

(E)RACING SERVICE-LEARNING AS CRITICAL PEDAGOGY: RACE MATTERS

DISSERTATION

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By

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ABSTRACT

Service-learning is an experiential pedagogy connecting academic learning objectives with active engagement in work addressing community needs and issues. In the current moment, rationales for its use and growth center around 20+ years of societal frustration with poor academic performance and perceived irrelevance of educational institutions throughout the K-16 system (Boyer, 1996). Service-learning as an educational pedagogy and a tool for advancing civic engagement has flourished in this historical and social context. Its literature and research teem with stories and promises of personal, and sometimes, institutional transformation. Despite the wealth of information on program growth and positive student outcomes, service-learning has not been subjected to much theoretical critique (Butin, 2007). A “victory narrative” has resulted and has obscured other important issues in our collective understanding of this “transformative” pedagogy. One such issue is the silence that exists within this narrative about the experiences of people of color who are both underrepresented in service-learning’s program and research participation rates (Butin, 2005a; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Swaminathan, 2007). Race and class have received some amount of attention but are constructs typically examined through the lenses of white students and white researchers (Green, 2001, 2003). A troubling lack of critique alongside complicated outcomes

benefiting individual, largely white students and little understanding of larger communal and societal benefit as evidenced by an ever-widening wealth gap suggests that the claims offered by victory narratives around service-learning are insufficient.

The purposes of this critical qualitative research was to explore the ways in which racially underrepresented college student “mentors” at a predominantly white institution and their African-American, urban high school “mentees” from struggling socioeconomic backgrounds are impacted by their service-learning experiences. Specifically, I am interested in how discourse shapes the ways in which “impact” within service-learning is experienced and articulated. Multiple methodologies, instrumental case study, critical race, and Foucauldian discourse were used to collect data through in-depth interviews of college and high school students, document analysis of reflective writing, and participant observation notes. This data was analyzed three times using three distinct methodologies to elicit three “reads” of the data. The results were three very different stories that illuminate the vested interests and competing discourses operating in this service-learning experience.

The results speak against a “neat” read of the ways these students of color experienced service-learning as a critical pedagogy. There was some evidence to suggest that this service-learning experience described as working “within” community, was an important reason for the college and high school students to academically persist. The course was racially and socioeconomically homogeneous in its demographic makeup and provided the college students of color a safe release space from the stressors and pressures operating at their predominantly white campus. However, the students were

very reluctant to join “service” activities or even consider this course and experience “service-learning” because of the ways in which they perceived community service as a “white, do-gooder” thing, giving some insight into why these students had not participated in other service-learning courses or programs on campus. Finally, discourses were analyzed in order to interrogate the ways the college students performed themselves in the service-learning and mentoring contexts. Characterized as “disengaged” in the classroom and as mentors, this discourse analysis worked to discern the complex issues working in the lives of these college students of color that were completely untouched by service-learning leading to questions about whether and how critical service-learning lives up to its transformational promises.

This study offers a glimpse into the complexity of a pedagogy that is too often treated as a “good thing” in and of itself. Through the candor and generosity of the participants in this study, highly conflicting understandings of service-learning emerge that speak against the neat and tidy packaging of service-learning in both the research and in the pedagogical design of service-learning. The goal of this study was never to simply dismiss service-learning but to delve into the complexities and honor the participants’ wisdom. It is my hope that this study achieves this end and speaks with a conflicted though hopeful voice about service-learning and its potential.

Dedicated to the circle of women who make my world a better place through their
integrity, strength, kindness, and loving spirit.

Emma Carol Brown

Elizabeth Grace Brown

Donna Beth Gilbride

Carol Ann Riley

May you always know that you are loved forever and like crazy...

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“You must do the thing you think you cannot do.”

---Eleanor Roosevelt

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CHAPTER 1:
WORKING THE RUINS OF SERVICE-LEARNING AS SOCIAL JUSTICE
PEDAGOGY: WE ARE BETTER THAN THIS

INTRODUCTION:

Higher education and service-learning: Complicating post-critical foundations

"My experience in government is that when things are non-controversial and beautifully coordinated, there is not much going on."

John F. Kennedy, 35th President of the United States (1961-1963)

"Sacred cows make very poor gladiators."

Nikki Giovanni, Poet (1943-present)

"We are better than this."

Barack Obama, U.S. Senator, Democratic Presidential Candidate (1961-present)

Service-learning is an experiential pedagogy connecting academic learning objectives with active engagement in work addressing community needs and issues. In the current moment, rationales for its use and growth center around 20+ years of societal frustration with poor academic performance and perceived irrelevance of educational institutions throughout the K16 system (Boyer, 1996). There is also a growing demand for education to prepare committed citizens who are equipped to address persistent social problems. Service-learning as an educational pedagogy and a tool for advancing civic engagement has flourished in this historical and social context. Its literature and research teem with stories and promises of personal, and sometimes, institutional transformation.

Its popularity has grown across K-16 as is evidenced by the rise of organizations like Campus Compact in higher education and NYLC at the K-12 level who provide resource coordination and advocacy for service-learning. Despite the wealth of information on program growth and positive student outcomes, service-learning has not been subjected to much theoretical critique (Butin, 2007). A “victory narrative” has resulted and has obscured other important issues in our collective understanding of this “transformative” pedagogy. One such issue is the silence that exists within this narrative about the experiences of people of color who are both underrepresented in service-learning’s program and research participation rates (Butin, 2005; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Swaminathian, 2007). Race and class have received some amount of attention but are constructs typically examined through the lenses of white students and white researchers (Green, 2001, 2003).

The calls for future research in service-learning are related to placing a sharper focus on issues of race, class, and inequality (Chesler & Scalera, 2000; Jones & Abes, 2004). It is within this call that this study is situated. The research on race and service-learning is dominated by white students’ engagement with difference. Civic attitude or engagement research “does not give us very much guidance on these delicate and complex matters of racial attitudes, structures, and behaviors” (Chesler & Scalera, p. 22). Thinking about what we mean by terms like “politically engaged,” “civic engagement,” “citizenship” and their relationship to service-learning creates a confusing picture. The picture becomes more complex when we ask Dan Butin’s (2007) critical questions about engagement “for whom,” “to what ends,” and “from what racialized and

dominant/subordinate standpoints?” What happens when race and class do matter to the students in the course because of their location to the lived reality of unearned disadvantage conferred because of race and class standpoint? What happens when the students in the course experience the border crossing phenomenon in every other course except the service-learning course in which they find similarity and comfort? How does that speak to and against a white, middle class perspective on service-learning and its political, racialized projects?

A similar victory narrative exists in the mentoring field in which our understanding has been informed by a theoretically weak and one-sided understanding (Colley, 2003). Race and class in the mentoring context are typically conceptualized as “issues” or “reasons” for mentoring and assumed to be characteristics relevant to those being mentored, as is congruent with a colorblind discourse that dominates both service-learning and mentoring.

These victory narratives in both service-learning and mentoring have benefited from the dominant community service discourse in this country that focuses on the individual, her/his deficiencies, potential, and development (Pritchard, 2002; Radest, 1993). This discourse is explicitly apolitical and is congruent with the neutral, objective, and essentializing discourse dominating schooling and education (Bowles & Gintis, 1976). Mentoring and service-learning have experienced a growth in popularity and proliferation of programs and resources due in no uncertain terms from these dominant discourses largely shielded from critique (Butin, 2005; Colley, 2003; Niesz, 2008). But while there has been an expansion of these programs, both service-learning and

mentoring are negatively impacted by this discourse because of the way in which their transformative potential is impeded. A troubling lack of critique alongside complicated outcomes benefiting individual, largely white students and little understanding of larger communal or societal benefit as evidenced by an ever-widening wealth gap suggests that the claims offered by victory narratives around both mentoring and service-learning are insufficient. This study moves towards investigating this paradox and being, as McCall (2005) urged qualitative work to be in her theorizing of intersectionality, “accountable to complexity” (p. 17).

This study situates such complexities as resources in interrogating these discourses and resulting silences. It will foreground the voices and experiences of college students of color who are underrepresented on their campus and are mentoring local high school students of color from an academically and economically struggling urban school district. This mentoring is happening through a year-long service-learning course on “theories of mentoring” offered through the college’s communications department. In this research project, service-learning is treated as a critical pedagogy in which its transformational promises are scrutinized. As such, critical race theory (CRT), a theoretical framework constructed by scholars of color, is used to shape the lens through which these students’ experiences are interpreted (i.e. Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller & Thomas, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2000). Critical Foucauldian discourse analysis informed by Michel Foucault (1972) is also used to discern the elements of the dominant discourse in service-learning and mentoring. Students of color talk to and against this dominant discourse in order to elicit a more

theoretically rich understanding of this popular pedagogy moving toward more effective practices.

Context of Study

The context of this study was a year-long service-learning course over three academic quarters that was part of a larger mentoring initiative between the small, private, suburban, predominantly white liberal arts college and a nearby large urban school district. The goal of this mentoring initiative, lead by a well-respected, long-time faculty member at the college, was to create a community of college, high school, and middle school students through peer mentoring that would educate and inspire the pre-college youth through relationships and reflective writing that took shape in the form of a “Writer’s Diary.”

A key component of this mentoring initiative was the academically credit-bearing service-learning course that met weekly entitled, “Theories of Mentoring.” The class meetings included both the college and high school students meeting in a seminar format for two hours, once a week to talk about theories of mentoring and personal development. These weekly course sessions also functioned as mentoring sessions between the college and high school students. The class meetings were followed by meals in the college cafeteria. Periodically these class sessions would happen at the high school. Outside of this course meeting, group mentoring sessions happened several times throughout the year with three different middle schools.

The instructor of this course was a deeply committed and charismatic white male who has single-handedly forged an important but extremely difficult partnership with this

particularly urban high school and the larger urban district. He was worked with this district for 20+ years and through his interest and relationships with the school created this service-learning course and larger mentoring initiative. He heavily recruits college students into the mentoring course and works year-round with the high school, getting to know the students and their families through summer programs and trips throughout the year. He is deeply loved by both the college and high school students as is evidenced in this study's participant reflections.

This instructor was extremely generous with me and interested in partnering with my research project in order to strengthen his program. I was invited to be part of as much of the mentoring initiative and service-learning course as my schedule would allow. As a result, my engagement with this project was broad and deep due to his willingness and amazing relationships with the high school and college students. I participated in weekly class meetings as well as mentoring sessions with middle school students. The design of this project was created in consultation with him. We decided early on to keep the focus of the dissertation study on the college and high school students. This was due to the fact that the middle schools' commitment to the project was sporadic, though enthusiastic. It was difficult to know when we would have college and high school students mentoring the middle school students and could not count on those meetings with any real frequency. The substantive interaction and relationships were between the high school students, college students, and the instructor. It is important to note however that the focus of the inquiry here is on the experiences of the college students and their mentoring relationships with the high school students. The

high school students played a critical role in the service-learning course and mentoring initiative and, as such, their voices significantly inform this study.

Theoretical Frameworks

The combination of theoretical frameworks informing this study are important to delineate in order to understand the way in which the findings and conclusions of this study were drawn. The goal of this research project was to complicate service-learning and its claims in order to actualize its promises for ALL people. Given this interest in voice and the racialized construction of the service-learning story, critical theory is an overarching framework used to inform the examination of discourse, pedagogy, and race and provides the guiding theoretical structure for this study.

Critical Theory

Critical theory informs all aspects of this study insofar as it offers a view of the world from which to examine discourses of service-learning and the experiences of students of color. Critical theory stands on three important assumptions attributed to Karl Marx. Despite talk of freedom and justice, Western societies are unequal and social class, race, and economic inequities are a reality. Ideology operates to obscure this reality by perpetuating a view of the social world as inevitable and normal. Critical theory's purpose is to enact change through understanding this phenomenon (Brookfield, 2004, p. viii). The foundations of critical theory from the Frankfurt School to Paolo Freire and into the U.S. present-day context are traced in the next chapter, offering a foundation with which to view service-learning as a critical pedagogy in service of its

transformative promises as well as a racialized view of critical theory, articulated by critical scholars of color and commonly known as critical race theory (CRT).

Foucauldian Discourse Theory

This study employs a critical view of “Discourse” articulated through the work of Michel Foucault (1972). Discourse is viewed as statements in their socially classed, gendered, and raced contexts that carry weight because of the way in which these statements are deployed in order to shape our sense of reality and truth. Discourse is significant to this study because of the ways in which statements form bodies of knowledge, which in turn inform our sense of the “real” (Foucault; McHoul & Grace, 1997; Mills, 1997; Phillips & Hardy, 2002). As members of the social world in which discourse is produced and operates, we participate in discourse’s construction, dominance, shifts, and interruptions.

The discourse dominating service-learning practice and research is characterized by language about positive transformation and service-learning as an unquestioned social and pedagogical good (Butin, 2003). Viewing service-learning through a critical discourse lens offers the opportunity to speak both within and against the dominant discourse, seeing this pedagogy in its raced and classed context through the perspectives of students of color. Students of color are situated on the margins of a colorblind discourse and practice in service-learning. They are uniquely positioned through, what Gloria Ladson-Billings (2000) calls, “double-vision,” to name dominant and potentially marginalizing elements of service-learning’s discourse and practice while also perceiving its promises.

Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy is the enactment of critical theory in the educational context and is an attempt to see schools as agents of maintaining the status quo, reproducing and transforming divisions along race, class, and economic lines (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Darder, Baltodano & Torres, 2003; Freire, 1971). While mostly viewed otherwise, service-learning has been articulated through a critical lens and by a few in the field of higher education as a “critical pedagogy” insofar as it enables cultural critique, reflection upon the world, and action for social change (e.g. Boyle-Baise & Efiom, 2000; Butin, 2005c; Hayes & Cuban, 1996; Jones, 2002; Kahne & Westheimer, 1999; Morton, 1995; O’Grady, 2000). Carolyn O’Grady (2000), for example, was one of the first to articulate the ties between the critical roots of multicultural education and the promises of service-learning as a critical pedagogy. She explicitly warned service-learning practitioners to work against the disconnect between critical pedagogy as enacted in multicultural education and service-learning in order to avoid advancing the potentially oppressive results of engaging students of privilege and resources in marginalized communities with lesser access to resources in the name of “education.” Hayes & Cuban (1996) theorized the “border crossing” occurring in service-learning and argued that such crossing and complexities are best negotiated in service-learning treated as a critical pedagogy. Doing so enables the goal of this “crossing” as moving beyond voyeurism and into the complexities and actualization of social change. This study is situated within this view of service-learning and seeks to critique whether or not it delivers and on whose behalf.

The next chapter explores the tradition of critical pedagogy in a view of service-learning's location within its promises and with questions about its enactments.

Critical Race Theory

A key to achieving such critique is through a lens informed by people who participate in the structure but stand outside the dominant voice and discourse. In the collegiate service-learning context, students of color are well suited to offer such critique because of the ways in which their voices and experiences are rarely considered (Swaminathian, 2007; Verjee, 2005). Critical race theory is an articulation of critical theory by scholars of color that enables one to apply this very analysis. Critical race theory was fueled by critical scholars of color and their desire to move race and systemic racial inequality to the center of critical scholarship (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller & Thomas, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Its interests, while not intended to be dogmatic in nature, are to understand white supremacy and the ways in which colorblind stances serve to maintain the subordination of people of color. It is also not enough to just understand this dynamic. Congruent with its foundation in critical theory, the goal is to change the system. CRT has been applied to education, most notably through the work of Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate (1995), in their groundbreaking article, "Towards a critical race theory of education," as well as Laurence Parker, Donna Deyhle, and Sofia Villenas' (1999) edited volume *Race Is...Race Isn't: Critical race theory and Qualitative Studies in Education*. These works among others have served to provide a critique of education in order to "offer a way to understand how ostensibly race-neutral

structures in education--knowledge, merit, objectivity, and "good education" in fact help form and police the boundaries of white supremacy and racism (Parker, et al., 1999, p. ii).

Important to this study is a critique resting upon the experiences of students of color and a desire to foreground the systemically racist contexts in which service-learning operates and serves to both disrupt and perpetuate. CRT offers a lens to illuminate the perpetuation of power imbalances and white supremacy in service-learning and allows this study to explore the limits of what we know about the transformative potential AND the complicity of this pedagogy. The next chapter explores the power of CRT and its connections with this study that are important to understand in light of the findings and the implications of this project.

Purpose and Design of Study

Purpose of Study

I conducted a critical, qualitative investigation into the ways in which racially underrepresented college student “mentors” at a predominantly white institution and their African-American, urban high school “mentees” from struggling socioeconomic backgrounds are impacted by their service-learning experiences. Specifically, I am interested in how discourse shapes the ways in which “impact” within service-learning is experienced and articulated.

Guiding Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study and, adhering to the spirit of emergent design, were questions shaped and molded as the research experience and data unfolded.

1. What discourses do racially underrepresented college students use in how they articulate, perceive, and perform the impact of the service-learning and mentoring experience?
2. How can the students' perceptions, articulations, and performances in service-learning be used as a resource to interrogate how the dominant community service discourse is interrupted, sustained, and redefined?
3. How does redefining the analytic lens illuminate alternative "reads" of the impact of this pedagogy and what kinds of discourses become possible as a result?

Significance of Study

Two dominant trends in the higher education service-learning research inform the significance of this study. The first is a lack of voice from students of color. "Student" in the research has been race-neutral and, upon closer scrutiny, refers largely to white students (Butin, 2005; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Green, 2001, 2003; Hayes & Cuban. 1996; Jones, 2002; Jones & Hill, 2001; Nieto, 2000). The second trend is a lack of interrogation of the discourses that shape the researchers' analytic lenses as well as participant and the researcher behavior and perceptions in the service-learning context. This study seeks to address this critical gap in our understanding by foregrounding the voices of students of color and employing critical discourse and critical race frameworks that are absent from critiques of service-learning (Butin, 2005; Verjee, 2006). Doing so offers new insight and different potential for deepening our understanding of service-learning and moving closer towards actualizing its promise for ALL people.

Research Design

The epistemological assumptions guiding this study were grounded in a critical, constructivist paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Lather, 1994; Popkewitz, 1999). This paradigmatic lens brings social, political, and economic factors to the fore in an effort to understand the ways in which systems of inequality shape our sense of what constitutes reality, truth, and knowledge. This study views service-learning as an explicitly political pedagogy and seeks to work against the dominant, colorblind, race-neutral discourse that promises transformation without an interrogation of its terms and conflicting realities.

This study used a diversity of methodologies in order to interrogate different “reads” of the data and how the deep investments of a lens inform the ways in which the same experience is perceived. As a result, three methodologies were critical in shaping three distinct analyses of the data. Instrumental Case Study Methodology (Stake, 2000) was used to examine this particular case in order to understand the ways in which external stakeholder interests shaped “the story” on service-learning outcomes. Critical Race Methodology (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002) was used to elicit a second “read” of the data by foregrounding the voices of students of color in a critique of how racialized oppression operated in this highly popular, white-dominated pedagogy. Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (Foucault, 1972; Phillips & Hardy, 2002) was the third methodology used to examine the discourses shaping the students’ experience and the ways in which the students were impacted as a result.

Overview of chapters

Chapter 1 has provided an introduction to the theoretical frameworks and qualitative methods that guided this study. The following exploration is situated within a view of service-learning as an explicitly political practice, a literature that speaks with a largely celebratory, white voice and offers little social critique, and a silence on the part of people of color regarding their experiences and perceptions of this highly popular pedagogy and its socially transformative intentions.

Chapter 2 will explore the critical frameworks upon which this study is constructed. Critical theory is delineated, as it is an overarching theoretical perspective that shapes the subsequent theorization of discourse, pedagogy, and race that inform this research. Foucauldian discourse, critical pedagogy, and critical race theory are explored with an eye towards their application to education, service-learning, and this study. The service-learning and mentoring research is examined with a goal of situating this study of the experiences of students of color. Finally, there are two dissertation studies and two published journal articles that are most central to this study and they are explored in depth for their contributions to the questions and approaches that follow.

Chapter 3 will outline the research design and methods used to conduct this qualitative investigation. Most notable is the explanation of the three methodologies employed in this study that were central to the three distinct analyses of the data. Case Study Methodology (Stake, 2000), Critical Race Methodology (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002), and Critical Discourse Analysis (Foucault, 1972; Phillips & Hardy, 2002) guided three distinct “reads” of the data that served to explore the ways in which the deep

investments of a particular analytic lens can shape the story that is told. In this case there are three distinct stories about how these students of color perceived and experienced service-learning. The participants in this study are introduced and pseudonyms are given in order to respect confidentiality.

Chapter 4 will offer a “thrice told tale” (Wolf, 1992). Each “read” of the data is explored in depth using the voices and reflections of the high school and college students. While college students are the overall focus of the study, the role of the high school students as “mentees” in the program’s design and co-participants in the construction of and participation in the norms and behaviors within this service-learning experience was important and served as a critical narrative against which the college students’ could talk. The first “read” of the data applies a Case Study Methodology informed by the external interests of the private and governmental funding agencies providing support for the program. The second “read” of the data applies critical race theory to the voices and reflections of the students, offering some insight in to how service-learning was conceptualized and engaged. The third and final “read” of the data is a critical discourse analysis that serves to trouble the neatness of the first reading and the certainty of the second read. What follows is an exploration of the complexities and complicities of service-learning as exemplified through the voices, behaviors, and perceptions of the students of color in this study.

Chapter 5 will posit the implications and conclusions of this study. I take the opportunity to stand within and against the existing service-learning narrative in order to speak out, honor what I have learned, and get started on what needs to be done. The

chapter, entitled, “Taking Freire Seriously,” is a call to push service-learning to reflect AND act on its complicated foundation in critical pedagogy in a way that respects these roots and actualizes its promises in light of experiences of the participants in this study.

Conclusion

This study offers a glimpse into the complexity of a pedagogy that is too often treated as a “good thing” in and of itself. Through the candor and generosity of the participants in this study, highly conflicting understandings of service-learning emerge that speak against the neat and tidy packaging of service-learning in both the research and in the pedagogical design of service-learning. The goal of this study was never to simply dismiss service-learning but to delve into the complexities and to honor the participants’ wisdom. It is my hope that this study achieves this end and speaks with a conflicted though hopeful voice about service-learning and its potential.

CHAPTER 2: COMPLICATING FOUNDATIONS

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature and research relevant to the theoretical ground that provides the base for this study about racially underrepresented college students' experiences in service-learning. This review begins with an overview of critical theory followed by its application to race and education. The chapter then examines the scholarship on mentoring and service-learning in order to identify dominant discourses shaping the ways mentoring and service-learning have been treated in both research and practice. The chapter concludes with a review of the research on college students of color in service-learning paying close attention to any research employing a critical theoretical perspective. Finally, this study will be situated in the apparent gaps illuminated by this review of the literature and research.

Critical Theory

The power in critical theory as this study's theoretical framework lies in its ability to offer, despite its tenuous and always partial claims, "a location for healing" (hooks, 1994, p. 59). Critical theory stands on three Marxist assumptions about how the world is organized and operates which are as follows:

1. Western democracies, despite claims and beliefs in openness are “highly unequal societies in which economic inequity, racism, and class discrimination are empirical realities.”
 2. Ideology and its dissemination are central to the way this arrangement is reproduced and “considered normal, natural, and inevitable.”
 3. Critical theory attempts to understand this in order to change it
- (Brookfield, 2004, p. viii)

Karl Marx and the Western European philosophers following in his tradition, known as the Frankfurt School, articulated a consideration of theory as Critical theory to the extent that a theory’s purpose was emancipation (Bohman, 2008). Given the broad range of human conditions from which one could be emancipated, Critical theory can and has been applied widely, eliciting such frameworks as critical race theory and feminist theory. Marx and the Frankfurt School philosophers, Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse, and Habermas most notably, articulated the emphasis of social inquiry “on human beings as the self-creating producers of their own history and the transformation of contemporary capitalism into a consensual form of social life” (Bohman). Given their historical context of early 20th century Germany and the Frankfurt School’s subsequent flight from Nazi Germany to the United States in the 1940’s, one early articulation of an ideal social life was “real democracy” standing in contrast to other societies. Horkheimer (1982) posited,

A democratic society would be rational, because in it individuals could gain conscious control over social processes that affect them and their life chances. To

the extent that such an aim is possible at all, it required that human beings become producers of their social life in its totality (p. 244).

The problems of a positivist articulation of “real democracy” as articulated by the Frankfurt School, a preoccupation with macro/structural forces and psychoanalytics at the expense of personal agency and meaning, as well as the rise of dogmatic advanced capitalism pushed critical theory to embrace a more dynamic idea of “democracy,” personal agency, and interaction between individual and structure (Bohman, 2008). Jurgen Habermas figures prominently in the development of Critical theory in a post-WWI era. James Bohman characterizes this movement and Habermas in the following:

Habermas argues not only that the demands of advanced capitalism restrict the scope and significance of democracy, but also that the state is “crisis ridden” and unable to solve structural problems of unemployment, economic growth, and environmental destruction. These crisis tendencies open up a space for contestation and deliberation by citizens and their involvement in new social movements (<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/critical-theory>).

An important tool offered by Critical theory is that of ideology critique (Brookfield, 2005). This critique seeks to consider the current socioeconomic system and make visible the ways in which knowledge is inscribed by dominant ideology. This ideology creates “the framework of thought that is used in society to give order and meaning to the social and political world in which we live” (Darder, Baltodano, Torres, 2003, p. 13). Control over these frameworks creates anti-democratic environments in which the elite control common understandings of what constitutes

“knowledge” and “common sense,” naturalizing people’s economic and social places in the world. This socially-constructed knowledge gets perpetuated in social institutions, most relevant to this study are schools, and has the effect of “shoring up” dominant understandings and control over economic and social practices. Critical theory seeks to make oppressive ideology visible in order to raise consciousness and promote social, egalitarian change (McLaren, 2003).

While ideology plays an important role in shaping the status quo, hegemony creates “a process of social control that is carried out through the intellectual and moral leadership of a dominant sociocultural class over subordinate groups” (Darder, et al., 2003, p. 13). If ideology is a framework of thought inscribed by the dominant, hegemony is the process of putting ideology to work, connecting “politics, economics, culture, and pedagogy” (Darder, et al. p. 13). These connections serve to replicate privileged positionality and maintenance of the status quo. As with ideology, Critical theory engages with this concept of hegemony in order to critique the web of dominant power relations and social, political, and cultural arrangements. Understanding hegemony as an ongoing effort to maintain this oppressive web creates opportunity, from a critical perspective, for transgressing these arrangements through resistance and action.

