, Hendricks writes:

I (Hendricks) ask myself why it is that I am concerned with the concept of voice. Finding the answer is more difficult than dealing with the concept itself—noting it’s [sic] place in the stream of conversational and authorial consciousness called the history of thought. Scratch a theorist, uncover a complex bundle of contradiction and human situatedness. I suspect that my fascination with voice begins with the fact that I am a woman who
thinks. More so, given that it is the utterance that fascinates, it is probably issues from the importance I attach to being heard. Perhaps it may reside in unmet infantile needs too inaccessible to grasp without depth psychology. The baby cries. Is it heard? The meaning of being heard may lie in the quintessential act of cognition. (Hendricks & Vickers, 2003, p. 457)

These words get to the heart of this project. I want the story to be told, but the story to tell is not only my own. Over the years, however, the story has become more and more my story every day. Whether this is a good thing or a bad thing for me and the program is hard to decipher at the moment, but my sense is that it may not matter much over time. I find myself agreeing with Maya Angelou (1969) writing in *I know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, “There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside of you,” but also with J.D. Salinger’s “Don’t ever tell anybody anything. If you do, you start missing everybody” (Salinger, *Catcher in the Rye*). It is a bit of a contradictory perspective to hold, and it is, more so, a bit frightening to offer my version of the story of service learning in Cincinnati.

What if I am wrong about the story? What if my version is too tinted by my own subjectivity? What if I offend those that I work with and work for? These are all questions that ping around in my mind, but perhaps the most important question pinging about is what if I do not tell the story? And the answer to that question has the tendency to silence those pesky doubts. Perhaps the perspective provided by Saturday Night Live’s late and great Gilda Radner is most befitting to the spirit of this work. In her book, “It’s Always Something,” she writes:

I wanted a perfect ending. Now I’ve learned, the hard way, that some poems don’t rhyme, and some stories don’t have a clear beginning, middle, and end. Life is about not
knowing, having to change, taking the moment and making the best of it, without knowing what’s going to happen next. Delicious Ambiguity. (Radner, 2009, p. 268)

I have come to realize that the story needs to be told and there is no other way forward but to tell it in the midst of living it. What follows is just that.

**Stage One: “The Ground Thaws”**

Volumes have been written about the original founding of the *cooperative education* model, and the reader is strongly urged to investigate its evolution through the many resources available in the appendices. The reason that cooperative education, or “co-op” as it is more commonly known, plays such a major role in the narrative of service learning at the University of Cincinnati is that it has been, for over 100 years, the core institutional structure of the university. Unlike the evolutions of other service learning programs in the nation and world, UC’s story of service learning is cemented by and to the structure of co-op, which has had both positive and challenging outcomes, as will be discussed.

Even today, the cooperative education program is articulated as one of the university’s key signature strengths. It is THE history of the institution. It is the “hook” on which we hang our hat. It is in the DNA of who we are and what we are becoming, and we are very proud of it.

According to the University of Cincinnati’s website:

Co-op was invented at the University of Cincinnati in 1906. Now, over 100 years and 43 countries later, generations of students worldwide have followed our lead!

Today, UC’s co-op program is listed among the nation’s best in “US News & World Report” rankings. Cooperative education is an educational model in which students alternate traditional academic semesters with semesters spent working full-time in their chosen field. Co-op positions are paid and are offered by a variety of organizations all
over the country and the world. Students complete between three and five co-op semesters prior to graduation. During each co-op semester, students complete an online course intended to help them focus on their academic and professional development. Co-op employers are also asked to evaluate student development and performance.4

The story begins with who I argue was one of the original farmers of service learning—Herman Schneider. It could be argued that Schneider could have had no idea of how his own agency within structure would unfreeze, not just the University of Cincinnati, but also, a vast amount of higher education. Fortunately, we can look back in time, talk with those who know his work, and surmise that on some perhaps unconscious level, Schneider understood the duality of structure, enacted agency through fresh acts, and began to “thaw the ground” for many types of experiential learning.

In talking with MB Reilly (author of The Ivory Tower and the Smokestack: 100 Years of Cooperative Education at the University of Cincinnati, 2006), Kevin Grace, and Cheryl Cates, I have come to learn more about Schneider’s many fresh acts, each of which enacted agency within structure. There is much to Schneider’s legacy which could be connected to the evolution of service learning at the University of Cincinnati, but what the reader will encounter below are those watershed moments of his legacy that the narrative participants illuminated as being key.

While at Lehigh University at the beginning of the 20th century, it is said that Schneider believed that learning in the traditional classroom was insufficient for technical students, which could be considered an intrapersonal fresh act—agents reflectively reframe their understandings of the structure, providing new opportunities for agency. Schneider observed that several of the

4 https://www.uc.edu/careereducation/experience-based-learning/co-op.html
more successful graduates had worked to earn money before graduation and, after interviewing many employers and graduates—an example of *interpersonal fresh acts*, which occur when individual agents within an institutional structure form new relationships with other agents, serving to shift the structure and provide new types of agency and choice—Schneider created the framework for cooperative education in 1901, an example of a *structural fresh act*—which occur when the larger institutional structure shifts, providing opportunities for agents within that structure to draw upon new sets of agency and choice.

Schneider knew that industry had the best equipment but it was too expensive for the university to purchase the equipment, particularly because the equipment would become obsolete so quickly. In 1903, the University of Cincinnati appointed Schneider to their faculty, and later, in 1906, allowed him a year to experiment with the co-op plan. Following that year, the University of Cincinnati gave him full permission for the co-op program, a significant shift in structure spurred on by the previously mentioned intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural fresh acts.

It should be noted that there is a myth surrounding this story of Schneider’s epiphany to create a co-op program. According to Cates, Schneider was walking around campus pondering how to raise enough funds to purchase equipment for his budding engineers to learn on. He had been getting reports from industry that the students were well-educated upon graduation but they were lacking an understanding of how to apply that education in the field setting of working with equipment. The myth says that during one of these daily walks, Schneider heard a lunch whistle blow at one of the local factories, and in this moment, he decided to cease thinking about how to bring the equipment to the campus and instead focus on how to bring the campus, and the students therein, to the equipment.
This is another example of an intrapersonal fresh act, wherein the agent—in this case Schneider—reframed, internally, the ordered elements of the structure. In the case of Schneider’s rethinking how the university would provide education to engineering students, this intrapersonal fresh act resulted in discursive and interpersonal fresh acts, which ultimately led to the structural fresh act of piloting the co-op program. These fresh acts enacted agency which has fundamentally shifted the system of education at the University of Cincinnati and elsewhere.

Table 4.1. Timeline of events in the evolution of service learning at UC: 1872–1921.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Herman Schneider, co-op’s founder, is born in Summit Hill, Pennsylvania</td>
<td>1872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First engineering program begins at UC, then a municipal university</td>
<td>1873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Cooperative system of education is proposed at Lehigh University in Pennsylvania</td>
<td>1899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UC’s College of Engineering is organized</td>
<td>1901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herman Schneider arrives at UC from Lehigh University to serve as professor of civil engineering</td>
<td>1903</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-op is officially founded</td>
<td>1906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Though the new co-op program isn’t advertised, up to 800 students apply for 70 co-op positions</td>
<td>1907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeastern University, Boston, is the first university to follow UC in adopting the “Cincinnati Plan”</td>
<td>1909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Pittsburgh adopts co-op</td>
<td>1910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Binns becomes UC’s first co-op graduate. Co-op is adopted at the University of Detroit</td>
<td>1911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At UC, the first co-op class graduates</td>
<td>1912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UC’s co-op enrollment stands at 473 while employers number 86</td>
<td>1917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marquette University begins co-op with 175 students</td>
<td>1918</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Clearly, the seeds planted in the unfreezing ground by Schneider are not specifically tied to service learning in a direct way. However, it is easy to see that this early form of experiential education did very much lay the groundwork for many different modalities of experiential learning, service learning being one (See Table 4.2 above). I could have chosen to focus specifically on the creation of co-op as the watershed moment pertaining to the eventual development of service learning at UC, but I have instead chosen to focus on a less celebrated and understood development ushered in by Schneider—Hobby Hour.

**Hobby Hour and the Thawing Ground**

In a 2005 article included in *UC Magazine*, a publication produced by the university administration, Schneider’s Hobby Hour is described in the following way:

Paintings, literature, music and sports allowed Herman Schneider, the author of cooperative education, to help students grow as persons, as well as engineers. Within the activities and arts he introduced to early co-ops are the roots of campus traditions that still bring beauty and joy to the university.

Schneider wanted the co-ops to develop an appreciation for the arts, but wondered how he could ask students with heavy academic schedules to take on anything more. He
introduced two on-campus experiences: fine art displayed in the engineering college and a daily “hobby hour” of diverse activities.

Turning the walls of the college into an instant gallery in 1916 was his solution to students’ lack of time for museum visiting. An Edgar Degas sketch, “Ballerina Adjusting Her Stocking,” is one of the first pieces he obtained, a gift from the Charles Taft. The lesson was not lost on the co-ops. Students raised funds, asked Schneider’s advice and began presenting artwork as their graduating-class gift. Edwin Abbey’s “Winter” and two works by H.H. Wessel: “Coal Miner” and “Jamming Barges Under the Suspension Bridge” are among early alumni gifts that form the foundation of the University of Cincinnati’s respected Fine Arts Collection.

Dean Schneider’s introduction of “hobby hour” in 1920 gave students a mandatory “break” at noon each day. Co-ops were told to fill this time with an activity unrelated to their studies, one that would offer their weary brains a change of pace. Among the options were sketching, band or orchestra, chess, literary discussion, wireless radio club, horseshoe pitching, fencing and basketball.

The music groups were particularly successful. The orchestra, led by College-Conservatory of Music staff, was a mix of student and faculty members. Regular performances were presented on campus.

The co-op band, which would become known as the UC Marching Band, is one of the university’s strongest traditions. In 1923, the band performed on campus at the first football game played under electric lights in the U.S. The lighting system was designed by co-op Jack Silverman, Engineering ‘23.
As impressive as the UC Marching Band has become, it had an inauspicious start. At the first rehearsal, one of the eight co-ops who showed up was Ralph Van Wye, Engineering ‘24, who had played in a World War I Army band. Recalling the marching formations of the early UC group, Van Wye later joked, “The only letter we could form was the letter ‘I.’”

There are many events that led to this moment in time in 1921, and I could have chosen any of the above moments to dissect and narrate, but during the narrative inquiry research, this single event seemed to resonate as a key watershed moment for what would many years later come to be known as service learning at the University of Cincinnati. It was Schneider’s ideas for Hobby Hour that opened-up the then-existing structure of the then-newly developing co-op program.

Up until this time, the engineering curriculum was designed to be much like what one would remember from high school, with specific class times and rotation among those classes. Schneider very much understood that students needed something more than simply experiencing what they were learning through an engineering lens, and he created a period of the day—Hobby Hour—where students were divided into teams and given the freedom to explore how their interests and skills could be applied to things outside of engineering. Schneider understood that the engineering students needed to be enriched more holistically, beyond their traditional classroom study and co-op rotations. Therefore, he assigned them time to work on other things that could be of benefit to the university and to the community.

______________

5 http://magazine.uc.edu/issues/1205/hobby.html
While cooperative education was a key watershed moment at the University of Cincinnati, the specific intrapersonal and ultimately structural fresh act of Hobby Hour served to create many new projects and endeavors that are more easily tied to the service learning program. Many non-engineering projects were started through Hobby Hour. For example, the chess club, a university marching band, a literary society, the university newspaper and a cooperative engineering magazine, a wireless radio club, a sketching club, and many sports such as baseball, basketball, boxing, wrestling, tennis, and track began at this time.

In many ways, Hobby Hour was an early form of service learning, because students were applying what they were learning to the service of others by accomplishing goals for the campus and the community. Because of Schneider’s unfreezing of the typical co-op coursework and rotation, enacting a bit of agency within structure, these students were given time to identify needs on campus and in the community, and self-organize groups to meet those needs. For example, UC’s Amateur Radio Club was born during the 1937 flood, which was instrumental in keeping open lines of communication during the disaster. Other examples included sketching, band or orchestra, chess, literary discussion, wireless radio club, horseshoe pitching, fencing and basketball. It was in these moments that the production, reproduction, and transformation of social environments through rules and resources in relationships—the duality of structure and agency—can be observed.

Up until this moment of unfreezing, the structure—the general routines that the university followed in accomplishing goals—the rules—and the attributes or material goods that could be used to exert power in a group—the resources—that were used to sustain the organization—the system—of co-op at UC had been more narrowly focused on traditional engineering education. But Schneider had new ideas, and he enacted behaviors or activities used
in social environments—agency—through developing something new from an action or behavior—fresh act—that fundamentally shifted the university structure in no small way.

It is argued here that this fresh act of agency fundamentally changed the institutional culture of the university, and in many ways, it eventually created an institutional atmosphere that was ripe for something like service learning to be adopted some years later. There is more left out of the larger story of experiential learning than this dissertation will allow for, but the point is to say that the ground was beginning to thaw for this sort of thinking about how and why students should be educated. The ground began to thaw for thinking about how teachers and students could address some of the needs at the university and in the community, allowing for the application of skill sets, understandings, and even theory to those contexts. The reader can also see in the timeline that the structure of the nation and the working world was shifting as well, and this was due to individual agents working toward many types of fresh acts—discursive, intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural fresh acts—which served to unfreeze the structures of higher education in sizable ways.

This fresh-act of Schneider’s Hobby Hour was key for many of the narrative inquiry participants. Through his actions, Schneider in many ways became a change agent who provided his students with the opportunity to also become change agents. His legacy at the University of Cincinnati was monumental. The university historian, Kevin Grace, confirmed what was said by Professor Cheryl Cates, one of the leading experts of Herman Schneider’s legacy, in describing the gravity of Schneider’s agency at UC and beyond when. She stated:

Herman Schneider went from school to school to help other universities start their own program. When Herman Schneider died at his desk in 1939, campus was closed to attend his funeral. Because he was such an important national figure, there were obituaries in
many national publications. Schneider was personally responsible for starting many—if not ALL—of the current co-op programs all over the nation.

Many events have occurred since the creation of Hobby Hour, and most can be linked back to this fresh act and moment of unfreezing the structure of the university. Schneider’s agency altered the institutional structure and provided additional agency and opportunities for fresh acts to be enacted by others. These moments of unfreezing at UC have even served to change the structure of many institutions of higher education here in the U.S. and also in other countries. Many of these are observable in the Table 4.3 timeline below.

Table 4. 2. Timeline of events in the evolution of service learning at UC: 1925–1998.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UC co-op students begin a new system— one month on the job with one month in school</td>
<td>1925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The first Co-op Day is held. It becomes an annual event through 1953</td>
<td>1927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herman Schneider becomes president of UC, a post he reluctantly holds until 1932</td>
<td>1929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UC has 1,800 co-op students and more than 300 employers</td>
<td>1930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools across the nation, including medical and divinity schools, have adopted the co-op plan</td>
<td>1930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools in England, Germany, China, and Hawaii adopt Co-op</td>
<td>1930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UC’s co-op students begin alternating work and school on a seven-week basis</td>
<td>1934</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dean Herman Schneider dies</td>
<td>1939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due to World War II, almost half of the U.S. institutions with co-op suspend their programs</td>
<td>1942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrollment at the College of Engineering stands at 2,073, the largest in the history of the college: 1946 Moviemaker Steven Spielberg’s father graduates from the co-op electrical engineering program</td>
<td>1949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Thomas Brown of Cincinnati becomes the first African American to enroll in UC’s co-op program</td>
<td>1950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is the 50th anniversary of co-op</td>
<td>1956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The “Panorama of Progress” exhibit at UC’s Field House draws 56,000 visitors</td>
<td>1956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-op program highlighted on Radio Free Europe and on a network TV show Today</td>
<td>1956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neil Armstrong, the first man on the moon, joins UC’s College of Engineering to teach co-op</td>
<td>1971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationally, 1,028 programs with (student body of 200,000) are participating in co-op</td>
<td>1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is the 75th anniversary of co-op at UC</td>
<td>1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The undergraduate medical technology program goes co-op (first in the nation)</td>
<td>1986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Co-op Program begins at UC</td>
<td>1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UC’s interior design program as the nation’s best, citing co-op as the program’s premier strength</td>
<td>1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Learning Report is commissioned by the Provost</td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Stage Two: “The Ground is Tilled”**

I came to the University of Cincinnati as a freshman in 1993. Much of the narrative pertaining to service learning and Cooperative Education was not even in my sphere of understanding until around 2006. What you will see below are portions of the narrative that I have come to know through studying records and having narrative inquiry discussions with many participants in this case study.

**Turning Over Ground with the Service Learning Report of 2001**

Schneider’s legacy, it could be argued, served to thaw the ground at UC and beyond, but even with the development of Hobby Hour, it would be many years before the wheels of service
learning would begin to turn at the university. In talking with Professor Emeritus, Dr. Wayne Hall, one-time Vice Provost of Faculty Development and my first supervisor, one of the key watershed moments of the story of service learning at the University of Cincinnati occurred in 2001 when the then-Senior Vice President and Provost, Dr. Anthony Perzigian, requested that a group of university stakeholders explore the budding practice of connecting classroom instruction to the service of the community. This request from Perizgian, a key example of a discursive fresh act that ultimately resulted in a larger structural fresh act, was reported by narrative participants to have started the process of institutionalizing service learning at the University of Cincinnati.

Table 4.3. Timeline of events in the evolution of service learning at UC: 2001-2003.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service Learning Report is commissioned by the Provost</td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Learning Action Plan at UC is drafted</td>
<td>2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Paper for Service Learning at UC is drafted</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In June 2001, a Service Learning Committee Report was prepared for Perzigian and the Vice President for Student Affairs and Human Resources, Dr. Mitchel D. Livingston. The authors of this report came from all over the university and included representation from the College of Engineering, College of Applied Science, Raymond Walters College, Community Service Programs Office, College of Arts & Sciences, College of Education (known today as the College of Education, Criminal Justice, and Human Services, or CECH), College of Design, Art, Architecture, and Planning (DAAP), the now-defunct University College, and the Vice Provost for Faculty Development. The report represented the input of a wide swath of university stakeholders, which can be understood as an interpersonal fresh act.
In conducting the narrative inquiry over the last several years, I have had the chance to speak with several of the original authors and have included their ideas and feedback in this dissertation. Some of these stakeholders are still employed in some capacity at the University of Cincinnati, but many have moved on. One of the original authors, Hall, would in 2008 become one of my two supervisors. Another of the original authors is my current supervisor, Dr. Kettil Cedercreutz, who is now the Director for the Division of Experience-Based Learning and Career Education. Two other original authors would become mentors of mine: Professor MJ Woeste, Department of Communication, College of Arts and Sciences, was the individual who originally taught me about service learning during my undergraduate years at UC; and Professor Barbara Wallace, now retired, would come to serve as one of the original members of the service learning Advisory Council formed shortly after my hiring, in 2008.

This 2001 report—a discursive fresh act—ushered in a monumental shift for the University of Cincinnati through an interpersonal fresh act of collective agency. Perzigian’s discursive fresh act of requesting a report and the work done by many to produce the report underscores the interplay between the structure of the university and the agency of those beginning to operate in the world of service learning. While it would still take some years for a formal Service Learning Program to take hold at the university, this report served to begin unfreezing the university in such a way that within a few years, funding would be sought to create an office to lead the effort.