Critical theory has relevance for Foucault’s theory of resistance, which sees power as not only a mode of restriction but also a mode of agency (Foucault, 1972). “It (power) needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression” (p. 61). Critical theory assumes “that all people have the capacity and ability to produce

knowledge and resist domination” (Darder, et al. 2003, p. 14). The belief in resistance and power being employed by the marginalized through practices of resistance is the core of hope in Critical theory and informs its use in this study.

One of the important vehicles for resisting, raising awareness, and the development what Paulo Freire (1971) termed, “conscientization,” or critical social consciousness, is “praxis.” Praxis is “an ongoing interaction of reflection, dialogue, and action” (Darder, 2003, p.15). Critical theory seeks to integrate theory and practice in order to increase their transformative potentials. Exercising power and agency through resistance and critiquing ideology and hegemony in order to transgress happens through praxis. Action without reflection and reflection without action lead to circumstances in which theory becomes irrelevant or oppressive and action serves to further one’s own, unexamined ends (Freire, 1971). Paulo Freire and Donaldo Macedo (2003) argue that “consciousness is generated through the social practice in which we participate” (p. 354) and inherent in this belief is that reflection and contemplation, alongside action, are a necessary implication of critical theory.

This study gazes upon service-learning and the experiences of students of color through a lens strongly shaped by Critical theory. The dominant service-learning discourse has heralded this pedagogy as transformative for students. What would it mean to view this discourse from a lens that sought to tease out the impact of a dominant voice? What are the ideological assumptions operating and whose interest is being served? These questions have been asked for decades from a critical perspective and

Critical Foucauldian Discourse and Critical pedagogy are important theoretical perspectives stemming from critical theory and inform this study.

Foucauldian Perspective on Discourse

A review of a wide variety of literature on discourse quickly reveals the futility of capturing the essence of the term, “discourse.” Most generally, discourse appears to encompass the domain of communication” (Mills, 1997, p.5). “Classic” and “contemporary” approaches to discourse treat discourse as language and seek to discern the underlying rules and procedures for conversation and written text in their “naturally occurring state” (McHoul & Grace, 1997, p. 26). A Foucauldian approach to discourse treats the same spoke and written text as socially situated, inextricably linked with dominance, and governed by rules, norms, and structures that mediate the way in which something like community service is conceptualized, and in turn, reproduced. Differing from classic and contemporary treatments of discourse, Foucauldian discourse analysis “reads ‘naturally occurring’ texts as socially classed, gendered, and historically located” (McHoul & Grace, p. 28).

Given my interest in race and systemic inequality, a discussion of the discourse shaping how the United States has valued, engaged in, and promoted community service and service-learning is best informed by a Foucauldian approach to discourse grounded in cultural and critical theory. Sara Mills (1997) offers a clear response, from a critical Foucauldian perspective, to the question of “what is discourse.” She states:

A discourse is not a disembodied collage of statements, but groupings of utterances or sentences, statements, which are enacted within a social context,

which are determined by that social context and which contribute to the way in which that social context continues its existence. Institutions and social contexts, therefore, play an important determining role in the development, maintenance, and circulation of discourse (p. 11).

Michel Foucault (1972) resists “gradually reducing the rather fluctuating meaning of the word ‘discourse,’” but offers additions to its meanings, “treating it sometimes as a general domain of all statements” (p. 80). Statements are at the heart of discourse and can be thought of as those written or spoken words that carry weight and shape the way something, like service-learning, is conceptualized (Foucault; Mills, 1997). These are statements that carry some effect in forming bodies of knowledge, which in turn produce our senses of “reality” (McHoul & Grace, 1997; Phillips & Hardy, 2002).

An analysis of discourse, or collections of statements that formulate a body of knowledge that shapes our notions of truth, is meant to allow us to “explore how the socially produced ideas and objects that populate the world were created in the first place and how they are maintained and held in place over time” (Phillips & Hardy, 2002, p. 6). The point here is not to determine what ideas about service-learning are real, true, best, or (in)valid. Rather, Foucauldian discourse analysis considers ideas in their historical and social context to discern how “history is now trying to define within the documentary material itself unities, totalities, series, and relations” (Foucault, 1972, p. 7). An effect of history’s attempt to define such unities is the creation of “regimes of truth” in which arbitrary notions of truth are established and shaped over time. For Foucault, the project

was to challenge where there appears to be unanimity and continuity of ideas. The goal is not to merely reject service and service-learning out of hand but to,

disturb the tranquility with which they are accepted, we must show that they do not come about of themselves, but are always the result of a construction of rules of which must be known, and the justification of which must be scrutinized (Foucault, p. 25).

A goal of this study is to think about service-learning through a Foucauldian critical discourse lens. Mills (1997) argues, “The only way we apprehend reality is through discourse and discursive structures...(and) in the process of interpretation, we lend these structures a solidity and a normality which is often difficult to think outside of” (p. 54). If major statements that carry institutional and cultural force about service and service-learning are examined, can we discern the ways in which it has been socially constructed to be an unquestioned, common sense, communal good at the very core of what it means to be a citizen of the United States of America?

This study is interested in discourse and is situated within a Foucauldian and critical framework because of the current dearth of Foucauldian application to service-learning research as well as for the possibilities that doing so may elicit (Butin, 2005). Considering the discourses shaping service-learning and service in this way just might allow us to discern some sense of the racial, gender, and socioeconomic implications for the construction of community service’s practice and its relationship to who is “citizen” when some do not choose to participate as a possible result of these constructions. This study will offer some insight with the goal of “opening” up the conceptualization,

practice, and participation of service-learning in an equitable way in order to achieve structural societal transformation as the end goal, congruent with both critical and Foucauldian purposes.

Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy is an approach to education that seeks to distill and eradicate marginalizing elements of society that create economic and social inequalities and control knowledge production and reproduction. Central to this pedagogy is a belief that schooling historically has reproduced class status, racial divisions, and social/economic marginalization while at the same time having the great potential to subvert these divisions, transform and liberate students, and be truly egalitarian and democratic (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Darder, Baltodano & Torres, 2003; Freire, 1971; Giroux, 1983; McLaren, 2003). There is no blueprint for implementation and, like critical theory, this pedagogy actively resists formulaic approaches to education (Giroux, 2003).

Major critical pedagogy theorists have argued for pedagogy in practice that mirrors many of the core principles of service-learning. Peter McLaren (2003) speaks of a “critical” pedagogy grounded in:

...walking the talk and working in those very communities one purports to serve...Opportunities must be made for students to work in communities where they can spend time with economically and ethnically diverse populations, as well as with gay and lesbian populations, in the context of community activism and participation in progressive social movements...to quicken the affective sensibilities of students as well as provide them with a language of social analysis,

cultural critique, and social activism in the service of cutting the power and practice of capitalism at its joints (pp. 170-171).

McLaren considers the importance of meaningful work in the community, an element of service-learning design empirically demonstrated to be significant for positive student learning outcomes, particularly those related to perspective transformation, critical thinking, citizenship, interpersonal development, and tolerance (Astin, Sax, Vogelgesang & Yee, 2000; Eyler & Giles, 1999). Engagement with work that enables cultural critique and activism is also congruent with many of the scholars and practitioners working within a social change orientation to service-learning (e.g. Butin, 2005; Morton & Saltmarsh, 1997; O’Grady, 2000; Rhoads, 1997; Robinson, 2000).

Paulo Freire (2003) articulated the interdependence of social engagements and worldview during his 1987 interview with Donaldo Macedo. Responding to a question about ways in which consciousness-raising can and ought to happen in the classroom, Freire states,

I think consciousness is generated through the social practice in which we participate...A pedagogy becomes critical when an educator has a dialogue with students and methodologically challenges them to discover a critical posture...Students assume a critical posture to the extent that they comprehend how and what constitutes the consciousness of the world” (pp. 354-355).

The Freirean concept of “praxis” is also a critical function of merging social practice (action) and consciousness and mirrors the critical element of service-learning, reflection. While McLaren (2003) and Freire (2003) are speaking of critical pedagogy

specifically, themes of active engagement in environments different from dominant culture, and likely different from traditional-aged college students' backgrounds, resonate with the goals and vision of service-learning. Cynthia Rosenberger (2000), talking about Freire's concept of "conscientization," hints at the complexities congruent with our experience as service-learning practitioners. She states,

A critical service learning approach means becoming conscious and reflecting critically on our own positional power and on the dissonance that critical consciousness creates for us personally. Recognizing the underlying causes of inequalities may call into question values that we have never questioned. Righting injustices may mean giving up comfortable positions of privilege and power.... conscientization for the privileged requires reflection outward- on the world, as well as inward- on one's place and agency in the world (p. 36).

Much has been written in the service-learning literature about the theoretical connections between service-learning and critical pedagogy (e.g. Butin, 2003; Hayes & Cuban, 2000, O'Grady, 2000; Renner, Price, Keen & Little, 2003, Rhoads, 1999). This body of literature can be characterized as both theoretical gazing upon service-learning and applying the foundational assumptions of critical pedagogy in order to foster social change or social justice outcomes. This happens alongside a lack of understanding of service-learning's outcomes for community (e.g. Butin, 2005; Cruz & Giles, 2000; Jones & Hill, 2001). Much of this student outcome research employing a critical pedagogy framework has perpetuated a victory narrative in the service-learning research, speaking to highly positive outcomes around reduction of stereotyping, increased capacity for

advocacy, citizenship development, and increased tolerance with scant attention paid to weak statistically significant findings (Butin, 2005; Jones, 2002) or a dearth of longitudinal work from which to speak of enduring influence.

Critiques of Critical Pedagogy

There is a body of literature that stands both within and against critical pedagogy and pushes its modernist assumptions, mythical claims, and primary focus on class as the site of struggle to the exclusion of all other forms of oppression. Feminist poststructuralists and critical race theorists in education have offered major critiques of critical pedagogy by taking on its claims directly as well as through their formulations of alternative pedagogies like feminist pedagogy (e.g. Ellsworth, 1989; Gore, 1993; Lather, 1998; Weiler, 2001), border pedagogy (e.g. Anzaldúa, 1987; Elenes, 2003), critical race pedagogy (e.g. Gordon, 1995; Lynn, 1999) and culturally relevant pedagogy (e.g. Ladson-Billings, 1995). This study employs a view of service-learning as a critical pedagogy working against its certainties, strengthened by these critiques, and moving towards, as Lather (1998) described the project, “a praxis of stuck places.”

Feminist poststructural critiques in education (Ellsworth, 1989; Gore, 1992, 1993; Lather, 1998; Weiler, 2001) have challenged essentialized and unified ideas about “woman” as well as associated assumptions of women as collaborative, nurturing, and facilitators of “the common good.” They have critiqued the modernist, masculinist project characterized by abstract rationality, control, and universal understandings of truth. Finally, they have critiqued male educational theorists who obscure gender as well

as their own gendered privilege while failing to address the modernist project and its claims of mastery and transcendence (Weiler, p. 70-71).

Applied to critical pedagogy, a poststructural feminist critique takes on the following ways in which this “emancipatory” pedagogy fails to live up to its universal ideals and runs the high risk of perpetuating the very oppression it aims to eradicate.

Repressive myths

Patti Lather (1998) argued that the poststructural feminist project is to interrupt the mysticism associated with critical pedagogy’s claims. Chief among these claims is the goal of “empowering” individuals to change their own lives. Elizabeth Ellsworth (1994) suggests that empowerment functions as a myth of sorts and can be more about treating symptoms without touching the disease while giving the illusion of equality. She finds evidence of this in the ways in which the student/teacher relationship and its power dynamics of teacher as “empower-er” is untouched. Jennifer Gore (1993) sums up a critique of empowerment by stating, “In short, the emancipatory authority of critical pedagogy, exercised in the pursuit of justice and emancipation, may be dangerous to the extent that it sees itself as not requiring further justification or critique” (p. 103).

Other major myths looming from this perspective relate to the perception of silence equating with lack of voice and calls for dialogue. This assumption obscured dynamics as in both bell hooks’ (1995) and Elizabeth Ellsworth’s (1994) experiences where the classroom does not automatically feel like a safe place with which to share one’s voice due to gender, race, class, and other dynamics at play even in a classroom employing a critical pedagogy. Voice is also critiqued in terms of the possibility that

there exists an authentic voice as well as whether or not the teacher would hear this voice if it presented itself. Dialogue is put forth as a critical vehicle in the “consciousness-raising project.” Issues of “dialogue” on whose terms and being shaped by whose deeply vested and more powerful interests go unquestioned in critical pedagogy. The consciousness-raising project of “bringing, giving, allowing” voice is also put under suspicion as its agendas and terms remain as obscured as “dialogue” and is seen as another major myth from the perspective of poststructural feminism (e.g. Ellsworth; Gore, 1992; Lather, 1998; Weiler, 2001). The consciousness-raising project is part of a larger agenda Lather (1998) described as a salvage and redemptive agenda. Put under suspicion, this agenda is seen “as ever deeper places for privilege to hide. Feminism has long put emancipatory agendas under suspicion for their coercion, rationalism, and universalism...there is no outside of power networks, normalization, and tendencies toward domination in spite of liberatory intentions” (Lather, p. 3).

Masculinist certainties and lack of self-criticality

Critical pedagogy speaks of its revolutionary and liberatory project (Freire, 1972; McLaren, 2003) and, in doing so, offers certainties about the rightness of the struggle. Victory over the oppressor is in line with the Freirean view of history as struggle between good and evil with Freire representing forces of good and salvation (Weiler, 2001). Kathleen Weiler argues that this leads to a desire to be on the “right” side, or the side of the oppressed. Doing so creates a myriad of gender, race, and class implications insofar as unacknowledged privilege asserted in the struggle “with” the oppressed has the potential consequence of reinscribing the very oppression one is intending to fight

against. There is a certainty inherent in this that despite their own identities and standpoint, they have identified THE oppressive ideology against which a struggle is necessary and right.

The hero worship articulated by this critique has much to do with an overarching paternalistic arrogance at play with critical pedagogy. The teacher is always the center of the project and the students would not be able to stand outside of the dominant ideology without the presence and wisdom of the teacher who is glorified and credited with rescuing the emancipatory project. This teacher is imagined to be both male and highly public (Weiler, 2001). The teacher is positioned to define who is “us” and who is “them,” while being one of the few enlightened ones able to make such distinctions. Gore (1993) states, “This arrogance primarily functions to emancipate both the theorist and the teacher from actively worrying about inconsistent effects of the pedagogy” (p. 102).

From the perspective of a feminist poststructural critique, this is due in no small part to a lack of self-criticality that operates in critical pedagogy. Ellsworth (1994) argues, “critical pedagogues are always implicated in the very structures they are trying to change” (p. 304). Jennifer Gore (1992) suggests that where there has been self-criticality on the part of self-described critical pedagogues it has been more rhetorical than practically enacted. She argues that this lack of self-criticality is actually useful insofar as it has helped, “ignore the possibility that their own academic construction of critical pedagogy might not be the emancipatory discourse it is intended to be” (p. 60).

Ethics and impossibility of the ideal

Jennifer Gore (1993) critiqued critical pedagogy through a Foucauldian view of ethics. There is a disturbing push for teachers and students to discipline themselves in the name of rational and moral choice while universalizing the idea of the correct choice.

She states,

The student is considered to be both capable, and in need, of self-styling. Notions of self and social empowerment suggest the need for students to change themselves in ways that give them greater control over their lives while enhancing equality and justice for all...the general neglect of the ethical in relation to the theorist points to a general lack of reflexivity about the theorists own practices. (p. 110)

The effect of this lack of self-reflexivity is a lack of engagement with the impossibility of critical pedagogy (Ellsworth, 1994; Lather, 1998). Ellsworth argued that discussions in the literature ignore issues presented in the classroom as well as the historical contexts and political positions dominated by “definitions of critical pedagogy that are more appropriate for philosophical debate” (p. 302). However, this impossibility is not a reason to throw out critical pedagogy from a feminist poststructural perspective. Rather, Lather (1998) posits, “Implementing critical pedagogy in the field of schooling is impossible. That is precisely the task: to situate the experience of impossibility as an enabling site for working through aporias” (p. 4). Rather than ignore the impossibility and complexity, this critique views this stuck place as both theoretically and practically productive and a reason to move forward.

Privileging of social class

Both feminist poststructuralists and critical race theorists in education share the final major aspect of this critique of critical pedagogy. Class oppression is the reason to engage in the struggle to the great exclusion of other forms of oppression (Anzaldúa, 1987; Elenes, 2003; Ellsworth, 1989; Gordon, 1995; Gore, 1993; hooks, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Lather, 1998; Lynn, 1999; Weiler, 2001). Despite this critique and much dialogue with Freire and others, oppression remains framed as social class and its other forms (i.e. race, gender, etc.) are considered for their impact but remain on the back burner (hooks, 1995; Weiler, 2001).

Racialized views of critical pedagogy

This privileging of social class as the main game (Lather, 1998) mirrors the concern coming from scholars of color about critical theory upon which the pedagogy is built. For this reason, there have not so much been critiques of critical pedagogy coming from scholars of color but rather critiques of critical theory applied to education and the articulation of more inclusive and emancipatory theoretical and pedagogical alternatives (Anzaldúa, 1987; Elenes, 2003; Gordon, 1995; hooks, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lynn, 1999, 2004; Smith-Maddox & Solórzano, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

African-American critiques of critical theory are most numerous and have had the most dominant voice in terms of formulating critical race theories of education (e.g. Gordon, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lynn, 1999, 2004; Smith-Maddox &

Solórzano, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Marvin Lynn (1999) articulated a “critical race pedagogy” with an explicit focus on connecting the research and theories of African-American emancipatory pedagogy based on his research of socially active teachers of color. Critical race pedagogy stands outside of critical pedagogy because it is working against “prioritizing one axis of domination over another...and relies mostly on the perceptions, experiences, and counterhegemonic practices of educators of color” (p. 615).

Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate (1995) were among the first to articulate a critical race theory of education as a response to the undertheorization of race by predominantly white Marxists in the United States who were formulating the main body of critical writing. Race has been considered but it has never been important enough to be used to analyze social inequality. They stand with Cornel West (1993) in his assertion that “race matters” and apply it to education in the following way.

Although both class and gender can and do intersect race, as stand-alone variables they do not explain all of the educational achievement differences apparent between white and students of color. Indeed, there is some evidence to suggest that even when we hold constant for class, middle-class African-American students do not achieve at the same level as their white counterparts---‘Race matters.’ (p. 3)

In light of these critiques among others, alternative pedagogies have emerged that appear to stand with critical pedagogy but incorporate aspects of this body of critique. Border pedagogy (Anzaldúa, 1987; Elenes, 2003; Hayes & Cuban, 1996) is a response to the “universalizing tendency in critical pedagogy towards difference...Seeing students as

border crossers in critical pedagogy still does not specify how the different ways students are border crossers can be worked out” (p. 198). Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) articulated these “borderlands” as spaces of living simultaneously in and between different worlds. The result is a “mestiza consciousness” where one is in all cultures at the same time with all of its messages, contradictions, and struggles. The key to border pedagogy is “a disruption of the dualistic axis of a visible enemy to situations where the so-called enemy is not visible, but more ideology and discursive” (Elenes, p. 201).

Ladson-Billings (1995) articulated a “culturally-relevant” pedagogy that is a merging of Africanist traditions of Afro-centered views of the world with critical race theorists desire to change the structures. As such, culturally-relevant pedagogy, “not only addresses student achievement but also helps students accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspective that challenge inequities that schools and other institutions perpetuate” (p. 469). bell hooks (1995) speaks of education as a “practice of freedom” and employs language of liberatory pedagogy which seeks similar ends while standing both within and against Freire’s view of a pedagogy that is critical and transformative.

Because this is a study that views service-learning as a racialized critical pedagogy, theorization of criticality from scholars of color (CRT) is most significant and is in many ways a response to all of the above critiques of both critical theory and critical pedagogy. As a result, the focus must now turn to a more in-depth investigation of critical race theory and its application to education.

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory (CRT) is the dominant theoretical framework for this study. CRT brings together critical theory's questioning of assumptions of self and structures as "unproblematically democratic and free" located in a system of oppression and domination (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000, p.281) and critical scholars of color's, particularly legal scholars, desire to move race and the complicity of "the system" in sustaining racial inequality to the center of critical scholarship. CRT seeks to question "the very foundations of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, Enlightenment rationalism, and neutral principles of constitutional law" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 3). Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller & Thomas (1995) articulate the focus of critical race theory in the following:

There is no canonical set of doctrines or methodologies to which we all subscribe. Although Critical Race scholarship differs in object, argument, accent, and emphasis, two common interests nevertheless unify it. The first is to understand how a regime of white supremacy and its subordination of people of color have been created and maintained in American and, in particular, to examine the relationship between that social structure and professed ideals...The second is a desire not merely to understand the vexed bond between law and racial power but to *change* it (emphasis in the original) (p. xiii).

Ladson-Billings (2000) highlights three important aspects of critical race theory relevant to this study.

First, racism is a normal part of American life and “not aberrant;” storytelling can be an important means of increasing race saliency and challenging common, dominant white culture norms about people of color as inferior; finally, liberal legal structures and the legal community, through civil rights legislation, have continued to serve the interests of whites, particularly white women, through their slow, fundamentally non-transformative legal processes (p. 264).

Another relevant aspect of critical race theory is its disruption of liberalism’s belief in meritocracy, neutral principles of law and equity, and its goal of color blindness (Crenshaw, et al, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). CRT’s critique of neutrality and equity is visible through its skepticism about the American obsession with “rights.” Delgado & Stefancic, leading CRT scholars, argue:

Rights are almost always procedural rather than substantive. Think how our system applauds affording everyone equality of opportunity but resists programs that assure equality of results. Moreover, rights are almost always cut back when they conflict with the interests of the powerful (p. 23).

This critique has emerged out of a reaction to the perception of failed promises flowing from historical moments like *Brown vs. Board of Education* and civil rights legislation of the 1960’s and 1970’s. CRT holds that liberalism’s desire to be colorblind and have everyone get along are fundamentally in the best interests of white elite rather than a desire to truly change (Crenshaw et al; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). The desire to be colorblind “allows us to redress only extremely egregious racial harms, ones that everyone would notice and condemn” (Delgado & Stefancic, p. 22). This colorblindness

serves to leave the ways in which racism is deeply engrained in the ways we see and make sense of the world untouched, allowing racism to permeate everyday social practices.

Critical race theory is pertinent to this study because it offers a lens on racism and social practice in service-learning. A long-standing colorblind stance to “college students’” experiences in service-learning has obscured the critical voice of people of color. This framework illuminates the perpetuation of power imbalances and white supremacy in service-learning. Being informed by CRT allows me to interrogate the limits of what we think we know about the transformative potential of this pedagogy as well as its promises and perils.

Service-Learning

Service-learning is frequently defined as “a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development” (Jacoby, 1996, p.5). The generally agreed upon components of any service-learning program are the four “r’s:” *respect* for all involved, *reciprocity* with the community, *relevance* of service work to curriculum (academic or extracurricular), and *reflection* as a tool for synthesis and more critical thinking about complex issues (Boyle-Baise, 2002; Butin, 2003).

The major goal “areas” for service-learning include service-learning as a strategy for better content mastery, a stance for commitment to a more just world, a tool for fostering multicultural education and/or values of inclusiveness, responsibility, and

citizenship, and finally a mechanism for learning about the “other” in an effort to be better “servant leaders” (Boyle-Baise, 2002; Butin, 2005; Eyler & Giles, 1999; O’Grady, 2000). I am most interested in service-learning’s goals of citizenship development and social transformation, thinking about it as explicitly political and being both potentially transformative and oppressive for all involved (Butin; Kahne & Westheimer, 1999; Morton, 1995; O’Grady; Rhoads, 1997). First, however, it is important to gain a picture of the larger landscape of service-learning before focusing on its impact on citizenship development and social transformation.

Student impact in the service-learning research

Two bodies of research are important to consider when charting the literature on service-learning, research on impact of community service participation and impact of service-learning participation. The key difference lies in the fact that when considering community service, the research is defining this activity as largely voluntary, short-term or long-term, and unattached to any structured academic or co-curricular program. The research on the impact of community service experiences on college students is frequently cited as the empirical support for service-learning outcomes and provides a logical starting point for mapping the research on service-learning’s influence. The work of Alexander Astin, Linda Sax, and Lori Vogelgesang from the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at UCLA has been most significant and wide-ranging in both its scope and impact. Astin & Sax (1998) looked at how undergraduate students were impacted by community service participation. Their study of 3,450 students at 42 institutions indicated that participation in volunteer community service activity was

related to positive gains in academic development, civic responsibility, and life skill outcomes such as leadership, social self-confidence, and interpersonal and intercultural capacity.

The research on the impact of service-learning has been shaped by these same outcome areas found to be significant in the community service research. Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda & Yee (2000) found that service-learning was most significantly related to academic performance. Other significant findings were increased choice of service-related careers and plans to participate in service after college. Service-learning was not related to gains in interpersonal skills, self-efficacy, and leadership. This was a curious development given community service's positive relationship to these dimensions.

Janet Eyler & Dwight Giles (1999) research is widely acknowledged to have gone the furthest in investigating the overall impact of service-learning. Their mixed-methods, positivist study included a national sample of 1,535 students at twenty colleges and universities. 136 students were interviewed during or after their service-learning experiences as well. Their findings linked service-learning participation to cognitive and interpersonal development outcomes. Specifically, Eyler & Giles found significant gains in personal and interpersonal development (i.e. personal efficacy, leadership, connectedness to community, valuing a career of helping others), diversity (i.e. increased tolerance and decreased stereotyping), understanding and applying knowledge, critical thinking, and perspective transformation.

The outcomes areas of personal efficacy, diversity, critical thinking, and perspective transformation are particularly well examined in the research on service-learning. Taking a broad view, the research speaks to service-learning's impact on increased understanding of diversity and cultural competence (e.g. Aberle-Grasse, 2000; Flannery & Ward, 1999; Grobman, 2004; Jones & Hill, 2001; Moely, McFarland, Miron, Mercer & Ilustre, 2002; Myers-Lipton, 1996), heightened sense of personal efficacy most largely recognized in the area of teacher education (e.g. Donahue, 2000; Guadarrama, 2000; Root, Callahan & Sapanski, 2002), awareness of social issues (e.g. Curry, Heffner & Warners, 2002; Jones & Abes, 2003; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000) and valuing a career of helping others (e.g. Jones & Abes, 2004; Malone, Jones & Stallings, 2002; Roschelle, Turpin & Elias, 2000). The research done in these areas is largely quantitative with a growing amount of qualitative data, particularly as the field seeks to gain greater knowledge about how students understand their experiences.