Many narrative inquiry participants recalled that, during this time, stakeholders at UC were experimenting with service learning—examples of intrapersonal and interpersonal fresh acts—most with positive results. These, however, were typically limited to discrete faculty initiatives and not occurring at the university level. The main organizing of this work was
through one of the original authors of the 2001 report, Barbara Wallace, an individual faculty member in the now-closed University College. While Woeste, a professor of Communication on UC’s main campus, was simultaneously experimenting with incorporating service learning into his own classes—examples of intrapersonal and interpersonal fresh acts—Wallace was focused on program-based service learning both in the University College and at UC Clermont College—examples of interpersonal and structural fresh acts—a satellite organization in a rural part of the Cincinnati region. Her goal was to take a college-wide approach to service learning, which included having multiple classes all participate in some sort of community-engaged event each term.

Before the 2001 report, there were organic and grass-roots efforts to connect these programs to UC’s volunteering efforts, but they were fragmented and disparate, according to Hall and Woeste, and this report gave UC a working definition of service learning and recommendations for future developments. It could be argued that these grass-roots efforts are examples of intrapersonal fresh acts. It was reported by Wallace that before 2001, there had been efforts for patching ad-hock initiatives between academic and student affairs, but the structural and interpersonal fresh act of developing a steering committee for service learning gave the university an opportunity to ask for funding to support the efforts, yet another discursive fresh act which would ultimately lead to a structural fresh act.

Both Wallace and Woeste, two stakeholders with relatively little power, enacted agency with discursive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal fresh acts, and they seized upon the opening-up structure requested by Perzigian, a discursive and structural fresh act. Wallace’s work, first at the University College and later at UC Clermont, pushed the boundaries of her college and began to change the lexicon with an understanding and valuing of service learning, an example of
discursive and interpersonal fresh acts. Woeste, on the other hand, enacted agency and intrapersonal fresh acts of incorporating service learning into his individual classes, seizing the fluidity of structure provided by academic freedom. Neither Wallace nor Woeste possessed clear institutional power to shift the institution toward holistically adopting service learning, but they each in their own way worked within their respective structures—Wallace at UC Clermont and Woeste at UC’s main campus within his own classes—to help lay the groundwork for what would later become an institutional approach to service learning.

Hall indicated that the 2001 Service Learning Report substantially shifted the university's focus toward beginning to accept service learning as a valuable education endeavor, an example of a structural fresh act. The work of those original authors allowed the senior administration to advocate for service learning to the deans and associate deans across the university—discursive fresh acts—which provided opportunities for interpersonal fresh acts and shifts in structure. Perhaps most importantly, the 2001 Service Learning Report laid the groundwork for a secondary document to be drafted.

In 2002, an Action Plan for Service Learning was delivered to the Council of Associate Deans, detailing several key steps toward institutionalizing the program through discursive and structural fresh acts. In this action plan, it is written that service learning should be led at the university-wide level and required several resources for success:

Service Learning relies for its success and advancement upon both logistical support (from Student Affairs) and academic support (from the Provost Office). In the first case, community agencies need to be contacted, background checks need to be conducted, and other arrangements need to be made to make sure that Service Learning doesn’t pose too great a logistical burden on faculty or create any legal or political problems within the
University’s relationship with community partners. In the second case, faculty need to be given development opportunities so that they will redesign current courses or create new courses that have Service Learning components. It is thus essential that Student Affairs and the Provost Office maintain an ongoing collaborative relationship if Service Learning is to grow as an initiative. The efforts of both areas are crucial to the success of Service Learning.

With the above in mind, Frank Bowen (from Student Affairs) and Wayne Hall (from the Provost Office) will be the main administrators to be working together towards coordination of Service Learning activities on campus. This working relationship will not be designed so as to interfere in any way with other Service Learning initiatives, such as the one in University College. Rather, it will seek to enhance Service Learning through a variety of contexts and approaches, and in particular through a close working relationship with the Service Learning Steering Committee.

By the end of the current winter quarter or early in the spring, we will seek to have in place a Steering Committee for Service Learning. With the exception of the fulltime position for a Service Learning Coordinator, this committee will be constituted and will operate along the lines described in Section II of the Ad Hoc Service Learning Committee’s June 1, 2001, report.

The recent appointment of Ms. Pamela Person as director of the University’s Learning Communities program offers further new administrative resources. To the extent that some Service Learning courses might be part of a Learning Communities cluster of courses, Ms. Person will also be able to lend support to some first-year courses that contain a Service Learning component.
Ms. Pia Heyn will be able to lend some administrative-support time to Service Learning as well. We anticipate that this will amount to somewhere between ten and twelve hours per week for the remainder of this academic year, with this arrangement then to be revisited for the summer.

For the remainder of the current year, if some budgetary supplements are required for Service Learning activities, we will seek up to a total of $5000 from Success Challenge funding to help cover logistical costs incurred by the Center for Community Engagement. For the 2002-2003 year, we will seek to hire a graduate assistant whose duties will be dedicated to Service Learning. The functional supervision of this position will come from the Center for Community Engagement. The projected stipend will be $12,000, and we will seek a UGS from the academic department where the student’s degree program is housed.

Within this action plan of 2002, they go on to detail specifics for coordinating the program. They write:

In service learning, there are three main constituencies to be considered: the community agencies, the students, and the faculty. The main division of responsibilities, then, will assign community agencies to the Center for Community Engagement (CCE), with the Provost Office being assigned the faculty, and then both offices splitting responsibility for the students. More specifically, that breaks down as follows:

**Community agencies:** The Center for Community Engagement will be responsible for establishing and maintaining contacts with these agencies. In individual cases (for particular faculty, or for University College’s network), agencies might be contacted by a UC person not directly connected with the CCE; but the Provost Office would not be
involved in this particular area of the overall service-learning operation. The CCE would also have responsibility for communicating with agencies for training or assessment purposes.

**Faculty:** The Provost Office will be responsible for coordinating the training or recruitment of faculty, for providing faculty with the resources necessary to develop a service-learning course, and for working with such organizations as Faculty Senate or such programs as General Education in promoting and institutionalizing service learning. The Provost Office will also assist faculty in assessment activities related to service learning and will help to define additional academic policies that might apply to faculty who teach service-learning courses.

**Students:** Responsibility for students will need to be divided between the CCE and the Provost Office. The CCE will provide students with information about placements or contacts with available community agencies and will maintain a database to record those contacts. The CCE will also provide students with the documentation necessary for purposes of legal liability to the University. The Provost Office, in turn, will have the responsibility of coordinating academic assessment of service learning, developing institutional structures for identifying service-learning courses in Learning Opportunities and for certificate purposes, and defining additional academic policies that might apply to students in service-learning courses.

In the development of both the 2001 Service Learning Report and the 2002 Action Plan, we can observe several types of fresh acts: discursive fresh acts, structural fresh acts, intrapersonal fresh acts, and interpersonal fresh acts all served to incrementally shift the larger
institutional structure. These two fresh acts, the 2001 and 2002 reports, shifted the structure in such a way, that a third document could be drafted.

**Turning Over More Ground with the Service Learning Action Plan of 2003**

In 2003, a smaller group of stakeholders joined to enact collective agency and to keep the forward-moving momentum created from the 2001 Service Learning Report and the 2002 Action Plan. Dawn Hunter, the leader of this group, began to develop an action plan for service learning at the University of Cincinnati, and her work can be viewed as key examples of interpersonal, discursive, and structural fresh acts.

Moving forward with service learning at the university-wide level, the 2003 report clearly articulated the need for an organized and centrally supported operation in order to sustain the program. Authors usher in discursive fresh acts, writing specifically about the need to focus on four strategies: (1) curricular integration, (2) faculty development and involvement, (3) student participation and leadership, and (4) sustainability and institutionalization. Through their discursive fresh acts, they go on to write:

In keeping with the service learning mission and goals of the University of Cincinnati, these carefully selected strategies are imperative for sustaining and building service learning at the University:

- **Curricular Integration:** (a) Involve all levels of administration, especially the chief academic officer; (b) invite to class reflection sessions, etc.; (c) Involve administrators with community partner organizations.

- **Faculty Development and Involvement:** (a) Support travel and encourage presentations and formal publications by service learning faculty members; and (b) Collaborative with internal professional development entities.
• Student Participation and Leadership: (a) Identify student ambassadors for service learning; (b) Organize student presentations to faculty meetings; and (c) Celebrate student achievements and provide recognition.

• Sustainability and Institutionalization: (a) Include service learning in long-range planning; (b) Provide a budget that includes a service learning coordinator; (c) Make service learning a degree requirement, and (d) Assure academic integrity and rigor in all aspects of the program. (p. 7)

The 2003 document makes it clear that advancing service learning would require logistical support from both student affairs and academic affairs, thus calling for structural fresh acts through interpersonal and discursive fresh acts. The writers identify that student affairs should be charged with contacting community agencies, conducting background checks, and making other arrangements to reduce the logistical burden on faculty while academic affairs would develop opportunities for faculty to redesign current courses or create new courses that have service learning components. The report maintained that it was important for student affairs and the Provost’s Office to maintain a collaborative relationship, calling here for interpersonal fresh acts.

According to Hall, it was with these points in mind that he, representing the Provost’s Office, and Frank Bowen, a representative from student affairs, agreed to be the main administrators working together towards the coordination of service learning activities on campus, another example of interpersonal fresh acts. The report’s writers made the point that this working relationship should be designed so as to not “interfere in any way with other service learning initiatives, such as the one in University College…[but] rather…seek to enhance service
learning through a variety of contexts and approaches, and in particular through a close working relationship with the service learning Steering Committee.”

By the end of the 2003 winter quarter, the writers sought to have in place a Steering Committee for Service Learning at UC, echoing back to the groundwork laid in the 2001 Service Learning Report and 2002 Action Plan. They went on to write in the 2003 report that “with the exception of the full-time position for a Service Learning Coordinator, this committee will be constituted and will operate along the lines described in Section II of the Ad Hoc Service Learning Committee’s June 1, 2001, report (2001 SL report).”

This same year, another participant in this narrative inquiry case study, Pamela Person, was appointed as director of the University’s Learning Communities program. Person’s role was to extend resources so that some service learning courses might be part of a Learning Communities cluster of courses. Person was also charged with “lending support to some first-year courses that contain a service learning component,” per the 2003 white paper, which is an example of an interpersonal fresh act ushered in through the discursive fresh act of drafting the report.

This stage is another example of the ongoing duality of structure and agency occurring at the university. The 2003 White Paper, much like the 2001 Service Learning Report and 2002 Action Plan, served in very concrete ways as a means to enact agency within the larger university structure. The hiring and tasking of Person furthered this momentum in that someone would now be responsible for “touching” every freshman student at UC, a program that still
serves an important function at the university today. According to the University of Cincinnati’s website,\(^6\)

Learning Communities at the University of Cincinnati are made up of diverse groups of students and faculty who come together because of shared academic interests to interact in two or more university courses. There are more than 100 different learning communities for students to choose from at UC. During Bearcat Orientation, incoming freshmen have the opportunity to join a learning community based upon their major or area of academic interest. The partnerships that first year students form with faculty, staff, and other students in learning communities provides a cohesive learning experience centered around courses that fulfill core requirements. The Learning Community experience helps students:

- Establish close relationships with professors
- Explore areas of academic interest
- Build friendships with classmates
- Achieve their academic goals
- Experience the feel of a small college with the benefits of a major university
- Obtain reserved seats in popular, difficult to-get-into courses

Of particular interest to this narrative, the 2003 Service Learning White Paper demanded that three main constituencies be considered: the community agencies, the students, and the faculty, clear examples of supporting interpersonal and structural fresh acts through discursive fresh acts. In talking with several narrative participants, particularly Hall and Person, the action

\(^6\) https://www.uc.edu/fye/learning_communities.html
plan clearly set about structuring an approach to service learning that could potentially be scalable. In the report, the authors went on to write that student affairs would be responsible for connections with community agencies, academic affairs would be responsible for connections with university faculty, and both academic affairs and student affairs would share the duties associated with connecting with students. This, another example of discursive fresh acts impacting the structure of the university.

It is said that the 2003 Service Learning White Paper shifted the institutional structure in a few substantial ways, according to Hall and Person. The discursive fresh act of articulating which duties were to be led by both Academic and student affairs provided nuance to the structure of service learning at UC and opened-up particular interpersonal fresh acts for both. At this point, the Center for Community Engagement, an office of student affairs, could take on a leadership role with contacting and connecting with community organizations interested in service learning. On the other hand, the Office of the Provost could enact a complementary type of agency by invigorating faculty around service learning endeavors. Both Academic and student affairs could also step collectively into the shifting structure and agency created by the report’s articulation of shared duties for connecting with students.

The AmeriCorps Vista, Dawn Hunter, and the work of her drafting team helped to coordinate and further focus some of the scattered issues pertaining to service learning at UC. Prior to her leaving the university at the end of her AmeriCorps Vista placement, Hunter was able to substantially shift the university structure around service learning. She did not accomplish this alone, but it is very interesting that she was able to do this with what was seemingly zero institutional power. Rather, she leveraged the shifting structure to engage others through
discursive and interpersonal fresh acts, particularly those who had more power at the university, and all participating stakeholders were able to enact collective agency toward change.

In speaking with the narrative participants about this stage in the evolution, what is interesting is that Hunter’s work began to “put some meat on the bones,” as one participant mentioned, of the growing institutional philosophy and identity surrounding service learning at the university. Of interest to me personally is that Hunter could accomplish these things through enacting agency as a young twenty-something-year-old agent of change.

Her work can be explained through a structurational lens in that she stepped into an existing structure of service learning on campus. The discursive and structural fresh acts of the 2001 Service Learning Report and 2002 Action Plan had laid the groundwork and set the tone for service learning on campus, and Hunter enacted fresh acts within that structure to take the budding program one step further. It is unfortunate that I was not able to locate Hunter to get her ideas and thoughts about her work and that of service learning at the university, but the fresh acts that she was a part of are, nevertheless, very important in the story of the program.

**Stage Three: “The Seeds are Obtained”**

At this point in the narrative, I had just begun my doctoral training, having been accepted into the Urban Educational Leadership program at the University of Cincinnati. I had completed a Communication BA (2000) and MA (2003), also at UC, and had been retained as an adjunct instructor in the Department of Communication, College of Arts and Sciences. At this time, I still had no conceptions of service learning whatsoever, but it has been very interesting to hear others speak about this part of the story.

*Table 4. 4. Timeline of events in the evolution of service learning at UC: 2003–2006.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UC’s College of Allied Health Sciences begins co-op, as does the College of Nursing</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing becomes the first such program in the state with co-op</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design Intelligence Magazine name UC as having elite architecture programs because of co-op</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. News &amp; World Report lists the nation’s best co-op schools</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding is sought to create the Office for Academic Community Partnerships</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Director of Academic Community Partnerships is hired</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Seeding the Service Learning Grounds**

Due to the shifts in structure around service learning ushered in by the fresh acts of the 2001 Service Learning Report, the 2002 Action Plan, and the 2003 White Paper, along with the agency enacted and created by several of the stakeholders above and others, the university was in a position to seek funding to take the program to the next level. Taking the lead from the 2001 Service Learning Report commissioned by the Provost and Vice President of Student Affairs, and building upon the ever-growing structure ushered in by Hunter (2003) and her collective work with others, the leadership at the University of Cincinnati moved to create one of the key missing pieces outlined in both watershed documents—the centralized person to coordinate service learning at UC. This is an example of how the interpersonal and discursive fresh acts of the 2001, 2002, and 2003 documents substantially shifted the structure at the university.

In coordination with a local philanthropic family, the Mayersons, a grant proposal was written to a local funder, the Mayerson Foundation, which served to create a tangible position at the university. The *Office for Academic Community Partnerships* was created to lead the implementation of interdisciplinary experiential capstones for a growing number of seniors throughout the university community. In partnership with Vice Provost Gigi Escoe
(Undergraduate Affairs) and former Vice Provost Wayne Hall (Faculty Development), this position was designed with specific responsibilities, including the following:

- working with faculty members and community partners to craft mutually beneficial ongoing projects for senior students as part of their capstone experience;
- increasing faculty and community support for this academic model;
- assessing outcomes for students, faculty, and community partners;
- disseminating ideas and findings to faculty and students, community partners; and
- participating in the growing conversation on the pedagogy of engaged and experiential learning.

It was articulated that this person, while positioned in the Provost Office, would need to work closely with student affairs and Services, especially with the Center for Community Engagement, which is a key example of discursive fresh acts creating interpersonal fresh acts. This was substantiated by talking with Hall, Escoe, and the current director of the Center for Community Engagement, Kathy Brown. More so, in talking with the representative from the Mayersons, Jeff Seibert, the family believed that:

This was an opportunity for deep impact in the city…and the Mayersons were instrumental with this…At the time of granting this capital support, the Mayerson’s were in their seventh year of supporting service learning endeavors in the high schools of Cincinnati…Having an existing relationship with the university—Mannie Mayerson, the family’s patriarch and past president Joseph Steger were close friends, and the foundation even participated in Steger’s reconceptualization of the campus architecture—they moved to seed the office.
The Mayerson family was particularly interested in assessing what was currently happening in the world of service learning on campus. Seibert reports wondering, “what is happening on campus, where was service learning going on, and how can we begin to assess quality as well?” Therefore, one of the missions of this new hiring endeavor was to begin to understand where some of the leverage points might exist that could result in positive impacts for students and community.

In reviewing the hiring document for this position, which was co-crafted by the Mayerson representative and the Office of the Provost, specifically Gigi Escoe, the search committee was looking for someone with an extensive understanding of the pedagogy of experiential and service learning, along with teaching experience at the university level and research interests in the scholarship of teaching and learning. According to Hall, Escoe, and Seibert, the university and the Mayersons were looking for a candidate with an ability to help design innovative teaching environments and to collaborate with and support faculty, community partners, and other administrators within this budding initiative. Funding, a key structural fresh act, was to provide for the first year of this position, with a second year guaranteed upon successful progress towards the above responsibilities. It was mentioned in the position description that funding beyond the second year was contingent upon future budgetary developments and/or successful external grants, which can be understood as a severe structural constraint to the Service Learning Program that was overcome.

In talking with the narrative participants about this stage in the narrative, there was a bit of a tug-of-war developing at this time around where the Service Learning Program was to be “housed” at UC, which can be seen as a struggle through interpersonal fresh acts. Both academic affairs and student affairs had invested a considerable amount of time and resources into service
learning up to this point, but despite the best efforts from 2001 to 2005 to communicate the collaborative nature of the program, there was some confusion, which became even more divisive when the program received a very sizable grant of $250,000, the Learn and Serve grant, from Ohio Campus Compact. The Learn and Serve grant allowed training for faculty members on campus, which was very important for moving service learning along, but the addition of these funds caused a bit of infighting around who would control those funds. Despite the best intentions, there existed conflict within the structure of service learning at the University, which would still be apparent some many years later.