A major critique of the service-learning research, in general, relates to claims of significant impact. The research measuring impact is largely quantitative and there are areas in which differences in outcome measures like citizenship development, critical thinking, understanding of diversity, etc. are modest at best but are put forth as generally "significant" (Butin, 2005; Eyler & Giles, 1999). Often concepts like personal efficacy, citizenship development, or cultural competence are unclear (Butin; Cipolle, 2004; Kahne & Westheimer, 1999). For instance, Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda & Yee's (2000) study suggested significant gains in self-efficacy as a result of community service participation. However this finding was tempered by the additional finding that the effect of course-

based participation in service, service-learning, had a less significant impact on self-efficacy. This paints a confusing picture given their final conclusion that, “the positive effects of service (of which increased self-efficacy was one) can be explained in part by the fact that participation in service increases the likelihood that students will discuss their experiences with each other and that students will receive emotional support from faculty” (p. 4). Since most service done by college students is *not* done in conjunction with faculty involvement and does *not* involve time set aside for discussion and reflection outside of service-learning courses (Astin and Sax, 1998), it is not clear how they explain the mixed picture of the relationship between community service, service-learning with its faculty and reflective components, specifically, and increased self-efficacy. What may have been the case here, and is the case with other research (e.g. Denson, Vogelgesang & Saenz, 2005) is the unclear differentiation, or sometimes conflation, of community and service-learning at a variety of points in the research ranging from conceptual definition to reporting of findings.

Overall, theorization of service-learning and its potential speaks with some amount of certainty regarding student development outcomes. A “victory narrative” looms large in the literature and needs some examination and closer scrutiny (Butin, 2005; Jones, 2002; Swaminathian, 2007). Dan Butin argues,

Such narratives must be examined for their more troubling assumptions and implications: Who defines such narratives? In what terms? To what ends? For whose benefit? With what (unintended) consequences? This is not simply a cynical and relativistic appropriation of Lyotard’s definition of the postmodern

condition as the “incredulity to grand narratives.” This is a fundamental grappling with the very heart and soul of service-learning theory and practice (pp 1-2).

Taking Butin’s lead, the literature dealing with service-learning and civic engagement/citizenship development is in need of this kind of scrutiny. This is also the research most pertinent to my project on the experiences of students of color in the context of service-learning from a social transformation perspective. While there is certainly research to provide some support to the connection between service-learning and citizenship development (e.g. Eyler & Giles, 1999), the difficulty lies in the lack of agreement about what we mean by “civic engagement” and potentially destructive, albeit unintended, consequences of different responses to what it means to be “engaged” (Butin, 2003). This lack of agreement likely stems from a debate in the service-learning literature regarding the fundamental reason why we engaged in this potentially transformative pedagogy in terms of the politics of such an endeavor (Butin; Cipolle, 2004).

The politics of service-learning

I, supported by many others, believe service-learning is an explicitly political endeavor and to ignore its implications and possible unintended, harmful consequences is pedagogically detrimental (e.g. Butin, 2003, 2005; Jones, 2002; Kahn & Westheimer, 1999; Morton, 1995; Nieto, 2000; O’Grady, 2000; Rhoads, 1997). Issues of diversity are political and, as Chesler & Scalera (2000) offer in their review of race and gender issues related to service-learning research:

The question is not whether issues of diversity are present in community service learning programs; they inevitably are. The question is whether our community service learning programs will embrace these issues, and learn about them, as essential or as luxuries, as central or tangential, as potentially destructive or as potentially illuminating/liberating (p. 20).

Students cross borders that are shaped by power inequities and differential access to resources (Hayes & Cuban, 1996). These borders have clear class, race, gender, sexual orientation, and ability dimensions that must be engaged in the classroom setting because they are being experienced in the service setting. Cynthia Rosenberger (2000) aptly captured the field's need to move beyond service-learning's paradigmatic issues of when and how in order to engage its potential to "to create a more just and humane society...generating a thoughtful and critical consciousness in all stakeholders" (p. 39). As a result, I am interested in delving into the research that seeks to tease out if and how service-learning operates in such a way so as to generate thoughtful and critical consciousness for ALL stakeholders from the racialized view of students of color underrepresented in both service-learning opportunities as well as the campuses upon which they are studying.

Civic Engagement: Race Matters

One of the difficulties with research on civic engagement and, in particular, changes in attitudes and behaviors regarding race, social issues, and inequality is the ability to demonstrate any differences between verbalized intentions to actual behavior in settings marked by inequality, let alone any demonstrated and sustained impact in

thought or behavior over time (Butin, 2003; Chesler & Scalera, 2000; HERI, 2005). This might be critical to unpacking what we mean by civic engagement or citizenship development. Ann Green (2003), a service-learning scholar and practitioner focusing on whiteness and class identities offers the following about who is verbalizing in the context of service-learning: “In writing about service-learning, whiteness and middle class privilege are often unspoken categories that define those who perform service and those who write about service-learning” (p. 277).

There have been a small number of studies that have demonstrated progress on students’ understandings of diversity, race, and racism (Aberle-Grasse, 2000; Astin & Sax, 1998; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Jones & Hill, 2001; Myers-Lipton, 1996; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000). The research is mixed on the impact of service-learning around issues of race and whiteness in particular. There is some evidence of greater tolerance, appreciation for diversity (Eyler & Giles; Astin & Sax, 1998), deeper racial understanding (Aberle-Grasse; Ward & Wolf), and a decrease in traditional and modern racism alongside an enhanced perception of ability to work with diverse others (Myers-Lipton, 1996- Aberle-Grasse). However, a compelling and growing body of research also suggests that students’ unexamined privileged lenses, or misinformation, continue to shape problematic conclusions about “the other” and about inequality in general (Bonilla-Silva & Forman, 2000; Efiom & Boyle-Baise, 2000; Green, 2001, 2003; Jones & Abes, 2003). The studies in service-learning that have reported any findings on white students’ understandings of racialized systems of power and privilege and of themselves as “raced” have concluded that there is a silence (Green, 2003), lack of salience (Jones & Abes,

2004), or commitment to colorblindness (Efiom & Boyle-Baise) that persists into and beyond the service-learning experience.

This picture is complicated by demonstrated progress in other areas we might think about being related to social justice. Jones & Hill (2000) did find that students moved from learning that was centered on “the other” to “after time and continued dialogue, begin to make a connection between understanding others and understanding oneself. This process involved awareness of their advantages and disadvantages” (p. 207). They also concluded that questions about sustained impact needed further study as students were likely to return to previous patterns and doubt remained as to the sustainability of enhanced awareness when returning to “comfortable and familiar world of the campus” (p. 215). In the follow-up to this study, Jones & Abes (2004) found many of these same students experienced “a continued and heightened focus on others in relation to self, emerging commitments to socially responsible work, and a notable openness to new ideas, experiences, and people” (p. 160). They also found unexamined privileges related to race, among other dimensions, enabled students to avoid close scrutiny of these identities. White students, specifically, continued to be challenged by conversations about the relatedness of race and poverty, continuing to conclude that their service-learning experiences demonstrated that “‘people are really all the same’ or ‘race doesn’t matter’”(p. 161).

The questions that remain for further study require a de-centering of white students voices in order to delve into the complex issues of racial attitudes, structures, and inequality (Chesler & Scalera, 2000). This study seeks to investigate the “silence” of

the voices of students of color as they relate to service-learning and its racialized implications.

Dominant and counter discourses available within service-learning

The dominance of the individual, doer-centered community service discourse has shaped our theorizing, research, and language about service. Citizenship development, ethic of care, selflessness, and giving back are all things put forth as desirable outcomes and largely left as elements of youth development, evidenced in the constant references to youth and little theorization or research around adult or faculty involvement/learning in service-learning (Pritchard, 2002; Radest, 1993). Foucault (1971) argues that there are always competing discourses since the core of a discourse's dominance is the struggle to maintain such dominance. While all people play a role in the creation and perpetuation of a discourse's dominance, as individuals and groups we have the ability to offer critique and locate ourselves differently within and apart from the dominant. One such counterdiscourse has been shaped by the work of Paolo Freire and Christian religious thought evidenced in the liberation theology movement located largely in Latin America. John McKnight (1989), an American religious and community service scholar offered useful insight into a counterdiscourse merging religion and liberation. He states:

We all know that in the Last Supper, Jesus said, 'This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you. There is no greater love than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.' But for mysterious reasons, I never hear the next two sentences; "You are my friends if you do what I command you. I no longer call

you servants because servants do not know the business of the one they serve (p. 39).

Paolo Freire typifies the core of this counterdiscourse in his belief that education *is* politics and functions to further the good of the dominant class whose interests always run contrary to fully participatory democracy (Freire, 1971; Freire & Macedo, 2003; *emphasis mine*). He was a Brazilian educator and social activist who was exiled from his native country because he sought to raise the powerless' consciousness and knowledge of the unjust world in order that they may join in the struggle to transform *their own lives*. He coined the term, "conscientization" which encapsulated this capacity-building, revolutionary approach to social change. He saw education as the central facet of his work, viewing it as explicitly political and being about transformation of individual AND society. Widely regarded for his challenges to the "banking model of education," he espoused a dialogic, problem-posing method of education as a means of bringing people to greater consciousness about the world and their place and agency in the world. Freire stated (2003):

I think consciousness is generated through the social practices in which we participate...A pedagogy becomes critical when an educator has a dialogue with students and methodologically challenges them to discover a critical posture...Students assume a critical posture to the extent that they comprehend how and what constitutes the consciousness of the world (pp. 354-355).

Freire's focus on working for change in the present and naming the power imbalances is consistent with Butin's (2005b) critical, political conceptualization of

service-learning. Understanding service-learning to be transformative in its ability to disrupt hierarchy and authority in classrooms brings to the fore the glaring lack of evidence of any long-term positive consequences on the “other” side of the partnerships. One difference between the way “student” is conceptualized from a Freirean perspective and in the current American service-learning context is that the student was also the “done-to,” not only the doer as in the U.S.. Critical service-learning educators have drawn from Freire to enlighten their practice and embolden their claims but without a focus on the impact of a consciousness-raising pedagogy on the “done-to” about whom Freire was actually speaking. This also holds true for the current lack of understanding of this transformative pedagogy on “doers” who are located on the margins and are not members of a dominant group, such as students of color in service-learning.

A dominant community service discourse centered on individual preparation and betterment/development has benefited service-learning because it has offered this pedagogy a neat and largely unproblematic spot in the classroom and the academy. Since the dominant discourse around schooling and education struggles to maintain knowledge as apolitical, objective, and unbiased (Bowles & Gintis, 1976), a focus on the development of meritworthy youth through the act of service is highly congruent. It ought to come as no surprise that service-learning has become widely popular and its outcomes demonstrated in the research to be replete with student development potential. The significant fragmentation of perspectives on the purposes and uses of service-learning also serves to diffuse the hold any social, structural change agenda could have on this pedagogy, muting the voices that could be offering a counterdiscourse. “Weak

multiculturalism” (Butin, 2001; 2005b) characterized by, “always stopping short of approving other cultures at a point where some value at their center generates an act that offends against the canons of civilized decency as they have been either declared or assumed” (Butin, 2005b, p. 172) is often what gets enacted in the spirit of citizenship development.

Yet it is significant to note that it is this enactment of “weak multiculturalism” or “weak democracy” characterized by “ensuring that there are maximal opportunities for individuals to find self-fulfillment independent of government and assumes a view of the autonomous individual, maximizing aggregate individual preferences” (Lisman, 1998, p. 17), that also diminishes service-learning’s potential. What if we could articulate a vision of service-learning that authentically placed the community, the underrepresented, and/or the “done-to” at the center? While running counter to a myth of meritocracy and the position of the “done-to” as less meritworthy and fully responsible for their condition, we may just be surprised to find that transformation is actually possible. The dominant, privileged student-centered discourse diminishes service-learning because it diminishes any kind of transformative potential, regardless of one’s political orientation. Neither the left nor the right can claim victory or truth on the service front. We are all diminished as a result of the rise in national service and claims of a transformative pedagogy running concurrent with a rise in the wealth gap, poverty, and injustice in this country. The problem of the 21st century is still the “color line” as it was when W.E.B. DuBois (1912) penned it over a century ago, adding a “class line” to this “color line.”

Critical examinations of students of color in service-learning

Research that connects race and service-learning can be described as predominantly qualitative and largely focusing on white students with economic privilege and their experiences with increased tolerance, respect for diversity, racial differences and race as a problematic, systemic factor to be “solve= (e.g. Green 2001, 2003; Dooley, 2007; Myers-Lipton, 1996; Jones & Abes, 2003; Jones & Hill, 2001; Sperling, Wang, Kelly, Hritsuk, 2003). A few quantitative studies have been done and the analysis included examining any statistically significant differences between different demographics (Berthiaume, 1999; Ender, Martin, Cotter, Kowalewski, & Defiore, 2000; Eyler & Giles, 2000; Jordan, 1994). These studies all demonstrated gender differences in terms of preference for service-learning or perception of experience as positive. In Jordan’s mixed methods dissertation study, the results from the quantitative analysis did not reveal any significant differences but the qualitative analysis suggested differences along gender lines but due to a small representation of students of color in the sample of 116 students, it was difficult to say much about students of color in the experience with much confidence. The dynamic in Jordan’s study speaks to the difficulty of focusing squarely on the experiences of students of color in service-learning. The participation rates of students of color in the research, both qualitative and quantitative, are low and given the fact that statistical significance for any impact research in service-learning is not strong (Butin, 2005a; Eyler & Giles), the experiences of students of color are obscured and have gone largely unexplored.

Two unpublished doctoral dissertation studies and two studies featured in journal articles appear to be the only studies that focus squarely on the experiences of people of color in service-learning with one study employing the same critical race lens to the research (Verjee, 2006). Pickron-Davis' dissertation (1999) was an ethnographic case study of 13 Black college students enrolled in three service-learning courses. A strictly interpretivist lens was used to understand their motivations, perceptions of experience in the course and in the larger university context as well as awarenesses of explicit and hidden curricula at play in the course. A major finding of this study reiterated the results in many of the studies on white students and race. The Black students were frustrated by a lack of critical dialogue on racism and difference, a dynamic explored in the white student research as one in which the white students do not deal with these things unless they are a focus of the course material or discussion. This study also spoke to the Black students being skilled at moving between two worlds and negotiating "language and code-switching" when in community versus in classroom. They also experienced dynamic of peers in the classroom and role models/service providers in the community that caused a feeling of split and contested identities.

Verjee (2006) conducted her dissertation using a critical, Black feminist lens to explore the problematic of an institution dominated by white, class-based, male structures establishing partnerships with organizations and communities of color with the goal of supporting and improving the life experiences and opportunities of that community. Through a qualitative, counter story-telling study of the experiences of women administrators of color at the university and in the community, Verjee offers a critical,

Black feminist framework for service-learning partnership building that seeks to transgress the systemic exclusion of people of color existing in the white, male, class-based structures and discourses of the institution participating in the creation of these partnerships. Her study does not focus on students of color but uses a critical race lens to think through the systemic exclusion in a pedagogy that claims to be transformative. Verjee's study informs the current study by employing a critical, discursive lens on a subject matter rarely examined in such a way. Verjee's study, as a result of this lens, outlines specific principles from a critical tradition that might have a more authentic chance at producing the socially transformative ends that lies at the core of critical service-learning's promise.

Tricia Niesz (2008) published her study of those professional movements "wrought from social critique," or at the very least, from critiques of school practices that fail to contribute to more equitable social outcomes. While her study was not specifically focused on service-learning, she examined service-learning as one of those professional movements and conducted a year-long study of a service-learning course taking place in a school whose racial demographics were 99% students of color and 1% white. Niesz found that students reported high satisfaction with the course and could answer the meta-question guiding the course, "Do Our Voices Count?" However, Niesz found a critical silence that also informs my study. She states:

While a critique of racism and the study of political action for social change were important elements of the school knowledges promoted in this classroom, students were not provided with the opportunities or materials with which to

explore the structural forces behind urban poverty. Nor were they encouraged to interrogate hegemonic deficit constructions of communities like their own. In other words, the mainstream view that ‘problems’ in some urban communities are caused by inner-city residents who are somehow personally or culturally deficient was not contested through the ‘Do our voices count?’ project (p. 338).

At first glance it is possible for Niesz to hear the students reiterate the stated purposes and goals of the course. However, in tracking the silences and resisting premature closure, she was able to delve into a critical silence that begins to trouble whether and how service-learning is achieving its heralded purpose of social, not just individual, change. This kind of social critique of service-learning is precisely where my study is situated.

Angelique Davi’s (2006) study of the experiences of students of color also informs this study and is similar to Pickron-Davis’ study in so far as an interpretivist lens is used. Unlike Pickron-Davis’ study, Davi’s qualitative study maps neatly on to the positive outcomes of service-learning that dominate the research such as better course content mastery, self-efficacy, knowledge application, civic responsibility and critical thinking. The students in her study identified as racially underrepresented students of color from challenging socioeconomic circumstances enrolled in a predominantly white college writing course. Davi stays focused on the individual’s journey and their own personal responsibility in dealing with problems or issues. She concludes,

Participation in service-learning can provide students a means to critique those systems, they move from awareness to critical consciousness...However, many

students realized that making visible these structures of inequality is only the first step towards dismantling them (p. 92).

My dissertation study is situated where Davi's (2006) study leaves off. Davi's theoretical lens is not explicit and, as a result, a critique of the discourses that shape the service-learning structures and larger educational environments in which these students of color operate is missing. In many ways she is participating in the dominant service-learning narrative and remaining satisfied with a best case scenario. Service-learning might provide "a means to critique," but students of color are situated in such a way that their abilities to critique must look different than that of their white counterparts. What might this mean for their experiences in service-learning and on predominantly white campuses? This dissertation study draws from Verjee's (2006) use of critical race theory in service-learning to turn the gaze toward student experiences. It is informed by the silences interrogated in Tricia Niesz's (2008) study of service-learning in a context largely "of color." It also builds upon Davi's and Pickron-Davis' (1999) work by using an interpretivist lens to conduct an initial analysis of the students' experiences but takes another step by analyzing the macro structures shaping the discourse that informs what and how the individual students interpret and perform themselves in that environment. This dissertation study seeks to "trouble the waters" and speak against a dominant service-learning narrative that lays claim to positive student outcomes while remaining largely silent on the structural forces shaping the discourse in which these outcomes are studied in the first place.

Mentoring

Under examination in this study is a service-learning course in which the “service” was mentoring. College students of color from challenging socioeconomic circumstances were enrolled in a service-learning course on “theories of mentoring” at a predominantly white institution. Interestingly, the students enrolled in the course all identified as students of color. These college students were mentoring high school students who also identified as students of color from difficult socioeconomic circumstances while together considering theories of mentoring. It, therefore, becomes important to examine the research on mentoring to see the ways in which it might inform this study and provide insight into the experiences of these students of color across high school and college. A review of this research quickly revealed a very similar dynamic to the highly positive, rarely critical treatments of service-learning. What follows is a look at how mentoring is conceptualized, the research on student outcomes, and the emerging critiques of the research and practices that are only now, after twenty years of growing popularity across the Western world, gaining traction in the literature and coming from scholars in the United Kingdom.

Mentoring.org (2008) defines mentoring as:

...a structured and trusting relationship that brings young people together with caring individuals who offer guidance, support and encouragement aimed at developing the competence and character of the mentee

(http://www.mentoring.org/mentors/about_mentoring/).

However, Roberts (2000), argues that a definition of mentoring is difficult to achieve because it is a practice deeply bound by context such that it is difficult to discern what makes mentoring different from other activities like coaching, guidance, tutoring. It is frequently noted in dealing with definitions of mentoring, that the word has its roots in Homer's *The Odyssey*, in the person of "Mentor," an old friend of Odysseus. Odysseus put his kingdom in to Mentor's hands as well as the hands of his infant son, Telemachus (Colley, 2003; DuBois & Karcher, 2005). Mentor has been cast as a wise elder, advisor, and nurturing surrogate parent. Mentor's role required personal involvement, integrity, and close relationship with the child, Telemachus.

Colley (2003) sees this is a "modern re-writing" when, in fact, the royal household was in shambles, the child, Telemachus was in crisis, and Mentor was responsible for the kingdom's debacle and seen as a public joke. Goddess Athene had to step in and, as goddess of war, helps them regain throne in bloody battle and brutally re-establish power. Coley argues:

Myths deny the influence of context upon meaning, and conflate form and substance, as they represent historical phenomena as natural, and their contingent appearance as an eternal and immutable essence. (p. 261)

From the start, therefore, one can trace the difficulty in defining mentoring as well as the deep and personal investments into how mentoring is conceptualized and subsequently enacted. The research on mentoring does not grapple with issues of definitions of mentoring let alone discerning the appearance from the essence. Rather, the research has forged ahead over the last twenty years without much deliberation about

foundational questions and has asserted an array of positive impacts from which federal and private dollars have flowed allowing mentoring programs to rapidly grow.

Recent surge in the public's interest in youth mentoring is exemplified by President Bush in his 2003 State of the Union address in which he announced his commitment of a \$450 million expansion of mentoring programs for youth (DuBois & Karcher, 2005). In 2005, MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnerships and the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) released "studies" on mentoring, claiming 3 million adult volunteers were involved in formalized, one-on-one mentoring relationships which represented an increase of 500,000 mentors since 2002 (Mentoring in America, 2005). Mentoring's growth and popularity with youth and adults is assumed to be beneficial to youth development (Colley, 2003). DuBois & Karcher (2005) expressed a concern that this growth and development has not necessarily been matched with similar progress in the theory and research informing mentoring. Twenty years earlier, in 1983, Merriam also expressed a similar concern in a more critical fashion arguing that the mentoring literature was full of testimonials and opinions with no studies of the negative effects. In fact, DuBois & Karcher (2005), in their edited *The Handbook of Mentoring*, stated:

To date, there have been only limited efforts to articulate theoretical models of youth mentoring...(and) 'one stop shopping' for definitive accounts of existing scholarship and its applied implications have been difficult to come by, thus compromising the capacity for intervention and policy efforts to profit from available theory and research (pp. 3,7).

The research that has existed has tended to be scattered across a myriad of disciplines and could be characterized as falling into two categories. The first category is research that seeks to describe the mentoring landscape and dominant models for relationships and programs (e.g. Mentoring.org, 2005, 2005b). The second category is research that articulates the impacts and outcomes on students and, in some cases, their mentors (e.g. Baker & Maguire, 2005). For the purposes of this study, the research and literature on impacts and outcomes is most critical and will be the focus of this review of the mentoring research.

There are a wide variety of positive outcomes posited in the research on mentoring and can be grouped into the following areas:

- Improved academic performance (e.g. Dennison, 2000; DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002; Herrera, Grossman, Kauh, Feldman & McMaken, 2007; Linnehan, 2001)
- Gains in self-confidence (e.g. DuBois, Neville, Parra, & Pugh-Lilly, 2002; Smith & Smoll, 2002)
- Decrease in risky behavior (e.g. Jolliffe & Farington, 2007)
- Improved relationships with peers and parents (e.g. Hansen, 2007; Piper & Piper, 2000; Soucy & Larose, 2000)

A few studies are so frequently cited in this literature that they are worth noting. Tierney, Grossman & Resch's (1995) study of Big Brothers Big Sisters is credited with being among the most rigorous and far reaching treatment of the impact of mentoring.

Their findings, based on an 18 month, quantitative study of 1138 youth applying for mentoring through BBBS found that mentored participants were:

- Less likely to partake in risky behaviors (e.g. drug use, unsafe sex practices)
- Less likely to be truant or absent from school
- More likely to report increases in academic self-efficacy
- More likely to report positive peer and parent relationships (p. 23)

While this study is widely used in reviews of the mentoring literature, the critique of the weak statistical strengths of the gains alongside the unreported gains among non-mentored youth is less well acknowledged (DuBois, Holloway, Valentine & Cooper, 2002; Rhodes, 2002).

DuBois, Holloway, Valentine & Cooper (2002) are credited with conducting the most comprehensive analysis of the research (Baker & Maguire, 2005; Colley, 2003). They reviewed 55 evaluations of mentoring programs and, while they noted weak statistical gains across the evaluations as evidenced in their critique of the Tierney, Grossman & Resch (1995) study, they did make the connection between positive program attributes linked to positive study outcomes which created a research based implication for practice.

The service-learning outcome research and the mentoring outcome research share an important similarity in the dominant, positive voice with which the fields speak. The overarching narrative constructed by the mentoring research shares a similar tone with service-learning and it speaks of a victory of sorts. Mentoring experiences are heralded as transformative and have become a mainstay of the youth development conversation in

this country (Mentoring.org, 2008). We now have National Mentoring Month and a National Agenda for Action on how to close the “mentoring gap (Mentoring.org website). The government released results of a study of mentoring through the Corporation of National and Community Service (CNCS) that speaks of new research but the findings talk only of who, when, and where adults and youth mentor or are mentored. Mentoring relationships are defined as long-lasting if they lasted between 9 and 12 consecutive months and mentoring is said to be “rewarding” because 96% of volunteers would recommend it to others and these same mentors spoke of motivations around helping young people succeed and to make a difference. Their findings of “Mentoring in America” were remarkably absent of any discussion on the impact or benefit of mentoring.

Helen Colley (2002, 2003, 2005) stands out as one scholar who as insisted upon interrogating this victory narrative through critique of the research. Colley, among a handful of other largely UK-based scholars (Mazzei, 2005; Phillip & Hendrey, 2000; Piper & Piper, 2000; Roberts, 2000; Skinner & Flemming, 1999), have offered important theoretical critiques and evidence-based claims. Chief among those claims is that this mentoring victory narrative promotes problematic understandings of what is meant by mentoring and how these matches are formed or not, obscuring both the irony of governmental insistence on funding only evidence-based practices in light of the apparent lack of rigor with mentoring research and the power of mentoring’s hidden curriculum embedded in a history of “fixing” the “deserving” disaffected in order to shape a larger workforce serving the ultimate economic goals of the elite. In 2002, Colley traced the

history of mentoring from a Marxist and feminist perspective with the goal of distinguishing the essence mentoring from the appearance. Tracing the historical roots of mentoring through four stages, she places the current moment in both the “Modern” and “Victorian” stages of mentoring. The Victorian phase was characterized by the “strong” mentoring the “weak” which noted a shift from the elite mentoring the elite for cultural capital reproduction. She states:

The Victorian stage transformed the essence of mentoring from an intra-class mechanisms to a direct instrument of domination of one class over another...The appearance of mentoring remains the bonding of relationship and individual development. Yet its essential functions become surveillance and control. (p. 266)

The modern stage maintains both Victorian appearance and essence but moves the activity of mentoring to “weak” mentoring “weak” due to resources not keeping up with expansion of mentoring. The dominant model is one in which non-professional staff with less training and lower-to-no pay are serving as volunteer mentors, approximately 50% receiving no training at all (Colley, 2002, p. 268). Given the fractured definitions of mentoring where consensus is impossible, the terms on which programs are built and the capacity and commitment of those doing the mentoring create a weakness in mentoring’s appearance while the essence of the phenomenon continues to be perpetuated by what Colley sees as “impossible fiction like ‘Love will win the day’” (p.268) that both obscures the complexities and perpetuates oppression in its surveillance and control over the disaffected and marginalized.