The structural conflict over where service learning should “live” was made even more complicated by the hiring of my predecessor, Dr. Al Hearn. With funding from the Mayerson Foundation, Hearn was hired in 2006 to lead this office and represent the academic affairs element of the program, according to Hall. At about this same time, Kathy Dick (now Kathy Brown) was hired to represent the student affairs element and was charged with managing the Center for Community Engagement, which would house Hearn’s office. Both of these developments could be considered monumental fresh acts that pitted academic affairs and student affairs in opposition.

**Planting the Service Learning Grounds**

It should be noted that this point in the narrative is when my voice and agency enter the story. During my second year in the Urban Educational Leadership program, I worked in the Office for Academic Community Partnerships under Director Hearn. Hearn’s responsibility was to invigorate the Service Learning Program, following the groundwork created by the 2001, 2002, and 2003 service learning documents and the collective agency within structure therein, and my job was to work as his intern.
In speaking with Hall, Brown, and Escoe, Director Hearn was very instrumental in furthering the planting of service learning seeds at the University, and he remained in the position for two years. Unfortunately, many details about what occurred between 2006 and 2008 with regard to service learning at the university are unclear, according to the narrative participants. This was in-part due to the manner in which Hearn ran the operation, according to some, in that he did not engage a large swath of institutional stakeholders. He lasted for approximately two years in the office, and due to personal issues, was asked to resign. At the time of writing this dissertation, there are no records (written or otherwise) that were left by Hearn.

Despite his abrupt leaving, most narrative participants, including Woeste, Wallace, Seibert, Person, Brown, Hall, and Escoe, reported that Hearn’s senior status as an Academic Director certainly added gravity to the budding program. Up until Hearn’s hiring, the service learning endeavors were largely led by those lacking structural power. In so far as these individuals were acting in isolation, Hearn’s hiring provided structural power through the seeds planted by the Mayerson Foundation, a key example of a structural fresh act.

I knew Hearn personally as I had interned in his office for several months, and the last time that we spoke was over the telephone. Hearn, or “Al” as I called him, had called me to ask for a ride. Apparently, he was stranded somewhere in the city with car trouble. It was during this phone conversation that Al told me that he had resigned from his position. I was shocked. Of interest to this story however, is that one of the last things Al said to me was, “Who knows, maybe it’s a job opening for you.” I scoffed at this at the time as I was simply an adjunct instructor and a graduate assistant in the Office of the Dean of CECH, but little did I know then that Al’s words would later come to fruition.
As I will detail in the next section, Hearn’s leaving the university left a void in the leadership of service learning at UC. The position would remain vacant until 2008, and according to Hall and Brown, the Center for Community Engagement stepped into the void, enacting a bit of agency with the structure created by the vacated Office for Academic–Community Partnerships.
Chapter 5: The Narrative Continues

This chapter brings us to my era of leadership in the University of Cincinnati’s Service Learning Program. Stage four of the narrative takes the reader from the circumstances of my hiring, through the evolution of the program during my tenure, to the current-day contexts.

Stage Four: “A New Farmer”

During my time as a graduate assistant in the Dean’s office in the College of Education, Criminal Justice and Human Services at the University of Cincinnati, I was made aware of a new academic posting—Director for Academic Community Partnerships—an office with which I was quite familiar. Given my then-novel experience with service learning, which I had employed in several classes by this time, and given the fact that I had worked with Hearn, the previous director, as part of my Urban Educational Leadership internship, a colleague in the College of Arts and Sciences suggested that I apply.

A New Farmer is Hired

The position was listed as PhD-preferred, which I did not have, so I did not feel that I had much of a chance at being hired. But because I needed to pull together an electronic portfolio and a CV for another doctoral class in the Urban Educational Leadership program, I used the application for this position as a focal point for that class assignment. To put it plainly, the effort was more geared toward completing the class assignment. I had no expectation of actually being hired for the role, particularly because I did not have the preferred qualifications.

According to Hall, I was one of around two dozen applicants, and the search committee had narrowed that pool down to three by the time of my first interview. To be honest, I could hardly believe that I had made it that far, but I nevertheless remained in the process, and remained a doctoral student graduate assistant while waiting for the final decision. I recall the
awkward conversation of asking my then-supervisor, Dean Larry Johnson, for a letter of recommendation, not being confident that I should even be considering the position, but Larry agreed to write on my behalf.

Hall, who would later become one of my two supervisors and who is also mentioned many times in the supporting documentation of this narrative study, was my key contact person for the position. After a few weeks of not hearing much of anything from Hall, I decided to call him and ask about the process. It was then that Hall told me that I was one of three final candidates, one being a senior faculty member from another institution, and another being a friend and fellow Urban Educational Leadership program student. Hall let me know that the position had been offered to the senior faculty member from the other institution, and I was not at all surprised. He also let me know, however, that this candidate was asking for more security (faculty status instead of academic staff) in the position than what was being offered. The hiring committee was awaiting her final decision on the matter, but Hall was fairly confident that she was not going to accept the position. It was in this moment that I began to believe that I did perhaps have a chance at being hired. The competition was down to just two candidates of relatively equal credentials.

At this point in the process, Hall shared with me that the hiring committee was considering moving to reclassify the position to that of an Associate Director, instead of a Director, and he wondered if I was still interested in the position. I was. The classification made little difference to me as this would be my first full-time academic appointment. I agreed to remain in the process, and another round of interviews were conducted, this time with just myself and my fellow Urban Educational Leadership student, Nagy (although she had graduated by this time).
Until this time, I had relatively little confidence in actually obtaining the job, but an interesting thing occurred. Because I started to believe that I had a chance, I started to seriously explore this, to me at the time, fairly new world of service learning. This could be considered an example of an intrapersonal fresh act, wherein my internal dialogue began to shift, opening up new opportunities for agency within structure. I wanted to be prepared for this second interview, and one of the things that I did was to read my former internship supervisor, Al Hearn’s, doctoral dissertation.

In talking with university friends and colleagues at this time, I knew that Al’s experience and credentials helped to elevate the program, despite his personal troubles, and I wanted to leverage this understanding. It could be argued that I enacted a bit of agency in this decision in the form of both intrapersonal and interpersonal fresh acts. Prior to being invited for the second interview, the chance of me getting hired for this position seemed outside of the realm of possibility. Aside from going through the motions of applying, which was more geared toward completing a class assignment, I did little else. But this changed. I began to see the structure of possibilities as one in which I could perhaps enact some agency, so I did. I spent several weeks trying to become an expert in service learning—a notion that seems laughable today due to the deep robustness of the field—and perhaps because of this fresh act of diving into the literature of service learning and being able to speak about my newfound knowledge during the second interview, I was hired in 2008.

The position started at around $40,000 per year along with a benefits package, and I was provided a small budget for procuring a computer, business cards, and other necessities for starting a new position. Within a few weeks, I arrived at the Center for Community Engagement to begin my new role as Associate Director of Academic–Community Partnerships, an office
which was designed to represent academic affairs and be co-located with representatives from
student affairs. This was a structural fresh act that served to shift the structure of service learning
at the University of Cincinnati.

A noteworthy piece of the story occurred immediately after my hiring, but I think it
echoes my earlier lack of confidence that I was qualified or even ready to take on a job of this
magnitude. One of my first meetings as the new Associate Director was with one of my two
supervisors, Escoe. I arrived, prepared with pen and paper, but also a bundle of nerves. I recall
that Escoe (or “Gigi” as I call her now) began to list the many people that I would need to meet. I
feverishly took notes. But something interesting occurred about half way through our meeting. I
had mentally made the decision that my earlier hunch of not being “up-to” this job was right! I
was overwhelmed by all that Gigi was sharing with me. This job was too big for me, and I knew
it. I had momentarily enacted an interpersonal fresh act wherein my role in the larger structure
would be soon changing.

The meeting ended, and my plan was to walk back to my office and draft a very nice
email to both Gigi and Wayne Hall, my two new supervisors, saying something like, “Thank you
for this opportunity, but you have the wrong person.” This felt like a bit of a relief at the time.
The structure, it seemed then, was too big for me—too complex and too scary. The agency that I
was intending to enact within the structure was to quit.

But something else happened. My office at the time was about a five-minute walk from
Gigi’s office, and in the time that it took me to make the journey back to my office, I prayed. It
should be noted that I was a new Christian at the time, having just done what Christian’s often
call coming to Jesus, and in the time that it took me to arrive back at my office to type out the
very nice and respectful “I quit” email, I uttered to the sky something like the following:
God, I trust you, but this job is too big for me. What do you want me to do?

Now, I am not necessarily arguing that my remaining in the position was due to a revelation from God whatsoever, but what I can report with all honesty is that by the time I arrived back to my office, I had experienced some amount of peace and calm. It could be argued—and depending on the spiritual leanings of the reader, you may or may not agree with this—that in those moments of praying for guidance that I was enacting an interpersonal fresh act that altered the potential next moves that I could and should make. Without going down the rabbit hole of discussing God, however, let it suffice to say that I did not quit.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Co-op turns 100!</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Director of Academic Community Partnerships is hired</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Associate Director of Academic Community Partnerships is hired</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Learning Advisory Council created</td>
<td>2008</td>
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Service Learning Grounds Nourished by Integrated Core Learning (ICL)

Unbeknownst to me at the time of my hiring, a large group of stakeholders at the university had started to draft a university-wide plan for something called Integrated Core Learning. This was a monumental moment of unfreezing and structural shift at UC that was being spearheaded by the second of my two immediate supervisors in the office of the provost, Gigi Escoe. Gigi and a team of others at the university enacted agency—discursive fresh acts and interpersonal fresh acts—to fundamentally shift the structure of how the institution was to do their work of education.
This structural shift through agency and fresh acts had begun much earlier in 2005, according to Hall, Person, and Escoe, but the fruits of that individual and collective agency were becoming quite visible at the time of my hiring. In many ways, the previously discussed moments of unfreezing ushered in through the fresh acts of the 2001 Service Learning Report, the 2001 Action Plan, and the 2003 Service Learning White Paper are all very visible in the Integrated Core Learning report. In speaking with the narrative participants, specifically Person and Hall, this larger structural shift at the university was very important to further laying the groundwork for what would eventually become a standardized and formal Service Learning Program at UC. I have included below the main points of the Integrated Core Learning Initiative.

According to the University of Cincinnati website:⁷

Integrated Core Learning is the essence of undergraduate learning at UC, reflecting our strengths as one of the nation’s top urban research institutions. It’s the thoughtful mixing of top-notch academics with real world experiences. What is the result? A learning experience that is exceptionally self-directed, interdisciplinary, global, and in short, transformational…

The goal of the Integrated Core Learning (ICL) initiative is the thoughtful integration of the General Education core, major course work, undergraduate research, practicum, clinical placements, co-op and service learning experiences, co-curricular activities, and faculty-guided reflection throughout the undergraduate curriculum. This holistic approach creates a transformative individual educational experience. ICL is built upon

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the University of Cincinnati’s strength as a leading urban research institution with an emphasis on experiential learning and a high quality academic foundation.

As the reader can see in the above, the discursive fresh act of creating the Integrated Core Learning initiative served to tie-together the different elements and philosophies of education at the university. Upon my hiring as Associate Director for Academic Community Partnerships, I was immediately added to the ICL team, an interpersonal fresh act, and my responsibilities included reporting to the committee what plans I had for service learning in terms of the three ICL touchpoints identified in the ICL philosophy. The goal of these touch-points in the undergraduate experience is to provide all students with key opportunities to develop, review, and act upon a learning plan for degree completion. These include:

**Great Beginnings:** UC’s nationally known First Year Experience (FYE) program where students begin a firm foundation in courses (English Composition, common freshman readings, breadth of knowledge courses) as well as experiences and reflections (learning communities, first year seminars, first year expo, lab/applied experiences, e-portfolios).

**Mid-Collegiate Launch:** Students experience a purposeful curriculum combined with individual reflections and real world experiences (experiential learning) giving the student both disciplinary proficiency as well as contextual understanding. Our students learn to integrate their knowledge of various subjects and apply it to problem solving. Students continue to update e-portfolios, have a specialized upper-level writing course, have Just Community readings regarding diversity, and strengthen information literacy skills. Sophomore year is a special time. The Cincinnati Sophomore Initiative is rooted in ICL with its focus on academic, career, and co-curricular resources to help
students succeed. Sophomore Learning Communities have also been added to bring diverse groups of students together to engage with more complex course material.

**Finale: The Senior Capstone Experience:** A senior year experience that enables students to transition to a profession or graduate school and continue to pursue life-long learning and social responsibility. The capstone experience is designed to demonstrate proficiency in the General Education Core baccalaureate competencies and in the content/skills of the program/major. This high-quality learning experience challenges students to draw upon many disciplines of study and encourages students to think through the myriad connections and inter-relationships among professions, cultures, and civic life.⁸

Due to the ICL parameters placed on the structure of my office and the agency therein, I was given the opportunity to enact agency within the even larger evolving structure of experiential learning at UC. According to Escoe, Hall, Person, and others, the success of the Service Learning Program is due to not just the service learning-specific work, but more so due to the collective agency that was occurring across the university, which is a key example of interpersonal fresh acts taking place. I was realizing at the time that this job was big indeed, but the job of being the Associate Director of Academic Community Partnership was one piece of a much larger and complicated puzzle.

During this time of being structured by the undergirding of ICL, I came to realize that the relationship between academic affairs and student affairs, particularly around the issue of where service learning should be housed, had been a contentious one for some time (as covered in

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previous sections). My predecessor, I have come to find out, struggled with finding his place in
the student affairs-run Center for Community Engagement, according to Hall. Of interest here,
though, is that one of the first things that I remember hearing from my new supervisors was,
“you do NOT report to the Center for Community Engagement—you report to the Provost.”

This message, a distinct type of discursive fresh act, set up a series of difficulties
experienced during my time being co-located in the Center for Community Engagement. When
beginning to work in this position, I had no idea that any contention between academic affairs
and student affairs even existed. But this became apparent early on in the ways that the staff
members in the CCE were continually meeting with faculty without letting me know, for
example, and by their continuing to lead the service learning program without my input. Who
was going to control service learning at UC, academic affairs or student affairs, came to be a
very difficult battle to be thrown into.

To further dichotomize this split between two co-located offices, I was assigned a mentor
from academic affairs—the director of First Year Experience and Learning Communities, Pam
Person. In talking with another narrative participant, Kathy Brown, this decision did not sit well
with the Center for Community Engagement’s staff or with the then-Vice President for Student
Affairs, Tom Hadley. Brown, I recall, let those feelings be known repeatedly, an example of a
discursive fresh act on her part.

To put it plainly, the collaborative agreement did not work out very well. There was
constant in-fighting over who should be the contact for faculty interested in service learning,
who should be the contact for service learning partners, and who should be connecting to
students, and I believe that a lot of time and energy was wasted in trying to articulate who should
be doing what and with whom. This was substantiated in conversing with at least three of the narrative participants, Seibert, Hall, and Person.

It should be noted, however, that this conflict was not anyone’s fault, per se, at least not the staff members in the Center for Community Engagement. In looking back to those times and hostilities experienced in that first year, I believe that the in-fighting was coming from the top-down nature of the structure, meaning that the debate over where service learning should live had been a seemingly long-standing contentious issue between academic and student affairs. I had simply inherited this debate, and my co-located colleagues and I were simply carrying out orders of the structure. In hindsight, I believe that I could have enacted some agency to mediate these difficulties, but I did not.

This debate over where service learning should live was, according to at least a few of the narrative participants, made harsher because of the large sum of grant dollars that had come from Ohio Campus Compact (a topic introduced in previous sections). In talking with Dick Kinsley, the Director of Ohio Campus Compact, the university was granted close to $250,000 to broaden and promote service learning, and this grant was co-managed by my predecessor, Hearn, and the director of the student affairs’ Center for Community Engagement, Brown. Having resources compounded the issues of ownership, and I sit wondering today if things would have been more amenable without those additional resources, which in this case, it could be argued, complicated the constraints around any opportunities for agency within structure. It would seem, in fact, that having additional resources to compete over created a structure of in-fighting and hostility as the structural fresh act of added resources complicated the relational structure between academic and student affairs.
Despite the territoriality and hostilities experienced during that first year, I am proud to say that the Service Learning Program made substantial gains, and at least one of those gains occurred in partnership with my, at-that-time, seeming-competitors from student affairs. For all stakeholders involved, from both academic and student affairs, our agency relative to service learning at the University of Cincinnati was in many ways constrained by the larger structural battle occurring. A new structure was in the midst of being formed, but there existed competing and inherited plans for the direction of that new structure. The structural fresh act of hiring a full-time representative from academic affairs to be co-located in the student affairs office in many ways exacerbated the divide between the two divisions of the university, but the individual agents, it could be argued, had relatively very little institutional power to make substantial changes to how the overall organization of service learning was to be governed. In many ways, these “front-line” stakeholders were thrust into a war of others’ choosing.

It should be noted that the early success of the program had more to do with others coming together and enacting collective agency, exemplified by interpersonal fresh acts, than it had to do with me and any amount of my own agency demonstrated. It is easy to see now that I, at least subconsciously, understood that any progress with service learning at the University of Cincinnati would take many hands, and I figured out early that it was important to increase my agency within structure by joining it with the agency of others, a key example of interpersonal fresh acts.

Collectively, we were able to move the needle due to some shifts in structure that we were partly responsible for and some shifts that we were not. Nevertheless, we worked within the duality of agency and structure in order to demonstrate growth and success of the Service Learning Program at the University of Cincinnati.
More Farmers Through the Service Learning Advisory Council

As a very junior professional in this field, it became apparent early on that I needed help in this new position, but I also understood that this help was not going to be coming from an added staff person to my office nor would it be coming from the student affairs staff in the Center for Community Engagement. The structure was such that no additional resources would be allocated to this work, but I still had agency and the opportunity for fresh acts. The first of these fresh act and enacted agency within structure, an interpersonal fresh act, was to create the first Service Leaning Advisory Council. Interestingly, despite what was outlined in both the 2001 Service Learning Report and the 2003 Service Learning Action Plan, my predecessor, Hearn, did not have much success with pulling together a formal advisory council, perhaps one of the missing pieces of his tenure in the position.

Congruent with the underpinnings of structuration theory—duality of structure and agency—but perhaps more directly tied to the process of living the narrative, the needs demonstrated through the then-current structure of service learning at the University of Cincinnati can be understood as a rhetorical situation in need of remedy (Bitzer, 1968). Bitzer (1968) defined the rhetorical situation as

a complex of persons, events, objects, and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence which can be completely or partially removed if discourse, introduced into the situation, can so constrain human decision or action as to bring about the significant modification of the exigence. (p. 3)

The rhetorical situation of late 2008—the structure of service learning at the University of Cincinnati—dictated a discursive fresh act to leverage in order to change or amend the structure. As most fresh acts occur, creating the Service Learning Advisory Council grew out of a
structural need or a rhetorical exigence. There was simply little opportunity for me to manage such a huge endeavor on my own, particularly while feeling as if I was in competition with my student affairs office mates in the Center for Community Engagement, so at the urging of my supervisor (Wayne Hall), I sent around a call to the university faculty to see if anyone would want to become a member.

The responses were overwhelmingly positive. Over two dozen people answered the call, and we ended up with around 18 people on the Service Learning Advisory Council. There was a wide breadth of membership from the College of Arts and Sciences (A&S), the College of Education, Criminal Justice, and Human Services (CECH), the Center for First Year Experience and Learning Communities (FYE/LC), the University Honors’ Program, the College of Allied Health Sciences (CAHS), the College of Medicine (COM), and the Center for Community Engagement. In talking with Person, Hall, Escoe, and Kinsley, being able to create such a group moved the Service Learning Program from the margins of the university’s experiential learning portfolio, another example of a key interpersonal fresh act that was only possible due to my own intrapersonal fresh act of acknowledging the need for community.

Hall goes on to confirm that this eclectic group of participants was invaluable to the evolution of the program because it provided a collective voice and an opportunity to leverage collective agency into the structure of the university. We met approximately once per month in the early stages, and one of the first discursive fresh acts that we were able to accomplish was to define service learning at the University of Cincinnati. This quickly became an apparent necessity because the stakeholders conducting service learning in their courses were doing so in very different ways. Thus, the collectively enacted agency of defining service learning as an institution was the first thing that the Service Learning Advisory Council set out to do.
**Defining Service Learning Institutionally and Justifying the Crop**

It was impossible to begin to *count* or *assess* how much service learning was occurring at UC until we defined it. What I soon found out, however, was that arriving at a mutually accepted definition that would fit all stakeholders’ needs and desires would take some time. In fact, it took us close to three months to arrive at the definition that is still in use today:

Service Learning (SL) is a specially designed learning experience in which students combine reflection with structured participation in community-based projects to achieve specified learning outcomes as part of an academic course and/or program requirement. By participating in Campus-Community partnerships at the local, national, or international level, students gain a richer mastery of course content, enhance their sense of civic responsibility, and ultimately develop a more integrated approach to understanding the relationship between theory, practice, ideas, values, and community.

This discursive and interpersonal fresh act of defining service learning as an institution served to create a new structure at the university. We could now talk about service learning in a unified and consistent manner, whether talking with a faculty member teaching history or with a faculty member teaching information technology. As the reader may notice, we strived to craft a definition that was flexible enough that it would be applicable to all UC stakeholders, while at the same time still defining it institutionally in a consistent and transparent way. This was a key moment of agency because having the ability to define the practice—a discursive fresh act—enabled the institution to count service learning offerings officially, and to report those data to a wide audience—a structural fresh act.
**Huge Yield: 300% Increase in Service Learning Offerings**

With the help of the Service Learning Advisory Council, we were able to define service learning, and because we could define it, we could begin to count the number of courses and begin to understand in what colleges it was happening, and in what colleges it was not. In late 2008, with the help of then-Associate Vice Provost for Assessment, Julie Burdick, we sent around a survey to begin trying to understand what service learning was already taking place in the colleges. The results were overwhelming and surprisingly so.

Our first count of service learning classes at the University of Cincinnati demonstrated a 300% increase when compared to the last count in 2007 of 45 courses. We understood that much of this increase was due to our now-new ability to define and count service learning, but by convening the Service Learning Advisory Council, and by communicating with service learning stakeholders on campus for the first time since my predecessor left—an opportunity for more interpersonal fresh acts—we were able to generate a large amount of energy around the program.

Both Hall and Person confirmed that this was a key watershed moment in the evolution of service learning at UC, and it was beginning to be noticed by stakeholders outside of the institution. I recall getting telephone calls from other institutions asking, “how are you guys doing this?” and “how did you get your faculty to agree on a definition?” This is evidence of how agency within structure can have implications for other structures outside of the immediate stakeholders’ sphere of influence. The discursive fresh act of defining, after the interpersonal fresh act of convening an advisory council, had immediate and tangible impacts to the larger institutional structure.
Inviting Outside and Inside Farmers Through Breakfast

Another accomplishment that first year, which added even more energy and prestige to the budding program, was the Faculty–Community Partner Breakfasts, which remain as the one shining example of where service learning collaboration between academic affairs and student affairs seemed to work. The recipe was easy. We invited roughly the same amount of faculty and community partners to a breakfast, provided some inexpensive breakfast foods, scheduled a few short talks by key figures from the campus and in the community, and, perhaps most importantly, provided space for the stakeholders to begin forming relationships and collectively brainstorming about potential service learning partnerships. These breakfasts can be seen as key examples of interpersonal fresh acts that served to continue the evolution of the program.

Much like the 300% increase due to defining the service learning practice as an institution, the success of the Faculty–Community Partner Breakfasts created much energy around what we were trying to accomplish. This interpersonal fresh act, although quite simple and not at all original, served to temporarily unfreeze the false dichotomy between the campus and the community and between academic and student affairs. The participants in the room during these events were simply fellow structural agents, and it did not matter if they were professors, student affairs staff, or not-for-profit staff members.

They were all present at the Breakfasts because they were interested in learning more about the pedagogy and practice of service learning and building relationships with like-minded people. Narrative participant, Clare Blankemeyer, formerly a staff member in the Center for Community Engagement and now a Director for high school service learning at the Mayerson Foundation, confirms that the interpersonal fresh act and success of the Faculty–Community
Partner Breakfasts served to get into the public’s discourse that service learning at the University of Cincinnati was established and moving in very positive directions.

The popularity of the Faculty–Community Partner Breakfasts grew to the extent that we had to begin asking for RSVPs in subsequent gatherings, and example of the shifting structure. There were more people wanting to attend than we had capacity for, which turned into a very nice problem to work out. Now that we had a committed group of stakeholders sitting on the Service Learning Advisory Council, an institutional definition showing a 300% increase in the program offerings, and a very popular event that spanned the campus and the community, some very good news for the program would trickle down from the Office of the Provost.

**Permanent Resources for the Service Learning Growing Grounds**

In 2009, I received word that the executive leadership had moved the funding of the program from “soft” grant funds to permanent funding, a key structural fresh act. When I started the position, it was understood to be a one-year contract, ending when the Mayerson Foundation’s funds would be depleted. Therefore, I knew that I had a very short amount of time to enact any sort of agency within this large institutional structure.

In talking with some of the narrative participants, if it were not for the tremendous growth in the numbers of confirmed service learning classes and the demonstrated popularity of the program’s Faculty–Community Partner Breakfasts, both considered interpersonal fresh acts, it was possible that the academic affairs-maintained Office of Academic–Community Partnerships could have “closed-doors” when the Mayerson Foundation’s funding ran dry. It was suggested by Kathy Brown, the director of the student affairs office of the Center for Community Engagement, that there had been discussions about the program being managed by the Center for Community Engagement, with rotating “chairing” from members of the faculty. Brown
communicated that this model—a student affairs office in partnership with a faculty-chaired service learning committee—had worked in other universities.

*Table 5. 2. Timeline of events in the evolution of service learning at UC: 2009.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic–Community Partnerships gets permanent funding</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office name changes to the Office for Community-Engaged Learning</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because of the fresh acts and opportunities to collectively enact agency discussed above, namely the 300% increase in service learning courses and the success of the Faculty–Community Partner Breakfasts, the larger structure of the university had begun to shift and unfreeze. In talking with the Vice Provost for Enrollment Management, Caroline Miller, there was now at least the appearance of needing a permanently-funded office to coordinate those growing efforts. This was corroborated by Hall in sharing that the service learning partnership between academic and student affairs appeared to be working, a key example of successful interpersonal fresh acts.

The move to permanent funding also provided another opportunity for agency and discursive fresh acts in the form of an office name change. Since my taking the position in 2008, I noticed that stakeholders were often perplexed by the name of the office in that the name did not do a very good job describing the mission of the office. I recall, during an early Service Learning Advisory Council meeting, one of the senior vice provosts for UC International, Dr. Mitch Leventhal, asking me to clarify the meaning of the name, *Office of Academic–Community Partnerships*. I was mostly unable to answer that question as I had inherited the name from my predecessor, Hearn, but this did provide an opportunity for structural shift through a discursive fresh act.
The Service Learning Advisory Council used this seeming confusion over the name to propose a new name for the operation, one that could be more easily understood by stakeholders. This discursive fresh act, however, would require buy-in from the senior administration at the university. At this time, there were quite a few offices at the university leading programs that could be considered academic-community partnerships, and it was unclear exactly what my office was charged with doing, which was made even more confusing by the ambiguous office title. Therefore, I and the Service Learning Advisory Council moved to rename the operation the Office of Community-Engaged Learning. On this topic, Seibert remarked:

The challenge of creating this office seemed to be in navigating the territoriality of higher education. To be successful at UC at all was impressive, but then to begin to innovate was even more impressive, particularly given the political challenges. The new office title helped with this, I think.

Our hope was that this new name, this discursive fresh act, would clarify to stakeholders what the office did and how the office could and should support stakeholder efforts, which we hoped would increase the opportunity for more and more sustainable interpersonal fresh acts.

A Different Type of Crop: Experiential Explorations Program and Meeting My Future Boss

Another interesting shift in the collective university structure around service learning occurred during this time. The Division of Professional Practice, as it was known then, was struggling with placing students into cooperative education positions due to the downturn in the economy, a key example of the structure influencing potential agency. Fewer companies were hiring co-op students, and there was a demand by those students and (their parents) to do something about the problem. They were calling for a fresh act of some sort.
Co-op, being UC’s signature strength, was a key driver of enrollment, and students came to the university under the promise that they would find employment while attending. Co-op needed help with placing their students, and they turned to me (Office for Community-Engaged Learning) and the Center for Community Engagement to see if any of our not-for-profit partners would be interested in hiring co-op students. This was an opening-up of the larger structure of experiential learning at UC, or what Bitzer (1968) would call a rhetorical situation, which called for agency in the form of an interpersonal fresh act.

After talking about the possibilities and the constraints of this approach, the Division of Professional Practice began what is now called the Experience Exploration Program (EEP), which was designed to give co-op students the opportunity to work in the service and not-for-profit sector. Because of this discursive and interpersonal fresh act spear-headed by Professional Practice, we began to invite members of Professional Practice to the Faculty–Community Partner Breakfasts and began forming a deeper relationship with the other experiential learning practitioners on campus. This is a key example of the larger structure, the economic downturn of 2009–2010, having a very tangible impact on the smaller structure of UC, and also on the even smaller structure of experiential learning.

This was my first-time meeting Cedercreutz, the Director of the Division of Professional Practice, who would later become my supervisor. In looking back to this initial meeting with my then-supervisor Escoe and current-supervisor Cedercreutz, that early conversation was a foreshadowing of what was to come. I recall discussing how the Office for Community-Engaged Learning should be better connected to the other university programs leading experiential

9 Later called the Division of Professional Practice and Experiential Learning (ProPEL), and today called the Division of Experience-Based Learning and Career Education (ELCE).
learning programs, a key example of calling out for an interpersonal fresh act. Introducing this key relationship between the service learning and professional practice programs contributed to what would later become a more holistic umbrella organization housing multiple types of experiential learning programs all “under one roof.”

The Experiential Explorations Program (EEP) program was, according to Hall and Cedercreutz, another watershed moment for service learning at UC. This collaborative venture connected service learning to other types of experiential learning, and perhaps more importantly, this fresh act connected service learning to the historic and celebrated cooperative education program. According to the University of Cincinnati’s website, the EEP was designed

- to give students enrolled in the Professional Practice Program the opportunity to have a one-time educational alternative to the traditional co-op positions
- to provide students and co-op faculty with additional educational employment alternatives other than an administrative waiver to better prepare students to qualify for future co-op and career opportunities.

In this description of the discursive, interpersonal, and structural fresh act it is clear that the EEP was a measure used to solve the *too many co-op students and not enough co-op jobs* problem. However, it became apparent that the EEP was not as favorable as the traditional co-op placement, according to Cedercreutz. The description goes on to say that the EEP must not be used as an option more than once in a student’s college program, must not replace a co-op student who is working in a paying position with an unpaid student, and must be available to

10 https://www.uc.edu/propractice/uccoop/current_students/pal-2-student-resources.html
students who do not meet the admissions requirements and have not been accepted in the Professional Practice Program.

Some of the Experiential Exploration Program alternatives include: study abroad, community service and volunteer positions, research experience, and travel semester, which quite accurately overlays the offerings of the current umbrella organization of the Division of Experience-Based Learning and Career Education (ELCE). If one were to visit ELCE’s website today,\(^{11}\) the following programs are listed: cooperative education, undergraduate research, service learning, internships, international experiences, and UC Forward.

It should be noted that this newly-forming partnership did not sit well with my student affairs colleagues in the Center for Community Engagement. In fact, Brown commented during her interview that “the focus on experiential learning instead of service learning and engagement hurt the [service learning] program.” The alea iacta est (“the die is cast”) by agents in the structure, often outside of other agents’ control, and the forerunner of this larger partnership around experiential learning was taking hold, another example of a structural fresh act that would have both positive and negative consequences for the Service Learning Program.

As is the case in all organizations, the agents with the most power have the most agency and ability to introduce fresh acts. In the case of the EEP, which in many ways laid the groundwork for what would later become the umbrella organization of experiential learning at UC, the decision was made by those agents with the most situational power, Escoe and Cedercreutz. Those most immediately affected by the fresh act, the administrators responsible for the EEP program and the students served by those programs, had very little agency to halt this

\(^{11}\)https://www.uc.edu/careereducation.html
shift in structure. With that said, the newly formed structure of the EEP program did open up new opportunities for those stakeholders to enact agency through several types of fresh acts.

**Unsettled Ground: Deepened Divide Around Service Learning**

Despite the internal conflict between my office and the Center for Community Engagement, the university was seen by both internal and external service learning stakeholders to be moving in the right direction. According to the Mayerson Foundation’s Seibert, “the message nevertheless to the community was that we were trying to work together.” At this time, having a central point of contact for partners was key to the program, and “having service learning co-located in the Center for Community Engagement was sending the right message about this,” said Blankemeyer, formerly of the University of Cincinnati and now at the Mayerson Foundation. She reported that “instead of shopping around partners to different offices, we were trying to make the effort to work together.”

The structure of service learning at UC had shifted. There was a consistent message going out to the community stakeholders, which was also key in communicating to stakeholders the nature of the evolving structure of service learning. Because of the co-location of academic affairs and student affairs, at least in terms of the service learning programming, the structure of service learning at the university was having a very positive impact on the perceptions of the surrounding community. We had internally agreed, an interpersonal fresh act, that both offices in the Center for Community Engagement were attempting to help UC become a progressive, outward-facing university, and “if we are going to do this right, we had to get outside of the university,” reported another narrative participant, Fran Larkin of the Center for Community Engagement. This was not very easy to do, however, despite the public perception. Blankemeyer shared the following about the inner-conflict:
Curricular vs. Co-curricular was tricky for us because UC stakeholders and community stakeholders did not really care about the names and separate responsibilities of the co-located offices…what they cared about was the service that the university could provide. The territory wars are internal only and confusing to stakeholders, so we didn’t talk about those much.

**Resource Drought Provides Growth**

Due to severe budget cuts across the university in 2010, all academic units that reported to the Office of the Provost were asked to produce a report to the then-newly hired Provost Dr. Santa Ono, another opportunity for a discursive fresh act. In these reports, each program lead was asked to (1) provide an overview of their respective operations, (2) discuss what would need to be “cut” if 20% of their respective budgets were reduced, and (3) project what could be accomplished if their respective budgets were increased by 20%. In addition to my office (Academic Community Partnerships), offices such as the Office for First Year Experiences and Learning Communities, University Honors’ Program, UC International, the Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning, and others were asked to provide this report to the provost. This appeared to me at the time as an opportunity to enact agency within structure.

*Table 5.3. Timeline of events in the evolution of service learning at UC: 2010.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20% budget cuts across the university</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office for Community Engaged Learning is relocated to the Division of Professional Practice</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the time of getting the request for this report, which occurred during one of the monthly-scheduled Integrated Core Learning (ICL) Council meetings, I recall being quite excited about this opportunity to showcase my office and the growth of service learning at UC. After all,
much of this growth had been accomplished on a shoe-string expenditure, which amounted to my salary and a small operating budget, and I felt that I could make a strong case for increasing that budget to have an even stronger impact. I looked forward to drafting this report for the provost and having the opportunity to enact agency by “making my case” for a budget increase. Unlike the other provostal offices mentioned above, my office had no staff and had close to zero additional costs associated with the growth, and I felt confident that my office would not be one of the offices to be negatively impacted by the 20% budget cuts.

To prepare for these reports to be delivered to then-Provost Ono, each program leader was to first share their reports with the ICL committee. My office, being one of those programs, was put on the meeting agenda, and I prepared the document in anticipation of practicing making my case to my fellow program leaders, to polish it and have it ready for the provost. The structure of this shifting landscape appeared to me at the time as a keen opportunity to enact agency within structure and conduct a discursive fresh act of asking for more resources, this, in the climate of depleted resources. The ICL meeting, however, foreshadowed what was to come of my attempt at a discursive, and ultimately, structural fresh act.

After sharing my pitch to the ICL committee, in which I boasted about the 300% growth of service learning, the development of the Service Learning Advisory Council, the development of an institutionally approved definition of service learning, and the move from “soft” funding to permanent funding, I concluded my presentation with the statement, “If the university wants this growth to continue, the office is going to need additional resources to meet the demand.”

After ending the report by asking for more resources to continue the momentum, one of the ICL members, who would later become president of the University Faculty Senate, Richard Harknett, stated, “you obviously don’t need those extra resources because your program is
growing just fine the way it is, right?” This was not the response that I had expected or planned for. The member who asked the question was correct, however, and I left with a sinking feeling, knowing that I probably was not going to be obtaining extra support as asked for in my proposal to the provost. Harknett’s comments can be seen as a discursive fresh act that shifted my internal thinking, potential intrapersonal fresh acts, about growing the office. Unbeknownst at the time, I would later find out that my discursive fresh act of asking for more was never going to hit the provost’s desk.

Leading up to the date in which these proposals were to be packaged into a larger report to be delivered to the provost, my two supervisors, Hall and Escoe, scheduled a meeting with me to discuss the details of my proposal. My hope was that they believed that I had made a strong case for growth, and that they were going to help me with the details of the proposal so that it would be successful with the provost, despite the comments made during the ICL meeting.

After handing paper copies of the proposal to both Hall and Escoe, I was asked the following question: “What do you think about moving your office to Professional Practice?” which at the time was exclusively focused on Co-op. They explained that Professional Practice was moving toward expanding their portfolio outside of just co-op, and they wanted to know my thoughts about potentially moving my operations out of the Center for Community Engagement and into Professional Practice, an academic unit. They explained that this would mitigate some of the in-fighting that was occurring between the curricular (academic affairs) and co-curricular (student affairs) elements in the CCE, and they projected that the move would be beneficial to service learning and could even result in an increase in resources, as I would have access to the staff in Professional Practice. It did not take me long to answer, but I soon realized that the question was never really a question. In hindsight, my answer of “no” was not a moment of
enacting agency because the decision to move the office had already been made. The structure had already shifted. After stating that I did not want to move to co-op, an attempt at an interpersonal fresh act through discourse, they asked me to explain why I did not want to make the move.