There is also some evidence coming from scholarship in the UK that creates a counter story to the victory narrative looming in the mentoring research. Phillip and Hendrey (2000), in a study of mentor perception of effectiveness and connection compared to mentee perception found that even where mentees are enthusiastic about the experience, their mentors often did not share this view and, in many cases, left frustrated and believing the experience to be a failure. Colley (2003) reviewed research on disaffected youth in mentoring and found a group of studies that avoid unsupported victory claims stating:

The researchers found evidence of inconclusive and even negative outcomes of mentoring in relation to school achievement and/or anti-social behavior.

Nevertheless, such evidence does not appear to have inhibited the growing popularity of mentoring with policy-makers. Despite fairly negative outcomes from their evaluation, the researchers in one such case explained that the project managers are using our evaluation of the project's first two years to intensify and focus their efforts for the future. They expect one-on-one mentoring to gradually become available for most student participants (McPartland & Nettles, 1991, as cited in Colley, p. 532).

Lisa Mazzei (2005) began a Foucauldian Discourse Analysis on mentoring discourses growing out of her experiences as a mentor and faculty member working with pre-service teachers. She became troubled by the potential of her work to be perpetuating regimes of truth put forth through dominant mentoring discourses and inscribing them upon her students. She began to discern the ways in which mentoring discourses were

perpetuated in an unproblematic fashion and, as a result, she shifted her focus to the ways in which mentoring practices perpetuate these regimes of truth, “not for the purpose of eliminating mentoring practices, but for the purpose of recognizing the dangers so as to minimize their policing effects” (p.5). Tracing the discourses will allow her to “understand the foundational assumptions present in the mentoring discourse...This awareness becomes critically important when monitoring, observing, or ‘policing’ serves the end of ‘producing’ a sameness of teaching practices”(p.6).

It is the example set forth by Mazzei’s (2005) inquiry in which my study is situated. Informed by the positive research outcomes of mentoring and troubled by the counter narratives and re-writing of the mythical nature, essence, and appearance of mentoring over time (e.g. Colley, 2002, 2003,2005) my study seeks to talk with and against the mentoring story in order to avoid a production of “sameness” among students of color in disadvantaged circumstances across high school and college contexts. In fact, the results of this study suggest that the college students are seeking to speak out against this sameness, having new and troubling insight to offer about the structurally racist and class-based boundaries on their educational and personal journeys. It is the voices and experience of these college students mapping on to the experiences of high school mentees and the mentoring literature that will serve to embolden a critique of mentoring with the hope of strengthening practices that disrupt dominant order rather than replicate.

Conclusion

This chapter explored the key frameworks upon which this study was constructed. Criticality in the form of discourse, pedagogy, and race has shaped how the existing literatures on service-learning and mentoring were examined. Articulating service-learning as a critical pedagogy and viewing it through a critical lens focusing on race and discourse provides the necessary background from which to launch this study. Speaking to and against the victory narratives in both service-learning and mentoring allows this study to move in the direction of being “accountable to the complexities” and an opportunity to critique these scantily-scrutinized though highly popular practices. What follows is an articulation of how these frameworks informed the guiding questions as well as rich description of the use of qualitative research design in this study.

CHAPTER 3: “RACING” CRITICAL QUALITATIVE RESEARCH: NECESSARY COMPLEXITIES

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter outlines the research design for this study. The elements of epistemology, theoretical framework, data collection methods, data analysis, and validity practices are offered here as the essential constitutive elements of the study. I conclude this chapter with a discussion of my positionality, deep investments, and subjectivity relevant to my role as a “researcher” in this study.

Purpose of Study and Research Questions

I conducted a critical, qualitative investigation into the ways in which racially underrepresented college student “mentors” at a predominantly white institution and their African-American, urban high school “mentees” from low socioeconomic backgrounds are impacted by their service-learning experiences. Specifically I am interested in how discourse shapes the ways in which “impact” within service-learning is experienced and perceived. Two dominant trends in the higher education service-learning research inform my approach to this study. The first trend is a lack of voice from students of color. “Students” in the research have been racially neutral and, upon closer scrutiny, refers largely to white students (Butin, 2005; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Green, 2003, 2001; Hayes &

Cuban, 1996; Jones, 2002; Jones & Hill, 2001; Nieto, 2000). The second trend is a lack of interrogation of the discourses that shape the researchers' analytic lenses and both the participants' and the researchers' behavior and perceptions in the service-learning context.

Use of qualitative inquiry

“The qualitative researcher studies things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.3). Qualitative inquiry seeks to illuminate and describe the ways in which people make meaning and experience the world around them. Since I seek to illuminate patterns and peculiarities about the ways racially underrepresented college students perceive the impact of the service-learning experience, qualitative inquiry most appropriately fits the investigation at hand.

Research Design

Ontology

This study is grounded in a critical, constructivist paradigm. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) described the constructivist assumptions under which I am operating as, “assume(ing) a relativist ontology (there are multiple realities), a subjectivist epistemology (knower and respondent cocreate understandings), and a naturalistic (in the world) set of methodological procedures” (p. 21). Critical assumptions join the constructivist stance on the social construction of reality and the role that dialogue and interaction play in shaping this reality. In the words of Patti Lather (1989), “Doing

critical inquiry means taking into account how are lives are mediated by systems of inequality such as classism, racism, sexism, and heterosexism” (p. 104). This paradigmatic lens brings social, political, and economic factors to the fore in an effort to understand the ways in which systems of inequality shape our senses of reality, what is truth, and what constitutes knowledge. Thomas Popkewitz (1999), a significant post-critical voice in educational research, argued that the significance of critical paradigm:

lies in its oppositional stance toward the relation of state, power, and the knowledge of social science...Most training in social science posits a historical amnesia to the power relations inscribed in disciplinary knowledge...Critical traditions seek to reverse the historical amnesia by making the inscribed power relation as the problem of research. This occurs in two ways. One, there is a disciplined questioning of the subtle and indirect ways in which power works...Two, critical traditions are concerned with the implications of intellectual works to the formation of political projects (pp. 6-7).

Service-learning is a highly-regarded teaching pedagogy whose popularity and reputation is deeply enmeshed in the “historical amnesia” regarding schooling and community service is deeply political projects in which power relations have been dogmatically inscribed. I see service-learning as an explicitly political project and its aims can run the range from maintenance of the status quo to social transformation. The race and class-neutral approach to studying student impact in service-learning is hardly surprising given this view of the social context in which service-learning is embedded. This research project seeks to work against an amnesia of sorts that allow “service” and

service-learning” as political projects to go unnoticed and relies heavily on a critical, constructivist ontology in order to stand both apart from and within service-learning pedagogy.

Epistemology

Gloria Ladson-Billings (2000) describes epistemology as “linked intimately to worldview...that is, how one views the world is influenced by what knowledge one possesses, and what knowledge one is capable of possessing is influenced deeply by one’s worldview (p. 258). A critical paradigm asks questions about how this worldview has been inscribed by the dominant order. A critical epistemology seeks to “develop a worldview that differs from the dominant worldview” (Ladson-Billings, p. 258).

Ladson-Billings (2000) argues in her chapter on racial paradigms in the *Handbook of Qualitative Research (2nd Ed.)* that developing worldview apart from the dominant is akin to developing a kind of double consciousness. She argues that subordinated peoples have developed this “perspective advantage” or “wide-angle” vision as a result of not being located in the center. This double consciousness is also more than providing an alternative or additional perspective since conceptualizing it in this way does nothing to disrupt the dominant hold on the center. Rather, this wide-angle perspective “reveals the ways that dominant perspectives distort the realities of the other in an effort to maintain power relations that continue to disadvantage those who are locked out of the mainstream” (Ladson-Billings, p. 263).

This study seeks to develop a wide-angle perspective for myself and encourage this intellectual work in the research participants in order to do the active work necessary

to have a double consciousness central to a “racialized epistemology.” Ladson-Billings (2000) argues that this active intellectual work is necessary in order to disrupt the influence of “schools, society, and the structure and production of knowledge designed to create individuals who internalized the dominant worldview” (p. 258). The participants in this study identify as subordinated peoples and are engaging in a pedagogy whose internalization of a dominant view of school and society is under-examined. A racialized epistemology is central to this project of articulating the double-consciousness of these students in service-learning.

A racialized epistemology differs from a strictly subjectivist epistemology in that it requires a consideration of the ways in which knowledge and perspectives are not only socially constructed but also inscribed by the dominant center. A subjectivist epistemology suggests that students and I co-constructed our understandings of service-learning since realities are many and constructed through social interactions (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). As the researcher, I was an active participant in the ways participants made sense of their experiences. A subjective epistemology works against any restricted, “real” definition of the impact of service-learning. A racialized epistemology demands the next step, a double consciousness about the ways these identities are not only conceptualized and performed but also shifting, constantly constructed, and heavily mediated by our dominant-inscribed contexts: the context of service-learning and the context of researcher-researched dialogue.

Methodology

This study involved thinking through different methodologies in order to allow for an exploration of competing analyses and lenses and the ways in which these “reads” are heavily inscribed. As a result, three methodologies were critical in shaping the subsequent analyses of the data, Instrumental Case Study Methodology (Stake, 2000), Critical Race Methodology (Solorzano & Yosso (2002) and Critical Discourse Analysis (Foucault, 1972; Phillips & Hardy, 2002). The first “read” of the data draws from a instrumental case study methodology in order to examine this particular case in order to understand the ways in which external stakeholder interests (private and governmental granting agencies) shape what we might discern as the “outcomes.” The second “read” of the data draws from critical race methodology because of the study’s larger interests in foregrounding the voices of students of color in a critique of the ways in which racialized oppression operates in this highly popular, white dominated pedagogy. The third “read” of the data draws from critical discourse analysis because of the need, in this study, to examine the discourses which shape the students’ experiences, gain dominance in the performance of service-learning, and are simultaneously interrupted by the perspectives of these students.

Instrumental Case Study

Instrumental case study research offers me the opportunity to create a “bounded system” in which the course becomes the case and is scrutinized in depth for what we might understand about how students of color perceive, participate, and interrupt external stakeholders’ interest in service-learning. According to Stake (2000), instrumental case

study is appropriate “if a particular case is examined mainly to provide insight into an issue or to redraw generalizations” (p. 437). While the case, or course, is of interest, the power of external stakeholders to shape the “victory narrative” that dominates the service-learning research is of primary interest as a way to understand the terms upon which program implementation and research are funded.

Titscher, Meyer, Wodak & Vetter (2000) argue, “case studies are particularly appropriate if the context is unusually rich or complex” (p. 43). Merriam (1988) offers four properties of case studies that must be considered before selecting case study as a research design. Case studies must be “particularistic,” or focused on a bounded situation; these studies are “descriptive” in their end product through the use of thick description of what is happening; case studies are “heuristic” in that they bring fullness and new understanding to the reader’s previous knowledge about the issue; and they are “inductive” so as to draw generalizations and concepts from the data (pp. 11-13). This particular study will proceed with these characteristics in mind, seeking to illuminate the ways external interests shape what we might see in this particular case and how that is congruent and divergent from how the students of color experience service-learning. Using instrumental case study, I offer rich description of these understandings nested in the complex context of this service-learning course and draw conclusions and concepts from the data in ways that reflect and challenge the existing literature and theorizing in service-learning and critical pedagogy.

Critical Race Methodology

Critical race methodology was first articulated by Daniel Solorzano and Tara Yosso (2002), both Latina/o Critical (LatCrit) Theorists who were educational researchers seeking to offer a qualitative methodology drawing from critical race theory (CRT). The goal of critical race theorists in education is to uncover the ways in which race and racism operate in education and in the lives of people of color in the United States alongside the transformation of those oppressive structural and cultural aspects of education (Parker & Lynn, 2002). Critical race methodology aims to move discussions of race and racism from the experiential to the theoretical and offers “a theoretically grounded approach to research” (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 24).

Solorzano & Yosso (2002) articulate five important elements that inform the basic insights and perspectives of critical race methodology. The five elements are:

1. The intercentricity of racialized oppression that examines the “layers of subordination based on race, class, gender...” (p. 25),
2. a challenge to dominant, objective, colorblind, race-neutral, meritocratic ideology,
3. a commitment to social justice and liberatory transformative resistance to race, gender, and class oppression,
4. the legitimacy and centrality of experiential knowledge of people of color in understanding racism and marginalization; and
5. the transdisciplinary perspective that seeks to place racism in historical and contemporary contexts (pp. 25-27).

Critical race methodology is appropriate for the study of racialized identities in the context of this research on the experiences of students of color in service-learning because it interrogates how “educational institutions operate in contradictory ways, with their potential to oppress and marginalize coexisting with their potential to emancipate and empower “ (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 26). It is my belief, supported by the service-learning literature, that service-learning as a pedagogy with goals ranging from effective citizenship development to social transformation (Eyler & Giles, 2000; Kahne & Westheimer, 1999; O’Grady, 2000) has the potential to both empower and oppress. The goal of this research project is to delve into these contradictions by gaining a richer understanding of the ways in which student of colors perceive and participate in the racialized complications inherent in the server/served relationship as well as the white, middle class paradigm shaping the discourse in service-learning.