My fear at the time was that the “Co-op Culture” was much different than the culture of service learning. Because of the recently formed partnership around the Experiential Explorations Program (EEP), I had the chance to understand in-depth that the motivations of co-op stakeholders were, while also experiential learning, quite different from the motivations of service learning stakeholders. Due to the tone of the conversation, however, I quickly realized that the choice of relocating the Office of Community-Engaged Learning to Professional Practice was not going to be mine to make. I had no immediate agency within this shifting structure, little opportunity for interpersonal fresh acts. The structure had already been put in motion, and my agency within that structure, at least insofar as whether or not I was going to relocate, was non-existent. Within a few months, I would find myself packing boxes and moving to my new academic home in the Division of Professional Practice.

It should go without saying that these developments did not seem positive to me. Not only was I not going to be getting a budget increase, or even have the opportunity to make my case—my discursive fresh act—to the provost, I was going to be moving the growing Service Learning Program to an historically grounded and known goliath of a program that was originated by Herman Schneider. I would soon move from one person in a small office of seeming-competitors to a very large division of thirty or so people that had come to my office for help in connecting to not-for-profits just several months prior. This was indeed a structural fresh act and a moment of unfreezing for the Service Learning Program, but it was one in which I felt
very little agency to resist. In this case, the larger structures of the Integrated Core Learning Initiative, the Office of the Provost, and the needs of the university were simply too much and too strong to enact any individual agency whatsoever. That said, narrative participants discussed this moment as key toward the evolution of service learning at UC.

**New Structure–Agency Duality: New Crops, New Opportunities, New Challenges**

In talking with several of the narrative participants, this move to Professional Practice was viewed favorably by those with the most situational power and agency. In talking with Miller (Vice President for Enrollment Management), Hall (former Vice Provost for Faculty Development), and Escoe (current Vice Provost for Undergraduate Affairs and then-chair of the Integrated Core Learning Council), this move made sense for two important reasons. First, the move would temper the growing conflict around service learning that was occurring in the co-located offices of the Center for Community Engagement, and second, this move would alleviate the larger need of 20% budget cuts that were occurring across the university.

While this fresh act and shift in structure felt like a blow to my work, my identity, and to my hopes for service learning at UC, the decision was made for several good reasons, and there were definitely some key positive outcomes of the shift in structure. Miller reported that “Budget cuts had to be made and this was a good way to consolidate experiential learning under one roof.” Escoe has said that “this move did allow Professional Practice to expand, and bring forth programs like the Academic Internship Program, UC Forward, Undergraduate Research, and now, the Career Development Center’s program.” Echoing the educational structure outlined in the Integrated Core Learning initiative, Person commented that “the move of service learning started the thinking around having a holistic EL program, which was delivering on the promises of ICL.” Hall commented that “moving service learning to an academic division started a more
theory-driven endeavor.” He went on to say that “when service learning moved from the student life sector to the academic affairs sector…this was a threshold event,” an understanding that I agree with today, which is an example of an intrapersonal fresh act.

Of interest here is that the narrative participants who had the most agency in the move had mostly favorable things to say about this shift in structure, but while many of those reasons are well-founded, the move had more detractors, particularly with those stakeholders who had the least amount of agency within the shifting structure. For example, one of the narrative participants, Raj Mehta, Director of the Honors’ Program and UC International, stated,

the perception of the move of service learning into Professional Practice was that it would dilute the office because [Professional Practice] had completely different perceptions about experiential learning…you lost the momentum to synergize with the larger campus and you seemed to be more so synergizing with Professional Practice…the move to Professional Practice lowered the profile of service learning.

This sentiment was echoed by Larkin in saying, “service learning seemed to lose some of the momentum with the move…projects were not kept up after the move, everyone thought that service learning was simply dropping the ball.” Larkin’s supervisor Brown has said “[The move] caused more confusion for stakeholders,” asking, “I mean, who should they go to now for service learning help?”

Even one of the orchestrators of the move, my then-supervisor Hall, remarked that “when service learning moved…the Center for Community Engagement seemed to lose some things…service learning seemed to have more of an academic tinge to it, and the Center for Community Engagement lost that.” Hall goes on to comment that “there was some worry about the Service Learning Program being swallowed whole by Co-op,” which was a sentiment felt by
stakeholders at the Mayerson Foundation, the original funders of the office. According to Seibert,

There were some things lost…including the quarterly faculty-community breakfasts,…trainings were lost,…there was no attempt to do anything with philanthropy program…[the move] was a letdown to the Mayerson Foundation and was a mistake.

This was a turning point, a moment of unfreezing ushered in by a fresh act that occurred largely outside of my agency and that of my peers. In talking to the narrative participants, the move could have been due to a budget issue, or perhaps it was a political move, but my sense is that it was a combination of the two. Some narrative participants frame this structural fresh act in a positive light because it did allow Professional Practice to expand and grow. But for the narrative participants that are more narrowly focused on service learning and community engagement, both inside and outside of the university (Fran Larkin and Jeff Seibert, for example), this moment of unfreezing was, while perhaps positive for the larger university structure, a negative one for the smaller structure of service learning at UC.

Consistent with the understanding of the duality between structure and agency, there was still room for fresh acts of agency, even within the larger shifting structure of the university and larger community. I was asked to change the name of the operation again—which first was called the Office for Academic Community Partnerships and then the Office for Community-Engaged Learning—and so I took the opportunity to change the name to the Center for Service Learning and Civic Engagement in 2011, another key discursive fresh act. This is an example of enacting a small bit of agency within a shifting structure in which I and other service learning stakeholders had little power.
Both the structural fresh act of moving my office (over which I had no agency) and the discursive fresh act of renaming the office (over which I did have agency) did not sit well with my former colleagues in the Center for Community Engagement. I recall having one last Faculty–Community Partner Breakfast, still in partnership with the CCE, and we had the largest turn-out to date. The then-Provost Ono delivered the opening remarks, and mentioned the newspaper article that announced the opening of the first ever Center for Service Learning and Civic Engagement at UC. Ono went on to discuss the positive growth of the program since 2008, but attributed that success to my office, leaving out the jointly-won success between the academic affairs and student affairs elements of the Center for Community Engagement.

While this was definitely a proud moment for me personally, to have the provost speak so highly of my work and that of the newly named Center for Service Learning and Civic Engagement, his remarks served to only deepen the divide between my office and the student affairs center that had hosted my office since 2008. In hindsight, I can see that I missed an opportunity for agency, an opportunity that could have somewhat repaired the fractured relationship between my office and the Center for Community Engagement. I suppose that I was emotionally invested in “winning the battle” over where service learning would live—in academic affairs or in student affairs—and I missed the opportunity to acknowledge my CCE counterparts during that last Faculty–Community Partner Breakfast. As I think about this today, it was a bad decision to not speak up, as my silence, which could be understood as a form of agency within structure, served to deepen the divide between academic affairs and student affairs as it relates to the Service Learning Program at the University of Cincinnati.

The structure had shifted, mostly due to forces outside of my control and that of other service learning stakeholders, but in hindsight, the discursive fresh act of renaming the office the
Center for Service Learning and Civic Engagement—obviously, a name that seemed to compete with the already existing Center for Community Engagement—did not serve the Service Learning Program well.

This is an example of me enacting agency to the detriment of the Service Learning Program. The structural fresh act of moving service learning to Professional Practice was confusing to most, and my discursive fresh act to rename the operations only served to deepen that confusion and further agitate the already existing rift between the curricular and co-curricular sides of the house. The Center for Community Engagement had been involved with service learning since before my time in the office, and they felt rightfully marginalized by this seeming divorce.

Nevertheless, a few very positive things occurred because of the structural fresh act of the move and new structure of an umbrella organization for experiential learning, both for me personally and for the Service Learning Program. Because I was now in an academic unit that could create and teach classes, I was able to enact agency through the structural fresh acts of creating two new courses, Foundations of Service Learning and Civic Engagement and Leadership Through Service Capstone, which would accompany a new certificate program, the Undergraduate Certificate in Service Learning and Civic Engagement.

Having this ability to more clearly ground the Service Learning Program within an academic unit allowed these structural and interpersonal fresh acts to occur, all three of which were not possible before the move to Professional Practice. Being able to demonstrate my value to my new colleagues in Professional Practice through creating revenue-generating courses was certainly a positive.
More agency for service learning through semester conversion. During this moment of unfreezing and restructuring of service learning at the university, another, somewhat larger shift was occurring at UC. In addition to the 20% across-the-board budget cuts, which shifted the structure of my office, this was also the time when the university was embarking on perhaps the largest example of unfreezing and restructuring—the structural fresh act of semester conversion. As the reader will see in the 2011 UC Magazine article titled *UC’s Academic Calendar Moves From Quarters to Semesters*, MB Reilly (another narrative participant) writes:

If history is any guide, the University of Cincinnati’s just-completed move to the semester calendar will stand for at least the next half century…or longer. After all, UC was previously on semesters for just over 70 years, from the early 1890s to 1964. In the early 1960s, the move to quarters came thanks to the rising tide of baby boomers entering college years.

The article goes on to detail how the university had begun preparing for the transition in 2008, and preparations included three major challenges:

1. **Curricular revisions**: Every course—about 9,000 in all—had to be revised to cohesively fit into a semester calendar, with each course integrating with others across disciplines, majors, departments and colleges. UC added a twist by also taking this opportunity to streamline degree requirements to meet the needs of today’s and tomorrow’s workforce, industry and community needs;

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12 [http://magazine.uc.edu/issues/0912/semester.html](http://magazine.uc.edu/issues/0912/semester.html)
2. **Encoding and cataloging**: Behind-the-scenes encoding and cataloging of the new curriculum was done so that students’ online course registration process was both enhanced and simplified. UC also added new technology to track student learning.

3. **Student advising**: Students making the transition—including about 20,000 undergraduates in degree-granting programs—have individual transition plans/degree audits and the offer of academic counseling to map out degree completion during and after the switch to semesters.

According to Reilly’s article, former Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Chair of Semester Conversion Committee, Kristi Nelson said:

> With the course revisions alone, you can liken it to putting together an incredibly complex, three-dimensional jigsaw puzzle. Each one of tens of thousands of pieces had to fit with other pieces due to the nature of prerequisites and requirements of accrediting bodies.

The senior leadership at the university decided to become better aligned with the other Ohio universities and colleges by moving from a 10-week quarter system to a 15-week semester system. Through the lens of structuration, this monumental structural fresh act was conducted in order to conform to the university systems in Ohio, a much larger structure of which UC was a part. This large structural shift at UC amounted to every single class at the university being deconstructed and then reconstructed as a 15-week version of itself. The inner-workings of this monumental shift are too much to go into for the purposes of this dissertation, but this university-wide moment of unfreezing the institutional structure provided for me very fertile ground for sowing more seeds of service learning, and I took this opportunity to enact agency within that shifting structure. In talking with another narrative participant, Adrian Hall, Academic Director
of Data Management in the Office of the Provost, the opportunity to “seize the unfreezing” ushered in through semester conversion could be one of the most important watershed moments for the university’s Service Learning Program.

As is often the case, one of the structural constraints to faculty incorporating a service learning component into their teaching has always been lack of time. Working within a 10-week-long quarter makes it difficult to think about “adding” something new, particularly something as time consuming as service learning. Extending the term to 15 weeks made this a bit easier. More importantly, however, because every single course at the university had to be torn-down and reimagined as a 15-week-long course—a key structural fresh act—this also provided an opportunity to attract newcomers to service learning, an example of the shifting structure providing new agency and opportunities for interpersonal fresh acts.

Prior to this, faculty were often not willing to do the work required to reshape a class, but semester conversion was forcing them to do this anyway. This structural fresh act provided an opportunity to enact discursive and interpersonal fresh acts on a large scale by reaching out to faculty who had been tentative about incorporating service learning, impacting their opportunities for intrapersonal fresh acts. My message to faculty at that time was, “while you are reshaping your class, let’s talk about service learning,” and I was able to attract a whole new set of university faculty.

More agency for service learning provided by S.H.N.I.R.T. Also during this monumental moment of unfreezing and structural shift, and because the university’s identity has for 100-plus years been wedded to experiential learning, the senior administration created a system whereby courses could be given attributes that would signify them as including one of several types of experiential learning, service learning being one of those types (recognized by
the “S” attribute). The other types of experiential learning course offerings included “H” for honors, “N” for internships, “I” for international experiences, “R” for undergraduate research experiences, and “T” for transdisciplinary experiential learning courses—culminating in what came to be referred to as S.H.N.I.R.T. This moment was key in that it encouraged faculty members, and the leaders of faculty members (deans and associate deans) to begin focusing on how to incorporate all forms of experiential learning into classes.

In researching dated documents and now-defunct websites, I came across the following descriptions of this important step, this crucial structural fresh act, in the evolution of experiential learning at the University of Cincinnati:13

The faculty at the University of Cincinnati use a variety of exciting teaching methods in their classes. An attribute is a letter of the alphabet that we use to keep track of that particular type of class, and make a note on students’ official transcripts.

- Attributes help students find exciting classes.
- Attributes appear on the official transcript for a record that shows what kind of class was completed. This credit might be required for certain programs, such as University Honors.
- Attributes help the university to determine how many of our students have participated in these kinds of classes.

The University had at this time the ability to track and encourage courses to incorporate many forms of experiential learning.

Being able to discursively make the case for service learning to faculty (messages of you now have more time, and you have to rethink your class anyway) because of semester conversion was key for encouraging the grassroots-level faculty to begin thinking about (intrapersonal fresh acts) service learning. But the new attribute system (structural fresh act), whereby experiential learning courses were to be tracked at the administrative level, allowed me to make the fresh act of reaching out to deans and associate deans (discursive and interpersonal fresh acts), asking them to encourage their faculty to identify their class as using one of the S.H.N.I.R.T. attributes (also discursive and interpersonal fresh acts).

Stepping into this shifting structure, enacting agency from the bottom-up (engaging faculty stakeholders) and the top-down (engaging administrative stakeholders), had a very positive impact on the dissemination of the service learning seeds. In a short time, we could report as a university that service learning was happening in every undergraduate college at the university, along with some of the professional and graduate schools. At the time of writing this dissertation, UC’s Service Learning Program is one of the largest in the nation. This success is due primarily to the shifting structure of the larger university (semester conversion), but the fresh acts enacted during this moment of unfreezing, by myself and members of the Service Learning Advisory Council, are certainly due some of the credit.

During the time of semester conversion and introduction of S.H.N.I.R.T, the Office of the Provost leveraged the structural fresh act of being able to “count” experiential-learning attributed classes at the university and could accurately report substantial growth in all forms of experiential learning, service learning being the fastest growing.

More agency for service learning through retention rates. In addition, for the first time in the history of the university, participation in experiential learning could be connected to
something of importance to the university—retention rates. In other words, the university was able to make the argument, a discursive fresh act, that experiential learning had positive impacts for students. This was a key shift to the structure through discourse. Programs like service learning, which had often been marginalized as “something extra” and not key to a student’s success, suddenly could be seen as a modest driver toward student success. When comparing students who participated in service learning with those who did not, the data demonstrated higher retention rates for service learning students.

Table 5.4. Timeline of events in the evolution of service learning at UC: 2011–2013.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foundations of Service Learning and Civic Engagement and Leadership Through Service Capstone courses are created</td>
<td>2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate in Service Learning and Civic Engagement created</td>
<td>2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater Cincinnati Service Learning Network is formed</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Director (Center for Service Learning and Civic Engagement) transitions to a faculty position</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Move to Faculty Position: A New Type of Farming**

When initially joining Professional Practice, the original position of Academic Director reporting to the Office of the Provost was eliminated, and in its place a very similar position of Academic Director was created reporting to the Director of the Division, Associate Provost Cedercreutz with a “dotted-line” reporting structure to one of my two original supervisors, Escoe, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Affairs. This should be considered a structural fresh act.

This Academic Director position lasted for two years. Because of my ability to demonstrate value to my new faculty colleagues in Professional Practice—which by 2013 had been renamed the Division of Professional Practice and Experiential Learning (ProPEL)—by
creating and teaching new classes and successfully proposing a new undergraduate certificate, I was able to enact the discursive and interpersonal fresh acts of asking for a faculty position in ProPEL. Until this moment of shift, the structure in ProPEL was one in which I and three other non-faculty members were fulfilling faculty roles by teaching classes, making presentations, and promoting our programs.

In addition to my non-faculty role of leading the Service Learning Program, three other non-faculty members in ProPEL, Zach Osborne, Annie Straka, and Willie Clark, were leading the newly formed Academic Internship Program as non-faculty members. The structure of ProPEL during this time was, in addition to focusing on Cooperative Education, expanding to include other forms of experiential learning. This structural fresh act of shifting away from focusing exclusively on co-op brought with it the new name of ProPEL and a new broadened portfolio of experiential learning programs. As is the case when any organization temporarily unfreezes, this provided me with a bit of agency to re-establish my role differently. This enacted agency would not have been possible, however, without the structure in ProPEL being in the midst of change.

Until 2013, I was a non-faculty member with an academic director title. However, much of my day-to-day work was comprised of doing things that a typical faculty member would do, namely teaching. While “on paper” my role was as a non-faculty administrator, my work was that of a faculty member, and my request to be re-classified was granted by ProPEL and by the Office of the Provost. For me personally, this was a dream-come-true. The sole reason that I entered the higher education sector is for my love of teaching, and this shift in structure allowed me to fulfill that dream. With that said, however, this shift in structure most certainly had
negative impacts on the Service Learning Program as was reported by several narrative participants detailed below.

**Structural Constraint of Becoming a Faculty Member: Same Growing Grounds, New Crops**

As all faculty are aware, to sustain employment status as a faculty member, we are expected by our peers to conduct work that is congruent with the unit’s reappointment, tenure, and promotion (RPT) guidelines. What was not expected of faculty members in ProPEL was to conduct much administrative work, unless that work is compensated by an additional administrative stipend and/or faculty release time. While there was certainly a shift in the structure of my employment expectations, at least on paper and per my colleagues, there still existed a larger structural need to continue to administer the Service Learning Program across the university. I encountered the problem with this when applying for my first reappointment in 2015.

To put it plainly, I was almost not reappointed by ProPEL’s Reappointment, Promotion, and Tenure (RPT) Committee, but it was not due to the fact that the Service Learning Program was unsuccessful. Rather, it was because the items I submitted in my RPT dossier were more administrative in nature, and the RPT committee did not view those administrative tasks and work as worthy of faculty status. Fortunately for me, I was able to submit an addendum to the originally submitted RPT dossier in order to make a case for my reappointment, a key discursive fresh act, which was tentatively accepted by the RPT committee and later approved by the director of the division then the office of the provost.

As the reader can imagine, this caused a great deal of turmoil for me personally, particularly as it relates to my personal identity. I had obtained my dream-job as a university
faculty member, but my peers—those who had the agency to suggest that I not be reappointed as a faculty member—did not necessarily value my work leading the Service Learning Program because they framed much of this work as non-faculty effort. This caused an inner-conflict for me because I felt trapped between trying to operate and be successful in competing structures, that of being a successful faculty member versus that of leading the university-wide Service Learning Program. I felt that I had limited agency at this point, often wondering to myself do I work toward being a valued faculty member in ProPEL, or do I work toward continuing to grow the Service Learning program? And at the time of writing this dissertation, this conflict is still ever-present, a topic which I will discuss in more detail in a later section.

It could be argued that this conflict of agency within structure is one that is felt by many in higher education. Often, faculty are expected to fulfill administrative duties that are largely outside of their scope as university faculty, and this work is often marginalized into the “Service” portion of their RPT dossiers. This conflict of professional identity within the structure of an institution can cause trouble for those striving to be promoted and reappointed, but it should also be noted that individual faculty member (agents) always have the agency to adjust those structures.

My move to faculty also had a negative impact on the reputation of the Service Learning Program. While I sensed a bit of this prior to conducting this narrative inquiry project, the reality of this conflict became more concrete when speaking with some of the narrative participants. Many of the multiple participants that were involved with this narrative inquiry have shared with me their perception that my move to faculty damaged the Service Learning Program. There were a few narrative participants who communicated to me that the move helped the program, but much of the feedback demonstrated that the move was damaging. For example, Brown remarked,
“this move has not upheld the promise to the Mayerson Foundation to make this a full-time position.” One of her staff members, Larkin, a very close colleague of mine, communicated both positive and negative outcomes of this shift in saying,

service learning as a pedagogy became easier to promote since you became a faculty member…and this was a positive…[but] a negative thing is…Service Learning Program became less visible. Now, it is unclear where to go for service learning support. Person, the director of the First Year Experience and Learning Community Program, stated “service learning’s prominence was stalled…The move created an obstacle because now stakeholders feel like they can’t go to [Michael] for help.” She goes on to say, “It’s great for [Michael] but the move stalled the momentum of service learning.”

One of the university’s long-time adopters of service learning, Professor Woeste from the College of Arts and Sciences, echoed these sentiments in saying “even though I’ve been doing service learning since before you were around, I feel much more disconnected now.” Woeste goes on to say that

being a professor in ProPEL does not give service learning justice…but I can see that [Michael] is still trying to innovate and integrate service learning into the curriculum…but it’s in [Michael’s] classes, not our classes.

Mehta, the Vice Provost of UC International and the University’s Honors’ programs, commented that “it seems more difficult to do a service learning now. Getting started was great, but as time goes, no one knows where to go for advice. We need to get back to the foundations here.” Mehta goes on to say,
The need to develop new adopters to service learning is still important, but the program seems to have lost this part of the mission. There needs to be a process for continuing to nurture new and existing service learning stakeholders.

In discussing the future of the Service Learning Program, Mehta shared,

Moving forward, I would like to see the service learning efforts taken care of at a university basis. Being part of such a large entity like ProPEL is great, but what about the other colleges. How will service learning continue to flourish as it should without someone leading it?

Person echoes this in saying, “There are too many service learning opportunities that are yet to be tapped.” Larkin seems to agree with this, commenting that “large parts of the university are not aware of where to go for service learning, and this needs to change,” which is echoed by Mehta saying, “There are many units doing things on their own, which makes it seem like we are going backwards.” Perhaps the most important perspective about this structural shift came from the Director of Ohio Campus Compact, Dick Kinsley, sharing,

Someone needs to figure out how all of the moving parts fit together. There is a strong push for Career Education and co-op, but there is a fear of losing the critical theory approach…developing the citizen…of service learning. Someone should articulate the challenges faced if we lose the civic mindedness in our students…If you are training people as engineers, that’s one thing, but they can be good engineers but lousy citizens.

As the reader can probably imagine, this critical feedback about a program that I have worked very hard to build is difficult to digest, but consistent with the duality of structure and agency present throughout this dissertation, there are things that I can do to enact fresh acts within the shifting structure. We are always structuring new and different ways of being and new
and different understandings of our institutional world at UC, and this means that our identities are always dealing with some amount of instability and change. No institution—UC included—is inherently stable and consistent, and therefore, no identity—mine included—can be either. Taking cue from Giddens, I remember that, “from the core of mutual knowledge [an] accountable universe of meaning is sustained through the process of interaction…[and thus we live in a] universe of possibilities” (Giddens, 1979, p. 83). Therefore, I am choosing to see service learning in Cincinnati as an open book, which will continue to be written by myself and others.
Chapter 6: The Final Narrative, Discussion, and Recommendations

In this chapter, I discuss the most recent stages of this narrative, which include a detailed description of the future directions, actions, and positive changes underway for service learning at the University of Cincinnati. This approach is in line with the premises of an action research study, which will be followed by a final discussion of how this study has addressed gaps in the literature and my recommendations for the field.

Stage Five: “Ear to the Ground and Letting Go”

This portion of the narrative was the most difficult to write about for three interconnected reasons. First, for a period, I was not altogether clear about how this portion of the story would end and the impact it would have on my personal and professional identity. Second, despite the fact that I did not believe that these structural shifts would help the Service Learning Program at the University of Cincinnati in the long-term, the structural fresh act described below was nonetheless going to occur as the decision seemed to be largely outside of my control and agency. Third, this portion of the narrative was happening just as I was completing this doctoral dissertation. In actuality, the original conclusion of this document had to be amended to more accurately depict the evolution of service learning at the University of Cincinnati.

In 2016, a new layer of administration within the newly named Division of Experience-Based Learning and Career Education (ELCE) (formerly, Division of Professional Practice and Experiential Learning, and before that, Division of Professional Practice) was created, and my title of Director of Service Learning had been eliminated. It was explained to me by one of the new administrators, Assistant Professor Annie Straka, that the title of “director” was going to be reserved for those individuals that supervise people, which I did not do. This development was unexpected, but after talking with the unit administration, I understand why the decision was
made, the reasons for which will be explained below. That said, this structural fresh act did leave a vacuum in the leadership of service learning at the university for a short time. It should be noted that this structural fresh act impacted other experiential learning programs in similar ways, meaning the formal leadership of the UC Forward program, the Undergraduate Research program, and the Academic Internship program also had their formal leadership eliminated.

**Who Will Farm?**

After meeting several times with the newly-appointed Assistant Director of the Experiential Learning team, it was made clear that my leadership title (Director of Service Learning at the University of Cincinnati) and that of the other experiential learning programs represented on the team that Straka was charged with leading (UC Forward, Undergraduate Research, Academic Internships, and the Pre-Health Experiential Program) would also be eliminated. It was explained that the senior administration in the ELCE were working on a transition plan wherein the team leader with assistant director role in the division would serve as the administrator for those programs, and the former leaders of those programs would focus their faculty efforts on those respective areas. The simplified organization chart below (Figure 6.1) details this new structure.

This structural fresh act was not welcomed as good news by me, and in reflecting today about why that was, I believe it was because for so many years I had been the sole leader of Service Learning at UC, and my personal and professional identity had become inexorably intertwined with that role. Harkening back to chapter two, for example, in researching individual identity within institutional structure, Creswell (2003) discusses individual identity construction being intimately tied to institutional structure. Creswell’s (2003) work points to social construction (Berger & Luckmann, 1967) as the groundwork perspective holding that individuals
seek to interpret and comprehend their professional identity within the larger institutional structure, a duality that I can observe in myself today.

Figure 6.1. New organization of leadership for experiential education at UC.

Quite honestly, this structural fresh act of removing program leaders felt like a tremendous loss, but not a loss for financial reasons. The compensation that was provided for my leadership was low ($1000 per year), and I was not upset about the thought of losing this stipend. The feelings of loss had more to do with my sense of professional fit in the unit and at the university, which seemed to be evaporating by being asked to step away from leading the service learning program. Since originally accepting the position in 2008, my title had shifted several times, but my personal and professional identity had always been as the leader of service learning at the University of Cincinnati.

This then-newly shifting structure felt as if the service learning initiative was being marginalized, shrinking the ability to enact agency relative to the larger experiential learning program at the university. I recall feeling as if I was losing something of great value with little
agency to change this, but perhaps more importantly, I felt as if the university was making the wrong decision. The structure was nevertheless shifting, and it was now my responsibility to adjust to this shift.

Harkening back to the duality of structure and agency in chapter two, that agents always possess potential moves and outcomes, I began to make plans for enacting agency within this shifting structure. At the urging of the Cross-Campus Experiential Learning team leader, I was asked to begin drafting a transition plan that would effectively hand over the administrative duties for service learning program and to begin crafting my faculty workload in such a way that my teaching, research, and service would sufficiently meet the expectations of an assistant professor instead of as a faculty member with administrative duties.

This moment of seeming loss was compounded by my learning that the small $1000 stipend that I had been receiving since 2013 had, unbeknownst to me, been suspended since August of 2016. In other words, I had been administrating the program without being paid to do so for close to one year. This felt like a second blow to my personal and professional identity as leader of the service learning program, which felt even more severe because I had not been notified of this change. In fact, I did not find out about my stipend being removed until I personally met with the division’s business manager to ask an unrelated question about my compensation.

When I was told that the stipend had been halted, without me ever being notified by the administration, I recall leaving feeling dejected and wondering about potentially seeking a new appointment at another university, exemplifying an intrapersonal fresh act. Potentially leaving the university would indeed enact agency within structure, but I soon came to grips with the fact
that leaving was the wrong type of agency to enact. Rather, I decided to abide by the administrative decision.

In early 2017, I started to create the transition plan for administering the service learning program in such a way that despite having no formal leader of the program, the success of it could still be attainable. I and others, many of whom have been participants in telling this narrative (Fran Larkin and Kathy Brown from the Center for Community Engagement), started to discuss how to create a structure in which service learning at UC would continue to grow and flourish, despite not having a person at the helm. Larkin and I discussed this shift, and throughout that conversation and after, I began to accept this new structure and even started to look forward to adopting a new professional identify wherein I would not be the face of service learning at UC, another example of an intrapersonal fresh act. In addition to Fran Larkin, I met with some of the administrators in ELCE and I began to map how my former administrative duties could be handed off to the Center for Community Engagement and other offices related to service and engagement. These efforts to hand off the leadership responsibility resulted in the discursive fresh act of drafting the transition plan, the interpersonal fresh act of deepening relationships with other stakeholders to enact that transition, and the intrapersonal fresh act of embracing this change.

As has been the case since Schneider’s Hobby Hour was created, the university structure continues to shift, unfreeze, refreeze, and evolve, and there are always opportunities to enact agency and to perform fresh acts. In writing this dissertation, and by adhering to the principles of action research, my agency continues to interact with the larger university structure, and with the help of others, I had rededicated myself to the mission and vision of the Service Learning Program at the University of Cincinnati, but this time as more of a faculty consultant than as a
leader of it. During this transition, it was my goal that the program would continue to help create, support, evaluate, and promote service learning pedagogies and partnerships for the entire university community, and my newly forming identity around a 100% faculty workload would refocus energies away from leading and toward being a faculty member adhering to the mission and vision of the program.

**Division and Yield**

As the ELCE had decided to remove program leader positions for service learning, along with the Academic Internship Program, the Undergraduate Research, and the UC Forward Program, I was asked to come up with a transition report, which is described below. Of interest to this dissertation is that these shifts in structure and my agency within those shifts have been coinciding with my writing here, which again harkens back to the idea of the strange loop of dissertating where what I am writing about is intimately tied to what I am doing.

Having completed the listening tour and abiding by the newly forming institutional structure around Service Learning at the University of Cincinnati, I, as the former Director of SL@UC, enacted agency with intrapersonal and interpersonal fresh acts of yielding control. This included looking into the past narrative, reviewing the original service learning documents drafted in 2001, 2002, and 2003, along with the ICL document, and interrogating the then-current vision and mission statement of the program.

While this was occurring, the fresh acts were aligned with deconstructing the barriers that exist between the campus and the community and also between the different and necessary stakeholders needed to move the larger societal structure toward a more equitable and sustainable future for the program. In addition to these discursive and interpersonal fresh acts, I was rededicating myself to the importance of being authentically present within the shifting
structure—an intrapersonal fresh act—and in doing so, I was reminded of Rodgers and Raider-Roth (2006) writing:

Presence from the teacher’s point of view is the experience of bringing one’s whole self to full attention so as to perceive what is happening in the moment. Returning to the Latin roots of “attend” and “perceive” we find the kernel of the essence of presence. The Latin root of attend, attendere, is “to stretch toward”. Definitions include: “to listen or pay close attention to; to accompany; to remain ready to serve”. The Latin root of perceive, percipere, is “to seize wholly, to see all the way through”, and definitions include: “to become aware of directly through the senses, especially to see or hear; to take notice of; observe, detect”; “to become aware of in one’s mind; achieve understanding of”. The image of an alert mind, ready to “seize wholly”, in concert with a compassionate heart that stretches toward, ready to serve, captures much of what we mean by presence. (p. 267)

Embracing this change became central to my agency throughout this period. The shifting structure and my agency reduced to relinquishing leadership of the program, which had for many years been at the center of my identity, was not an easy thing to do. I found myself asking “now what?” but perhaps for the first time in a very long time, I was asking that question with an intentional focus on being present in the moment, present in the transition, and present in trying to trust that I would be able to forge a new, perhaps somewhat different type of identity pertaining to the service learning program at the university as a faculty-only employee. This was another example of an intrapersonal fresh act, wherein I actively worked to reframe my thinking about the change. I would soon find out that this act of embracing uncomfortable change would be tested.
Stage Six: “Hand on the Plow”

This next stage of the narrative details the final evolution of the program that will be included in this dissertation. The reader will see that the structure of the program has shifted once again, but the structural fresh acts detailed in the previous section have impacted the current structure in substantial ways.

In April of 2017, a meeting was scheduled with Vice Provost for Undergraduate Affairs, Gigi Escoe, along with the Associate Vice Provost and Director of ELCE, my direct supervisor, Kettil Cedercreutz. The purpose of the meeting was to share the newly penned SL@UC transition plan, which had been approved by my team leader, the assistant director of Cross-Campus Experiential Learning programs. By the time of the meeting, I had accepted the shift in my role and had in fact started to look forward to not being responsible for administering the program. Rather, I had moved to enact new types of agency, making the intrapersonal fresh act of refoocusing my efforts on faculty-oriented work.

In discussing the SL@UC transition plan at the meeting with Escoe and Cedercreutz, Escoe stopped the conversation mid-way and asked, “So, you are not going to be leading the program?” to which I replied, “That is correct.” I recall a long pause, punctuated by Escoe asking Cedercreutz, “Who is going to be leading the program?” to which he responded that assistant directors of Cross-Campus Experiential Learning programs would be taking on those responsibilities. After hearing this, Escoe communicated that she was not supportive of this structural fresh act and shift in responsibilities.

Up until this point, the transition from leading service learning to co-chairing a group that would lead service learning was not a structure that I originally felt comfortable with. However, I felt little agency to do anything but to craft a transition plan that would engage others at the
university to co-lead service learning and to outline how my faculty-only role could be supportive of the program. The goal of the submitted transition plan, then, was to establish a structure that could empower service learning stakeholders, myself being one of them, and to continue to support the service learning efforts at the university. Here we see a key example of an intrapersonal fresh act—me embracing this change—followed by the discursive fresh act—drafting the transition plan—and the interpersonal fresh act—engaging others in that process.

Through a structuration lens, this new structural fresh act was an interesting development in that Escoe, being the direct supervisor of my direct supervisor, Cedercreutz, had much more power within the shifting structure, and she made it very clear by the end of that meeting that she believed the program needed a defined leader.

I left that meeting with Escoe and Cedercreutz feeling cautiously optimistic, but very unsure about what would develop from the conversation. Within a few weeks, however, the administration in ELCE began to talk about creating program director positions for Service Learning, Academic Internships, Undergraduate Research, and UC Forward, which appeared to be a reversal of the original plans to remove formal leaders from each of those experiential learning programs. It began to appear that I would, in fact, remain in a formal leadership position, which can be seen as a key structural fresh act in the evolution of the program.

In hindsight, I am very grateful for the felt difficulty of being asked to give up leadership of the program. That shift of temporarily giving up leadership—a structural fresh act—forced me to interrogate my own practice—an interpersonal fresh act—and to think about how I could use my agency to enact positive change despite not being in a leadership position. Further, because both Escoe and Cedercreutz were able to observe in detail, on the SL@UC transition plan, that the administrative needs of the service learning program were robust—a discursive fresh act—it
seemed to have become obvious to them both that the $1000-per-year stipend was lacking and not at all congruent with the work needed to lead the university-wide program.

In many unexpected ways, dancing between the dissertation writing and the doing helped me to clarify a more sustainable role and more focused agency regarding the service learning program. Due to the critical reflection necessary in telling the story of service learning in Cincinnati, I was able to identify what could be positive next-steps for the initiative being led by a group of people, instead of being led by just one person. Despite this transition plan never coming to fruition, writing the dissertation while being asked to relinquish leadership of the program enabled me to observe the process in new, other-affirming ways.

In retrospect, it seems that for too long, I had forgotten the purpose of service learning at UC, which is not so that I have a job and professional identity. The program should be about others, which reminds me of work by Hawkins, Kroeger, Musti-Rao, Barnett, and Ward (2008) writing about Individualized Education Programs (IEP). They write, “Everyone on the...team is a significant stakeholder in the process. Often the person with the most interest in the...process...is the last to realize it” (p. 4).

In hindsight, it is clear that I had mistakenly put myself at the center of the SL program, unintentionally and perhaps selfishly neglecting the end-users of the program, the university students, along with faculty and community partners that teach those students. Critical reflection created by the felt difficulty of giving up the program has forced me to relocate myself from the center of the program to the margins of the program, and at the time of typing these words, I am grateful for this learning experience as it has opened-up the opportunity for the intrapersonal fresh act of getting out of the way.
Table 6.1. Timeline of events in the evolution of service learning at UC: 2017.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative duties for service learning at the University of Cincinnati are relinquished</td>
<td>May 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative duties for service learning at the University of Cincinnati are redefined</td>
<td>July 2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another Fresh Act, Shift in Structure, and Opportunities for Agency

In April of 2017, I received via email a proposal for becoming the program director of Service Learning at the University of Cincinnati. In hindsight, it is clear that Escoe’s interpersonal fresh act during the SL@UC transition meeting served to open up new possibilities for the program. The proposal identifies a 15-month administrative appointment beginning May 1, 2017 and continuing through August 1, 2018, and this role will include a 65% faculty/35% administrative split with a reduced teaching load and increased stipend for the administrative portion of the role. In preparation for a meeting at the end of April 2017 to discuss and negotiate the terms of this program director proposal, I began to articulate a new vision and mission statement for the service learning initiative.

Of particular interest through the lens of structuration, the developments over the past year have been illustrative of the duality of agency and structure. When I was asked to walk away from leading the service learning initiative, my first impulse was to resist this shift in structure. I attempted to argue, delicately, with the administration that the initiative needed a leader to sustain the growth and momentum of service learning at UC, but this form of agency, a discursive and interpersonal fresh act, was unsuccessful. But then something interesting happened. I accepted this shift in structure and resigned myself to enact agency in such a way that the program would be sustained by others—an intrapersonal fresh act—with me acting from
the margins in a consultative role. The drafting of a transition plan—an interpersonal and
discursive fresh act—for this shift, of me moving from a formal leadership position and into a
faculty-only position, served to enact agency in such a way that the senior administration
reversed their decision. In some ways, the intrapersonal, discursive, and interpersonal fresh act of
giving up service learning in Cincinnati resulted in an even more focused and better resourced
leadership role, another shift in structure that was entirely unexpected.

**Back to the Roots: New (Again) Mission and Vision of the SL@UC Collaborative**

In line with the premise of action research that the work we do should result in a
sustainable change for the participants and research setting, here I lay out the current iteration of
the mission and vision for service learning at UC, which has been highly informed by the
historical evolution of the program as narrated in this study, as well as my experience in
narrating it. This social construction, or discursive dance within the duality of agency and
structure, should be considered as a fresh act.

Much of the following text is taken directly from or paraphrases the actual document
illustrating the currently proposed mission and vision being submitted to the Office of the
Provost, portions of which will be connected to the theoretical underpinnings of this study—
structuration. The purpose for including the exact text is to share with the reader the current
depiction of Service Learning in Cincinnati as it is being structured through agency, or as it is
created through fresh acts. What is below is not a finished project. Rather, it is the beginning of a
new one.

**SL@UC mission statement.** Starting in May of 2017, the service learning program at
the University of Cincinnati (hereafter “SL@UC”) will help to create, support, evaluate, and
promote service learning pedagogies and partnerships for the entire university community.
SL@UC helps to develop service learning (hereafter “SL”) programs and resources, including assessment of SL activities. SL@UC is responsible for helping to guide the development, implementation, and assessment of community-engaged and experientially grounded courses for a growing number of students throughout the university community. While continuing and sustaining the partnership forged with the Center for Community Engagement (CCE), SL@UC will continue to develop and nurture collaborative relationships with a variety of related positions and offices, such as the Office of the President, the Office of the Provost, the General Education Program, Undergraduate Affairs, the Integrated Core Learning initiative, the First Year Experience and Learning Communities program, the Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning, the Honors program, the Action Research Center, UC International, the UC Foundation, and all relevant initiatives within Faculty Senate and Student Affairs.

The specific responsibilities of SL@UC will include: developing SL partnerships—working with faculty, staff, students and educational partners to craft mutually beneficial and sustainable SL partnerships; providing SL support—increasing campus and community support for SL@UC in a variety of ways including resource support and in-kind support; assessing and evaluating SL—helping to assess outcomes for students, faculty, and educational partners participating in SL; and representing SL@UC locally and globally—representing the ongoing and emerging role of SL within the ELCE, Undergraduate Affairs, and the Graduate School, and with an overarching goal of supporting the University of Cincinnati’s Academic Master Plan. In
addition, SL@UC will continue to participate in the growing national and international conversation around the pedagogy, implementation, and scholarship of SL.

**Service learning at the University of Cincinnati today.** The definition of SL approved by the 2008 Service Learning Advisory Council will guide this work:

Service Learning (SL) is a specially designed learning experience in which students combine reflection with structured participation in community-based projects to achieve specified learning outcomes as part of an academic course and/or program requirement. By participating in Campus–Community partnerships at the local, national, or international level, students gain a richer mastery of course content, enhance their sense of civic responsibility, and ultimately develop a more integrated approach to understanding the relationship between theory, practice, ideas, values, and community.¹⁴

As is identified in UC’s mission statement, “experience-based learning,” engaged citizenship, and community partnership constitute core institutional values. Based in ELCE, SL@UC will operate as one of the key coordinating and facilitating agents for SL at the University of Cincinnati. Some of the ways in which this office facilitates fulfillment of UC’s institutional mission include: assisting in development and listing of SL-based courses; identifying and connecting appropriate community partners with UC faculty and students; educating faculty on effective SL pedagogies and activities; and facilitating university and public recognition and university incentives for SL.

**Service learning within the university’s Academic Master Plan.** Because of its foci on meaningful student engagement, knowledge building, community service, and leadership

development, SL fostered by SL@UC aims to be an agent toward *transforming lives* through facilitating deep and meaningful student engagement in curriculum and applying the benefits of knowledge to the betterment of all; *transforming education* through a commitment to integrated academic experiences emphasizing purposeful student development, rich in contextual learning; and *transforming knowledge* through innovation in collaborative education, leveraging UC’s relationships with the business, civic, cultural, educational, health care, and professional communities composing our urban environment;

**SL@UC vision statement 2017.** Moving forward SL@UC will help define the University of Cincinnati as the first-choice destination for students, patients, faculty, and staff. We will strengthen the relationships forged with the surrounding community, transform UC into a 24/7 learning environment, and improve the overall quality of student learning and success. Toward achieving these goals, SL@UC will help implement, support, and promote SL as ways to increase student satisfaction and retention, academic learning, graduation rates, and career placements for students. Reaching these goals will simultaneously help address the many real-world problems found in our local and global communities.

The long-term goals of SL@UC will align with the larger vision of the ELCE and those of the University of Cincinnati’s Academic Master Plan by creating mutually nourishing relationships with the surrounding community, invigorating experiential education, and by sustaining ongoing development of SL faculty practitioners and researchers. Doing so will create a learning environment for our students and with the larger community in which the university will be seen as a valuable and accessible community asset.

**SL@UC two-year vision: By 2019.** Seizing upon the agency within structure, and through the support of SL@UC, UC will be the leading institution of SL in the Mid-West by
2019. In five years (2022), UC will be one of the national leaders. Toward this goal, SL@UC will help to ensure that every college at UC will have identified structures to develop a SL@UC initiative, which will include an identified liaison from their respective faculty/administration to sit on the Service Learning Steering Committee. All UC students will have the opportunity for a beginning (FYE), mid-collegiate, and senior capstone experience learning opportunity relevant to their programs, many of which will include SL.

To accomplish the goals outlined in the vision, SL@UC will hold regularly scheduled SL workshops to help inform best practices, will continue to implement an institutional definition for SL among other types of experiential learning at UC, will recognize faculty members who actively participate in SL@UC, will collect data from students, faculty, and educational partners on a regular basis and will be analyzed and disseminated for continuous, data-driven improvements and goal-setting, will incentivize and support both the research and practice of SL, and will obtain both internal and external grants and endowment support to help advance the above goals. While many of these goals are not necessarily considered fresh acts, they each will be approached through the understanding obtained above, that I, as the director of the program, need to simply get out of the way.

**How will we do this? Collective impact.** Since the time of the beginnings of semester conversion, UC's Service Learning Advisory Council has recognized the growth/expansion of SL around the university, and the committee has been very supportive of these individual, decentralized efforts. With that said, the former Service Learning Advisory Council has been deconstructed and reconstituted as the Service Learning Steering Committee, with
representatives from every college at the university along with the graduate school and related offices in the Division of Student Affairs.

Our overarching goal is to adhere to the principle of understanding *collective impact* (Kania & Kramer, 2011), through which we intend that any SL efforts at UC will abide by five conditions: *common agenda*—all participants (colleges, departments, programs, faculty) will support and participate in the shared vision for SL@UC, including a common understanding of the initiative and a joint approach to implementing it across the university; *shared measurement*—collecting data and measuring results will be done consistently across all participating units to ensure that the SL efforts remain aligned; *mutually reinforcing activities*—participants’ activities should be eclectic and differentiated while still coordinated through mutually reinforcing plans of action—we must celebrate the diversity of SL programs in a collective way; *continuous communication*—consistent and open communication will be ensured across many stakeholders to build trust, assure mutual objectives, and create common motivation and vision; and *backbone support*—collective impact requires a separate organization and a specific set of skills to serve as the backbone for the entire initiative and coordinate participating organizations and agencies. The office of SL@UC will act as the supporting and coordinating backbone structure, but as mentioned above, will work closely with the Center for Community Engagement, the Action Research Center, and other related offices in both academic and student affairs.

As I type these words in early May 2017, I am proud to report that the service learning initiative has grown exponentially over the past eight years, and while we should applaud, support, and empower the individual efforts of colleges and programs, it is critical that we, as a university, evolve the initiative in a coordinated and integrated way. Doing so will require a
strong backbone support structure through collective impact. In the process of writing this dissertation, by conducting the service learning listening tour and by interrogating my own relationship to the university-wide program, I am speaking into existence—or as understood through the structurational lens, enacting agency within structure—the overarching goal to support the stakeholders who own the program: the students, faculty, staff, and SL partners.

**How SL@UC supports students, faculty, staff, and educational partners.** Given the new structure of SL@UC which began retroactively on May 1, 2017, the program will provide support in several, interconnected ways. SL@UC will help maintain the service learning web site and develop informational and educational materials about pedagogies, partnerships, and projects related to SL. This website will be cross-linked with related offices such as the Center for Community Engagement (CCE), Student Activities and Leadership Development (SALD), and others. SL@UC will deliver routine progress reports providing evidence of student learning outcomes resulting from SL and data concerning value to educational partners, students, and faculty as well as to both the campus and community. SL@UC will also convene the Service Learning Steering Committee and will be responsive to their suggestions and input.

In addition to these basic duties, a yearly public-facing report highlighting the SL coursework occurring in the colleges will be delivered, which can be used for promoting the reach and impact of individual colleges, departments, and faculty therein. A UC Campus-Community Connection system will be employed, which will allow faculty to catalogue their respective SL courses, post opportunities to community stakeholders, and search for potential SL opportunities in the community. All participating colleges will have access to developed assessment tools that will focus on the SL experience from the standpoint of all SL stakeholders. In partnership with UC Libraries, SL stakeholders will be able to request SL resources (books,
articles, journals, videos, etc.) to be used for their own respective SL courses and programs. Through these efforts, my agency as leader of SL@UC will be supportive in nature, and I will work diligently to get out of the way of stakeholder success.

**Sowing New Seeds with Students, Faculty, and Community**

Starting in the beginning of the fall 2017 semester, I will enact agency through several types of interpersonal, discursive, and structural fresh acts, which will serve to support SL students, SL faculty, and the university’s SL community. While many of these fresh acts are recycled efforts from previous years, the overall focus of the SL@UC office will be to place these stakeholders at the center of the work; they, not me, being the primary beneficiaries.

**Sowing seeds with students.** First and foremost is the goal to develop the whole student through core SL@UC tenets. By participating in SL courses, it is expected that students will: (1) apply what they are learning in the classroom to a civic setting, thus deepening understanding of course materials; (2) apply and further develop problem-solving and critical thinking skills; (3) work meaningfully with people of varied cultures, socioeconomic backgrounds, lifestyles, and learning styles; (4) foster a sense of civic responsibility; and (5) appreciate the needs of the Greater Cincinnati community, while also recognizing how they may meet the community’s needs through their unique education, interests, and talents. SL@UC will work diligently to support any and all faculty aiming to uphold these tenets. To encourage the collective pursuit of this overarching goal, several partnerships will be forged with specific university offices.

In partnership with UC’s Action Research Center, SL faculty will have the opportunity to work with a designated undergraduate who will help with the assessment of the SL course. The *Service Learning Research Ally Program* (hereafter “SL-RAP”) is a program designed for students who have a desire to conduct action research within a SL classroom in order to build
their experiential learning portfolio and resume. In partnership with the Academic Internship Program, the Servant Leadership Experience Program (hereafter “SLEP”) includes experiential learning opportunities that are specifically structured as practical leadership experiences and are fueled by the student’s academic interests. SLEP is for students who have a desire to lead others through service, and who are interested in building relationships with the underserved and connecting their passions and skills to their leadership stance. This will be an opportunity for students to integrate their classroom study with real life experiences and to learn about and reflect a belief in the power of the greater good. Both SL-RAP and SLEP will place students at the center of their own personal, academic, and professional development, moving students from passive receptors of learning to agents leading through service.

In partnership with the Center for First Year Experience and Learning Communities, freshmen students will also have the opportunity to participate in service learning partnerships with surrounding communities through A Better Place Project, a partnership also including leadership from the Center for Community Engagement. To formally organize students, SL@UC will relaunch the Student Ambassadors for Service Learning program, wherein students can participate in inter-collegiate student activities. Students will have the opportunity to build their personal and professional networks while they build a robust resume as it is expected that students in this program will adopt one SL project per year and will serve as a speakers’ bureau for SL events.

To help organize the structure of student support, SL@UC is currently developing a Service Learning Handbook for Students. Access to a completed handbook that helps to address issues of risk management, best practices, and FAQs will be finalized at the end of the fall 2017
semester, which will include multiple memos of understanding. In addition to creating these opportunities designed for students, additional opportunities will also support SL faculty.

**Sowing seeds with faculty.** SL@UC will reinvigorate the *Service Learning Chautauqua Program.* The goal of the SL Chautauqua is to bring together an eclectic handful of teachers, learners, practitioners, and scholars who are interested in developing relationships with others while exploring service learning. It is intended that the organizers will combine entertainment, culture, and education for the whole community, through engaging diverse types of speakers, teachers, musicians, entertainers, spiritual leaders, and others. To further support faculty, and in partnership with the Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning (CETL), SL@UC will develop the *SL Fellows program,* which will be designed to significantly enhance the capacity of UC faculty to offer courses and conduct SL research that directly engages the university with the community. The goal is to develop innovative approaches to SL teaching and research that promote problem-driven, problem-solving, strategic, academically-grounded civic engagement, and then to recognize the champions of that work in formal ways.

SL@UC will work to develop energy around SL publication, research, and scholarship opportunities as well, which will serve faculty pursuing reappointment, promotion, and tenure. The Service Learning Steering Committee will consistently pursue platforms to present scholarship, conduct research, and publish findings pertaining to SL. It is expected that the SL@UC office will demonstrate efforts toward expanding the university’s place in the academic field, which will be supported both centrally and within the colleges and academic units.

Reflection is one of the most academically rigorous and important components of any SL course (Holland, 1987), and it is important that SL@UC offers support to faculty learning about reflection. Reflection helps students to thoughtfully process their community work and helps
them critically assess and understand what they are seeing and doing. Service learning practitioners and researchers have concluded that the most effective service learning experiences are those that provide structured opportunities for learners to critically reflect upon their service experience (Holland, 1987). It is also understood that students who take the time to reflect on SL experiences will get more from those experiences, which is why reflection is a required part of service learning classes at the University of Cincinnati. Support will be provided by SL@UC to ensure the rigor of these activities and the success of SL faculty creating them.

To begin this process, SL@UC has created a Service Learning Handbook for Faculty. This soon-to-be completed handbook will help to address issues of risk management, best practices, and FAQs to support faculty. Included in this handbook will be multiple memos of understanding which faculty can utilize at their discretion. In addition to creating supportive structures for SL students and faculty, SL@UC will work to enact agency that supports the wider SL Community.

**Sowing seeds with the community.** The SL@UC High School Alliance has been created, which proposes a collaborative teaching and learning partnership between several educational entities for the purpose of inter-institutional and trans-disciplinary learning. In particular, a partnership between post-secondary and secondary educators, along with their respective students and community partners, will be forged in order to offer coordinated service learning experiences

The Service Learning Collaboratory has been in existence for several years, but moving forward, the program will be more specifically focused on providing the larger SL Community

[^15]: [http://www.servicelearningnetwork.org/service-learning-university-cincinnati/]
the opportunity to experiment with novel forms of collaboration and collective impact. It is expected that these experiences will span a variety of industries/disciplines and will include a service learning focus. This program will intentionally disrupt the boundaries between teachers, learners, and community, and will attempt to dissolve the dichotomy between for-profit and not-for-profit organizing.

To further shift SL@UC out of its university silo, efforts will be made toward deeper engagement with the Greater Cincinnati Service Learning Network (GCSLN). Faculty and students will have access to a robust network of SL faculty from several universities and colleges in the Greater Cincinnati Region, such as Xavier University, Mount Saint Joseph University, Northern Kentucky University, Thomas More College, Miami University, and others. This network currently hosts yearly symposiums for faculty as well as routine training opportunities for educational partners, which will be used to deepen the support for SL@UC stakeholders.

To acknowledge the power that is created between campus-community connections, SL@UC will continue to promote the Jack Twyman Award for Service Learning, which is an award for service learning given to a collaborative educational team engaged in a service learning project that exemplifies the values Jack Twyman demonstrated in his life. The award will be given annually to one educational team that exemplifies the Bearcat Bond through: 

- *curriculum*—the educational team’s service learning project must meet the University of Cincinnati’s definition of curricular service learning; 
- *collaboration*—the educational team’s service learning project must display a fundamental understanding of, and consistent commitment to, collaborative relationships with community partners; 
- *character*—the educational

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16 http://www.servicelearningnetwork.org
17 https://www.uc.edu/propractice/service-learning/jack-twyman-award.html
18 https://www.uc.edu/conduct/BearcatBond.html
team’s service learning project must uphold the values of respect, responsibility, and inclusiveness and display a strong commitment to the highest level of personal and academic integrity; creativity—the educational team’s SL project must find creative, out-of-the-box ways to support organizations in our community and the people that those organizations serve; and care—the educational team’s service learning project must identify plans to continue the effort through long-term relationships after the project has ended. It is expected that the Jack Twyman Award will provide a structure in which multiple stakeholders can enact agency for the greater good.

**Sowing Experimental Seeds**

In the spirit of Herman Schneider, and with an eye on innovatively enacting agency and fresh acts within structure, SL@UC will continue to support several new types of fresh acts. Originally conceptualized in 2016, Project Dandelion and UC Campus Community Connections Committee (UC3C) will provide community members and educational partners the opportunity to be represented in all decisions made by and about SL@UC, and this will occur in two ways. First, key community stakeholders will be invited to sit on the UC3C, and second, all SL@UC stakeholders will have the opportunity to communicate to the program anonymously through an online information gathering portal that will be called Project Dandelion. The hope is that this structure will provide community members with the very important agency to enact changes and speak-into the academic community of the university.

In addition, SL@UC will continue the experiment known as *The Tapioca Radio Show*.\(^\text{19}\) The platform of the Tapioca Radio Show explores and expands the reach of experiential learning

\(^{19}\) http://tapiocaradioshow.blogspot.com
through popular education and the inspiration of Paulo Freire. The Tapioca Radio Show was designed as a platform for examining multiple forms of Experiential Learning (EL) through the medium of public radio and recorded podcasts. The creators and hosts for the Tapioca Radio Show will continue to cover a wide range of academic experiences (cooperative education, internships, research projects, service-learning classes, community-engaged learning partnerships, and other curricular and co-curricular endeavors), and disseminate experiential learning stories to a wide range of potential audiences (faculty, staff, students, administrators, and educational partners). The overall purpose of the Tapioca Radio Show is to promote and highlight innovative educational pursuits available at the University of Cincinnati and in the field of experiential learning.

Public radio and recorded podcasts are proving to be an important popular education delivery method because they provide listeners the opportunity to understand the language system that frames narrators’ perceptions of their educational worlds along with their symbolic action in it (Burke, 1966). Further, radio promotes a dialogical model of education in which there is ongoing structuration (Giddens, 1984) developing between the educator and the educated, thus breaking down traditional delivery systems’ banking education methodologies (Freire, 1973).

The Tapioca Radio Show hosts (University of Cincinnati faculty) conducted a preliminary survey to evaluate listeners’ perceptions of the show, and the findings are promising. Of the 178 listeners polled, survey data reveals a strong interest in the radio show concept. Participants considered the method of radio as a delivery platform for EL stories to be very
insightful and educational, and felt that radio is a strong platform for creating a network and engaging younger generations in the world of experiential learning.

Congruent with this approach to educating in novel ways, SL@UC will support the larger service learning community by continuing to house *Experience Magazine: Practice and Theory.*\(^{20}\) This publication features academic and practitioner submissions that cover best-practice highlights, field trends, how-to articles, and relevant information and resources for scholars and practitioners in the field of experiential learning. The audience for this publication reflects the diverse global field of experiential learning and will continue to provide evidence-based and practitioner-orientereed resources for a wide array of experiential learning stakeholders.

**Discussion**

Parker Palmer (1999), author of *Let Your Life Speak*, has written about the importance of listening to one’s own story and of listening to that story being told by others. Some of those *tellings* will reverberate in meaningful ways, and others will fall flat and feel hollow. In a recursive way, the story that is *told* is impossibly intertwined with the story that is *lived*, and it is particularly important for both the *story-teller* and *story-liver* to actively and reflectively listen, even if they are one and the same. Palmer (1999) explains this in writing:

> Before you tell your life what you intend to do with it, listen for what it intends to do with you. Before you tell your life what truths and values you have decided to live up to, let your life tell you what truths you embody, what values you represent. (p. 17)

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This case study has tried to make sense of service learning in Cincinnati by telling the story of the program’s evolution over time. In many ways, however, the story of service learning in Cincinnati began well before I was employed by the University of Cincinnati to lead the service learning program.

Many pages have been committed to detailing the criticality of service learning curriculum, particularly regarding how service learning impacts students, faculty, institutions, and communities. This was the topic of study. More pages were committed to explaining the theoretical framework of the study—structuration—which was followed by describing the inquiry into the narrative, the tool used to illuminate the data. All of this, however, was done to improve service learning in Cincinnati through an action research lens.

Three research questions guided this work, each of which have been answered to varying degrees: 

*RQ1*: How has Service learning in Cincinnati developed over time? What have been the key watershed moments; 

*RQ2*: How do Service learning stakeholders describe the evolution of Service learning in Cincinnati over time; and 

*RQ3*: How can the Service Learning Program at the University of Cincinnati better serve stakeholders? To answer these questions, I started a Service Learning Listening Tour close to two years ago and spoke with many stakeholders, some with much institutional power but others with relatively little institutional power. In addition, I spent considerable time reviewing service learning literature and interrogating historical documents that not only were illustrative of the evolution of service learning in Cincinnati but also key in identifying the uniqueness of the program being linked to the historical narrative of the University of Cincinnati being the founder of cooperative education. The result of this dissertation is that service learning in Cincinnati is being actively improved because of the story.
that has been collectively told—1921 to 2017—and by listening to that story and reacting to it, I am able to begin fresh acts that will better serve institutional stakeholders.

**Limitations**

Of the various limitations one could point to in this project, two of the most salient are (1) the limited size of my participant pool and (2) the limited scope in perspective garnered by analyzing such a distinct and in many ways isolated subculture of service learning stakeholders. While this did allow for a localized understanding for some service learning stakeholders, in the future, more participation should be garnered, and the very important voice of students should be included. Striving toward overcoming these limitations is not to reach the threshold of generalizable findings. Rather, it is argued that a richer, and perhaps more robust, picture of service learning at the University of Cincinnati could have been drawn if more people, and more types of people, had participated. Simply having more voices and more perspectives might have made some findings more compelling while challenging other findings.

Another limitation can be found in the fact that the perspectives learned were those of an isolated group with distinct experiences and a distinct subculture. Similar to the first limitation, I believe that a richer understanding could have been realized if diverse groups with diverse cultural understandings could have participated in the focus group interviews. Again, this criticism is not leveled for the lack of generalizability. Rather, it is my belief that a deeper understanding of service learning in Cincinnati over time could be garnered if additional perspectives are analyzed. Finally, many critics depict collective impact as overly idealistic, possessing very little pragmatic utility. Without doubt, any success of service learning collective impact could pose an uphill battle, but by adhering to the understanding of structuration and action research, the uphill battle can be won.
Contributions to Theory

In Bourdieu’s (1977) work, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, what people do without thinking is of focus. Bourdieu (1977) asks about where the system comes from, how it is produced and reproduced, and how it can be changed. For Bourdieu, action is what we do and is not necessarily tied to intention, while at the same time it is not random or accidental. Rather action is, for Bourdieu (1977), based on practical logic.

Leonardo (2004) further develops this thinking to move us toward actual choice—better understood in the language of this case study as agency—and the actual work required to maintain status quo inside systems. Leonardo maintains that the theme of privilege obscures the subject of domination, or the agent of actions, because the situation is described as happening almost without the knowledge of those who are privileged and powerful. This conjures up images of domination happening without the agency of the privileged, rather than on the backs of the underprivileged.

The study of privilege and structural power, then, begins to take on an image of domination without agents, and it obfuscates the historical process of structural domination in exchange for describing the state of structural dominance. In a similar vein more narrowly focused on race, Trepagneir (2006) considers structures of domination in terms of the notion of unintended action in the important role of well-meaning white people in the production of institutional racism. Trapagneir (2006) goes on to demand that, just because participation in structures of domination are often unintentional, this does not mean that those structures are inevitable or unavoidable.

These questions of how agency develops within an evolving institutional structure repeatedly emerged in this case study, and answering these questions within the scope of this
narrative contributes to theory. Throughout the study, the reader encountered several types of fresh acts, defined as something new being developed through agency that shifts the institutional structure in some way. *Discursive fresh acts* were described as occurring when something new is articulated by agents within a structure that alters or shifts the structure; *structural fresh acts* were described as occurring when the larger institutional structure shifts, which provides opportunities for agents within that structure to draw upon new sets of agency and choice; *intrapersonal fresh acts* were described occurring when individual agents within an institutional structure reflectively reframe their potential agency and choice; and *interpersonal fresh acts* were described as occurring when individual agents within an institutional structure form new relationships with other agents, which serves to shift the structure and provide new types of agency and choice.

A detailed application of these nuanced types of fresh acts was shared throughout this case study. In particular, the reader encountered the historical timeline of service learning at the University of Cincinnati as being punctuated by these different types of fresh acts. Each of the different types of fresh acts has served to fundamentally shift the larger evolving structure of the program and will continue to do so.

**Contributions to Higher Education**

This study does not purport to be generalizable to other programs, institutions, and/or cultures in higher education because the past, the present, and the potential futures of this story are unique to service learning in Cincinnati. What this study does attempt to do is illustrate the importance of narratives in making sense of service learning at the University of Cincinnati, the usefulness of a structurational perspective, and perhaps the gravity of what is the heart-and-soul of service learning—an action research philosophy that privileges relationships over rankings.
For this reason, while not generalizable to other institutions, the findings of this case study are perhaps applicable to understanding how stakeholders at other institutions in higher education can make fresh acts to collectively shift their respective universities in positive ways.

Bruner (1987) suggests that “life as led is inseparable from life as told, or more bluntly, a life is not ‘how it was’ but how it is interpreted and reinterpreted, told and retold” (p. 31). With structuration’s critical emphasis on the duality of agency within structure, we are better able to move from merely describing programmatic evolutions to prescribing different courses of action relative to them, and this can be accomplished through collectively living and telling that collective story. The key seems to be found in collectively making sense and re-structuring an institutional reality that benefits many types of stakeholders, a perspective that can be understood by drawing from Giddens’s (1984; 1990) structurational perspective, Putnam and Stohl’s (1990; 1996) treatment of the bona fide group perspective, Bormann’s (1985) theory of rhetorical vision, and McPhee’s (1985) work focusing on structure and decision-making.

In his book, *Imagining the University*, Barnett (2013) writes:

Ideas of the university in the public domain are hopelessly impoverished. “Impoverished” because they are unduly confined to a small range of possible conceptions of the university; and “hopelessly” because they are too often without hope, taking the form of either a hand-wringing over the current state of the university or merely offering a defense of the emerging nature of “the entrepreneurial university”. Against this background, the questions arise as to what, if any, are the prospects for imaging the university anew? What role might the imagination play here? What are its limits and what might be its potential for bringing forward new forms of the university? This then is the
problem before us: the problem of the place of imagination in developing the idea—*and*
the institutional form—of the university. (p. 1)

In this dissertation, *Critical Curriculum and Just Community: Making Sense of Service Learning in Cincinnati*, one pressing question that continues to go unanswered is whether higher education is a means to prepare students for the market place or geared toward making the world a better place, as one pathway leans toward the *capitalistic culture* of the west and the other toward *social justice*. My fear is that most of higher education is focused on the former, geared toward creating cogs for the capitalistic machinery of the consumption culture, but we—higher education—can do better, and perhaps we can do so by understanding the ongoing structuration of higher education, including how its stakeholders (from the campus and the community) are or are not empowered as agents within it.

Continuing down the path of creating alternative and imagined universities, Barnett (2013) writes:

Sir Ken Robinson has convincingly argued that education kills our creativity and imagination, but this is not a foregone conclusion; we can change this…Imagination is about continuous renewal, experimentation, reinventions, exploration, adaptation, creation and all of this in contexts that are relevant to those engaged in the process. It is not about maintaining the status quo, but about continuously questioning and rethinking the status quo. It is imagining what a better future would be like then taking control over the future, through imagination, rigorous dedication to humility—a feasible utopia. (p. 194)

There is more to this story untold than told, but this is the case with all stories. Despite anchoring the story of service learning in Cincinnati to the historical timeline of cooperative
education at the University of Cincinnati, it is clear now that the evolution of service learning in Cincinnati has not at all followed a linear path. What is occurring now is not only impacted by the past, but it frames the past in certain and specific ways. Likewise, what will occur tomorrow is intimately linked to what is going on now, leaving open many possible versions of service learning in Cincinnati in the future.

In his book, *Invisible Cities*, the author Italo Calvino (1972) alludes to the non-linear strange loop of interconnecting the past, the present, and the future, writing:

Marco enters a city; he sees someone in a square living a life or an instant that could be his; he could now be in that man's place, if he had stopped in time, long ago; or if, long ago, at a crossroads, instead of taking one road he had taken the opposite one, and after long wandering he had come to be in the place of that man in the square. By now, from that real or hypothetical past of his, he is excluded; he cannot stop; he must go on to another city, where another of his pasts awaits him, or something perhaps that had been a possible future of his and is now someone else’s present. Futures not achieved are only branches of the past: dead branches. (pp. 24–25)

Taking this idea of narrating histories and futures a bit further, Theado (2013) shares that the narrative process and its implications for history-making and story-telling can lead to differently traced histories of the past and, just as importantly, to alternate and more socially just futures. In line with this thinking, this narrative has been punctuated by moments of rupture—portions of the narrative that were unnerving—as well as those portions that were self- and other-empowering. Continuing down this non-linear path, the following section will detail an imagined future of service learning at the University of Cincinnati, conceptualized here as a summer-long opportunity for the campus and the community to connect.
An Imagined Future of Cincinnati Summer

Using the perspectives of Giddens (1984; 1990), Putnam and Stohl (1990; 1996), Bormann (1985), and McPhee (1985), research conducted by Howell, Brock, and Hauser (1998) focused on the collaborative program known as the “Detroit Summer Project.” I offer the idea that their work may act as a model for how the University of Cincinnati’s service learning program can move collaboratively toward a story in which many will find their voice, an approach that will begin in Cincinnati in July of 2017. During the Detroit Summer Project, scholars, business leaders, not-for-profit and community leaders, students, parents, and youth all worked collectively to re-structure a polyphonic story, which will be the key driver for fresh acts related to service learning in Cincinnati moving forward and beginning in July of 2017.

Detroit Summer was successful because, as Gawlikowski (2003) argues, collaborative work requires mutual respect, an inclination to understand others, and the eagerness to acknowledge that there will be alternative framings of the story. The following quote put forth by Howell, Brock, and Hauser (1998) offers a good degree of optimism for service learning in Cincinnati this summer:

Our inspiring experience with Detroit Summer teaches us that people who are very different from each other can find ways to successfully combine their energies to achieve a common goal. Acting together, as a group, members of Detroit Summer created an ideology and rhetorical vision and developed structures and strategies to bring it to life. The lessons learned from this group serves, hopefully, as an inspiration to other bona-fide groups. (pp. 105–106)

They go on to write:
Detroit Summer’s goals are both more and less modest. Building a community is, in many ways, vastly harder than fixing a single immensely difficult problem. But they are trying, and in an era when cheap cynicism too often passes for sophistication, we have learned that…we really can do anything when the community comes together…and it is extremely fun, too. (p. 104)

During Detroit Summer, the following components were deemed necessary for successful collaboration. First, during Detroit Summer, scholars, community members, and activists had to develop a shared ideology to serve as a guide in making decisions that influenced the structure and strategy of the group. For the University of Cincinnati’s service learning program, this could begin with constructing a shared ideology through the philosophy of collective impact, making the very crucial interpersonal fresh act of inviting the uninvited to the table.

Second, during Detroit Summer, flexible and voluntary participation in the work was a must, which included allowing for new participants to help the movement grow and evolve. For this to be successful in Cincinnati, all who participate must do so only on a voluntary basis, and the collective impact must ensure a continual outreach program to garner new stakeholders. Once the historically uninvited—community leaders, public health and safety officials, and normal citizens—are provided voice, they will be able to make intrapersonal and interpersonal fresh acts, shifting the structure of the institution in ways that are reciprocally beneficial.

Third, strategies consistent with Detroit Summer’s collective impact ideology needed to be designed to create and sustain participant’s commitment to the group’s goals and cohesion. As such, different university stakeholders who participate in the program must always have ability to add to, and at times have power to amend, the group’s goals through discursive fresh acts. The goals will change and will need to be amended as problems are continually solved and new
problems are born. Thus, new and old Cincinnati Summer stakeholders must feel that they are continually providing input during such changes, staking out their claim of agency within the evolving structure.

Fourth, for Detroit Summer to be successful over time, the group needed to create a permanent structure for core leadership. For the University of Cincinnati, the members of this core leadership will need to undoubtably change as new problems are broached, all the while maintaining the basic structure for group decision-making, but it is important that agents make the structural fresh act of creating a leadership team that is empowered, accountable, and critically reflective.

Fifth, this permanent structure of Detroit Summer had to be in balance with the necessity for ideological flexibility as the group’s ideals and goals evolved. As stated above, all voices in the University of Cincinnati’s service learning program must have the chance to be heard during Cincinnati Summer. Solving old problems and confronting new problems will undoubtedly call for new voices from different walks of life—the previously uninvited agents—with different experiential backgrounds to come to the forefront.

Finally, participation in Detroit Summer was successful to the degree that the collaborative work manifested a collective history, common ideology, and vision for the future. As I write this, the University of Cincinnati is manifesting a collective history, but we have for too long neglected the uninvited in the telling of that story and of co-living the story as it is being told. It is my hope that the imagined Cincinnati Summer will, in part, help to provide a common ideology and vision for the future that will garner a collective voice that is more mutually beneficial and prosperous for both the campus and the community.
Conclusion


Each day I go into the fields
to see what is growing
and what remains to be done.

It is always the same thing: nothing
is growing; everything needs to be done.

Plow, harrow, disc, water, pray
till my bones ache and hands rub
blood-raw with honest labor—
all that grows is the slow
intransigent intensity of need.

I have sown my seed on soil
guaranteed by poverty to fail.

But I don't complain—except
to passersby who ask me why
I work such barren earth.

They would not understand me
if I stooped to lift a rock
and hold it like a child, or laughed,
or told them it is their poverty
I labor to relieve. For them,
I complain. A farmer of dreams
knows how to pretend. A farmer of dreams
knows what it means to be patient.

Each day I go into the fields.

Why farming? I have asked myself this question many times throughout the months and months of telling this story. While trying to make sense of service learning in Cincinnati, I suppose that the farming metaphor was an easy way to navigate the strange loop of dissertating; it was a way to organize my thinking and share the story with you, the reader. But the plowing and the seeding of the growing fields, and the droughts and the dying of crops—these events did not pause when the storytelling began, nor were the actions done by me alone. Rather, and in a very interesting way that I find myself trying to understand today, the writing about farming service learning in Cincinnati has been intimately connected to the act of farming service learning in Cincinnati.

I have found myself taking notes while sitting on the metaphorical tractor, often unsure if I would be farming the next day. For some time, I even began to imagine stepping off the tractor, and handing over the plow, the drag, the digging fork, and the draw hoe to someone else. This thought of giving up the farm, relinquishing the yoke to another, was a poignant moment of felt difficulty for which I am eternally grateful. This moment enabled an intrapersonal fresh act—a rethinking of what it would take to effectively and efficiently farm the service learning grounds in Cincinnati without my identity being at the center of the work. Perhaps this was the key finding of this case study.

In hindsight, it is easy for me to see that for the majority of my tenure in this position—first as Associate Director of Academic-Community Partnerships, then as Director of Community-Engaged Learning, then as Director of the Center for Service Learning and Civic
Engagement, then for a short time as simply Assistant Professor Sharp, and now as Program Director of SL@UC—the agency I enacted and fresh acts within structure were mostly as an individual farmer, perpetually asking why so few were paying much attention to what I was doing. But this was no one’s fault but my own. I had donned the ego of the service learning leader, loaded myself down with the requisite tools, and exuded a sense of foolish pride in my toil. But I failed most times to meaningfully engage others. Quite frankly, I neglected to give others much reason to pay attention to the farm and my work on it. I was selfish, but in the worst kind of self-martyrdom kind of selfishness.

For too many years in this role, I had wedded myself to the idea that curriculum was the driver of service learning success, but this strange loop that I find myself in today has made it clear that curriculum—while critical—is not enough. This, another moment of felt difficulty, has provided an opportunity for me to understand that the fields are not mine, and they never were really mine. Rather, I have come to understand that the fields are ours, and they always have been.

The fields actually belong to the many faculty, staff members, administrators, students, educational partners, and the historically uninvited community members that service learning is designed to nourish. Certainly, I can continue to enact leadership, agency, and fresh acts within these multi-faceted relationships between the campus and the community, sometimes supporting existing structures and sometimes opposing existing structures and creating anew, but I have come to learn the very important lesson that the work is lonely only if my agency allows it to be.

As I conclude this study, at least for the time being, I have started to realize the simple ingredient that I have ignored for too long when trying to make sense of service learning in Cincinnati. I have failed to imagine how things could and should be, and have instead focused
on, and reacted to, how things are. The writing of this dissertation has reminded me that the efforts moving forward can create a *just* community, as the title implies, but only insofar as I am continually reminded, and am consequently able to remind others, that the many people that are tied to the university of Cincinnati, particularly those who have been historically ignored, must be empowered, must be able to do fresh acts, and must be part of the larger structure. Anything less than empowering others, giving the uninvited a seat at the university table, will result in more of the same crop and growing fields that will require more and more artificial fertilization. We must continually be restructuring away from, and out of, systems of domination perpetuated through silos created by higher education, and this can be done by the seemingly-powerless intentionally collaborating with others, both powerful and powerless, working toward an imagined greater good that is mutually nourishing and reciprocal.

This is best said by bell hooks (2003) who writes, “To build community requires vigilant awareness of the work we must continually do to undermine all the socialization that leads us to behave in ways that perpetuate domination” (p. 36), and it is argued here that we have all that we need within the confines of Greater Cincinnati, and perhaps beyond. But we need to structure cooperation and collaboration befitting a successful and prosperous community. After all, we are just that, are we not, just a community? And if we are not, if we are only living a story of isolated silos, let us imagine that we are something more. That is, let us imagine ourselves as a *just community*. 
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