Critical Discourse Analysis

As discussed in Chapter 2, discourse shapes the ways in which one is able to perceive and perform oneself. This study is interested in how students of color both perceive service-learning and perform oneself within its context and how that maps on to and disrupts the dominant, white discourse. Critical discourse analysis as informed by critical and cultural theory and, most significantly, by Michel Foucault (1972), is the other methodological framework guiding this study. Discourse analysis places a focus on the constructive effects of language and seeks to discern the ways in which social realities are produced (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). Critical discourse analysis has a concern with

context and a focus on power. This approach to discourse analysis examines what has been excluded and what has been constructed as natural.

Inherent in a critical approach to discourse is an interest in the struggle and conflict between the dominant and competing discourses. French philosopher, Michel Pecheux (1982), also a contemporary of Foucault, theorized the relationship between ideological struggle and discourse. Speaking on the connection between ideology and discourse, he posited, “It is ideology that designates what is said and what ought to be. It is ideology that supplies the evidentness with which ‘everyone knows’...the evidentness that makes a word or utterance ‘mean what it says’ ” (p. 111). Words, therefore, are assigned with meaning and force depending on their relationship to dominant ideology. It is the discourse or the “discursive formation” that produces an ideology’s dominance. Where Foucault diverges from Pecheux is in the contention that an individual can stand outside of ideology. His critique of ideology disagrees with the work of Karl Marx and Michele Pecheux which assumes that one can stand outside of ideology in order to critique it, while also holding that there is a “true” consciousness from which to speak (Mills, 1997). For Foucault, there is no “true” consciousness because we cannot fully stand outside of the discourse and ideology we seek to critique. As a result, the struggle and conflict inherent in discourse is that an individual, or the subject, is a contested terrain in which she/he are “enmeshed in numerous discursive and social structures that to a greater or lesser degree shape an individual’s identity. Further, individuals are not of one mind but have contradictory and fragmented consciousness” (Pecheux, p. 113). While the dominant discourse is structuring the subject, “we also create our own new and

different constructions which are potentially liberating” (Mills, p. 15). The project of discourse analysis is, then, not to stand outside of it in order to full reject, throw out, and prove its falsity.

Because my project relates to the ways in which students of color engage, disrupt, and propagate dominant discourses of “impact” in the context of service-learning and the inherent server/served relationships, I seek to understand the fluidity and ambiguity in the ways in which these students experience and shape this pedagogy. A Foucauldian, critical approach to discourse analysis, “reveals that power can be exercised by creating meaning for social objects and that certain identities are able to have an influence- even organizations that lack traditional power” (Phillips & Hardy, 2002, p. 47). My project is not to solely discern the ways students of color are held hostage to a discourse against which they cannot struggle. Can service-learning, a highly popular educational pedagogy and vehicle for civic engagement and citizenship development, be a place where racially and socioeconomically underrepresented students at PWIs be empowered to flourish and articulate their senses of being civically engaged on their own terms? Where are the contradictions? How do these students see and experience these contradictions?

Research Methods

Research site

A year-long undergraduate service-learning course at a small, private, predominantly White liberal arts college located in a suburb of a large urban metropolis in the Midwestern United States served as the research site for this study. According to

the Ohio College Association (Ohio College Association Website, <http://www.ohiocollege.org/AlphaGuideResults.asp>), in 2007 the college enrolled 3,184 students and its demographic makeup was as follows:

- Female students: 2,133 (67%)
- Female students of color: 165 (5%)
- Female international students: 16 (.5%)
- Male students: 1,051 (33%)
- Male students of color: 88 (2.8%)
- Male international students: 4 (.1%)

95% of students at this college receive some form of financial aid to cover the tuition and room/board annual cost of \$32,214 (Otterbein College Website, http://www.otterbein.edu/admission/fast_facts.asp).

The community partner was a college access program held at a predominantly African-American center-city high school in a nearby urban school district. This school is listed by the Ohio Department of Education as having emerged from “Academic Emergency” and was listed as in “Continuous Improvement” for the 2006-2007 academic year (Ohio Department of Education Website, http://webapp2.ode.state.oh.us/reportcard/archives/RC_IRN.ASP?irn=043802). During the 2006-2007 year, the demographic makeup of the school was as follows:

- Average daily enrollment: 556
- 94.5% African-American
- 3.5% White

- 94.5% “Economically Disadvantaged
- 65% Graduation Rate
- 55.9% of graduates taking ACT
- 15.4 mean ACT Score

Students of color at the small, predominantly White liberal arts college and at the urban, predominantly African-American high school participating in the service-learning course were asked to participate in this study. The college service-learning course entitled, “Mentoring Theory and Practice” and offered through the communications department, was a 3-credit course held in the winter and spring quarters of 2007. A long-time, teaching award-winning White, male instructor created the course and has taught it every year since 2000, partnering with this specific high school and urban district on a variety of projects since 1989. The course introduces theories of mentoring and communication to both college student mentors and their high school mentees. Together, these students introduce theory through journal writing and storytelling to their sixth and eighth grade mentees at three feeder middle schools to their urban high school. The service-learning course culminates in the production of a “Writer’s Diary” in which students ranging from 6th grade through juniors in college share their personal stories of aspirations, obstacles, strategies, and resiliency in order to create a district-wide dialogue around personal success and academic achievement/college aspiration.

The service-learning course and partnership had several different funding streams which impact the ways in which I will “read” the experiences of the student participants. The predominantly White liberal arts college hosted the course and provided support for

the program in a traditional course-funding model. This course was part of the instructor's contractual course load. The course met weekly in the college's academic buildings for both the college and high school students. There were also regular Saturday meetings at a college computer lab for all of the students to write and edit their entries for the "Writer's Diary."

The service-learning design required additional funding support in order to provide district-approved transportation for the high school and middle school students to the college. Regular weekly course meetings for the high school and college students happened in the later afternoon and required that dinner be provided to all of the students, which also offered important relationship building opportunities between the students and insight into campus life at this small college. There were many supply needs for the course related to transportation and creating/publishing the 80+ page "Writer's Diary." This additional funding came from a private community foundation grant from the local urban metropolis and from a federal government grant with a focus on urban youth college access and personal capacity building. Both grants promised "deliverables" that mirrored one another and will be discussed in greater detail during the first "read" of the data in the next chapter.

Sampling strategies

The service-learning experiences of the college students of color at the small, predominantly White, liberal arts college were the primary focus on this project. In order to engage the whole of the experience, it was important to include the high school students of color in this research project because of their critical role as both the college

student “mentees” and the “community partner” in this service-learning design. This course enrolled six (6) college students, all identifying as students of color and both racially and socioeconomically underrepresented at their college. Fifteen (15) high school students, all identifying as African-American from low to working-class families and not underrepresented on either dimension at their school, participated in the program and met weekly with the college students during the 2007 winter and spring quarters. Together, these twenty-one (21) students formed the group of possible research participants from which I could sample.

Purposeful sampling was used to allow for the selection of participants for interviews, document analysis, and focus groups who were appropriate for the goals of this study (Patton, 1990). “Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purposes of the research” (Patton, p. 169). Intensity sampling is a type of purposeful sampling seeking to identify “information-rich cases that manifest the phenomenon of intensity...one seeks excellent or rich examples of the phenomenon of interest, but not unusual cases” (Patton, p. 171). Finally, opportunistic sampling allows for “following leads during fieldwork, taking advantage of the unexpected” (Patton, p. 183). As a result of immersing myself in this service-learning experience and being an active, weekly participant observer at the class sessions, the bi-weekly “mentoring sessions” with the middle school students, and the weekend editing sessions for the final two months of the project, I was able to offer all of the college and high school students the opportunity to participate in the individual, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and/or document analysis portion of this study.

Sample Size and Demographics

Patton (1990) suggests, “There are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry,” but also recommends, “qualitative sampling designs specify minimum samples based on expected reasonable coverage of the phenomenon...” (pp. 185-186). Given issues around “doability,” triangulation of methods, and seeking a saturation of themes, I sought to have as many of the six college students as were interested participate in the project. I also sought to include as many of the fifteen high school students as were possible in the individual interview and focus group given issues of parental consent and time constraints. In the end, five of the six college (83%) students participated in the individual interviews and document analysis and ten of fifteen high school students (67%) participated in the focus group, individual interviews, and document analysis process.

Demographically, the gender representation included one college male, four high school males, four college females, and six high school females. All students were traditionally aged for their class standing. In terms of race amongst the college students, two students identified as bi-racial; two students identified as African-American; and one student identified as Latina. The high school students were racially more homogeneous. Nine of the ten students identified as African-American and one student identified as bi-racial (African-American and Japanese). Socioeconomic status was salient to the college students and four of the five of the participants identified as working class; two of those four participants had family situations involving serious unemployment and tenuous

housing circumstances. One of the five participants identified as wealthy. This student was also the one international student in the entire sample.

The socioeconomic status of the high school students was harder to assign words to given their current schooling circumstances. According to the State Department of Education, 94.5% of the students enrolled in this high school were classified as economically disadvantaged during the 2006-2007 academic year (Ohio Department of Education, <http://ilrc.ode.state.oh.us/Downloads.asp> retrieved on 1/27/08).

“Economically disadvantaged” is defined as meeting one of two criteria; eligible for free (family income at or below 130% of federal poverty level) or reduced-price (family income at or below 185% of federal poverty level); and recipients of public assistance. Given that 5% of the students were classified as economically advantaged, the relative socioeconomic homogeneity likely contributed to a lack of class saliency. This is not to say that these students were unaware of their economic resources or lack thereof. Rather, there seemed to be an understood assumption of “economic disadvantage.”

Introduction to the participants

The study participants were an extremely candid group of college and high school students who came to this program and this study with a strong sense of purpose. The college students thoughtfully shared personal aspects of their lives before college and their experiences at a predominantly white institution that significantly shaped their involvement in this service-learning experience. The high school students were extremely willing to share their perspectives on the service-learning program and showed

a remarkable dedication to one another, to the year-long program, and to participating in this study.

The Participants

College students*

Micah	Male; college sophomore; African-American; out-of-state student from socioeconomically struggling neighborhood in very large urban metropolis in Midwest; two-parent home; both parents work outside of the home and have some college education; art major; not working outside of school
Tanner	Female; college sophomore; bi-racial (African-American and White); local student from same socioeconomically struggling, urban neighborhood in which partnering high school is situated; two-parent home; both parents work outside of the home and have some college education; working two jobs outside of school; interdisciplinary major; academic scholarship student
Marc`ia	Female; college junior; bi-racial (Latina/Venezuelan and Palestinian); international student from Canada; upper class socioeconomic status; one-parent home; both parents working outside of home and attained college degrees; journalism major; working one job outside of school
Dawn	Female; college freshman; African-American; local student from same, large urban metropolis and school district (though from different socioeconomically struggling neighborhood) as partnering high school; one-parent home; parent attained high school degree and recently unemployed/seeking employment; undecided major; working one job outside of school

Carmen	Female; college freshman; Latina; local student from same, large urban metropolis and school district (though from different socioeconomically struggling neighborhood) as partnering high school; one-parent home; parent attained high school degree and recently unemployed/seeking employment; undecided major; working one job outside of school
High School Students*	
Nathan	Male; high school sophomore; African-American; parents divorced- living with father and father's girlfriend and mother in Iraq; parents attained high school degree; identified as middle-class; not working outside of school; academically top 10% of class
Adam	Male; high school junior; African-American; one-parent household; mother attained high school degree and employed; father described as largely absent; identified as working class; working job totaling 40 hours per week; academically lower 25% of class
Cameron	Male; high school junior; bi-racial (African-American and Japanese); living independent of mother; mother education unknown; identified as working class; working job totaling 40 hours per week; academically midrange of class
Eve	Female; high school freshman; African-American; living with cousin- mother medically incapacitated; mother attained college degree and employed prior to medical crisis; not working outside of school; academically in top 10% of class
Melanie	Female; high school freshman; African-American; one-parent household; mother attained high school degree and employed; father described as

	largely absent; not working outside of school; academically in top 10% of class
Mariah	Female; high school sophomore; African-American; living with grandmother- mother involved with substance abuse and criminal justice system; father described as largely absent; not working outside of school; academically midrange of class
Keisha	Female; high school sophomore; African-American; one-parent household; mother attained high school degree and employed; father described as largely absent; not working outside of school; academically in top 10% of class
Vonte	Female; high school sophomore; African-American; one-parent household; mother attained high school degree and employed; father not discussed; not working outside of school; academically in top 10% of class
Robert	Male; high school freshman; African-American; one parent household; mother attended some high school and sporadically employed; father described as largely absent; not working outside of school; academically in top 25% of class
Shawntey	Female; high school junior; African-American; mother of three year old son; one parent household; mother attended some high school and unemployed; father not described; working job totaling 20 hours per week; academically midrange of class

* Pseudonyms replace actual names to facilitate confidentiality

Table 3.1 Description of Participants

Data collection

Instrumental case study, critical race methodology, and critical discourse analysis are the methodologies guiding this study and all leave open the methods of data collection and analysis (Jones, Torres & Arminio, 2006; Phillips & Hardy, 2002; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). In order to triangulate the methods, I collected data using a combination of participant observation, in-depth semi-structured interviews, one focus group interview and document analysis of the reflective writing done in the course. I sought to interview and interact with the students to the point of saturation and replication of themes (Charmaz, 2000).

At the beginning of the winter quarter, I talked with the entire class, both college and high school students, about the opportunity to participate in this study and the time commitment involved. I had follow-up conversations with any student who expressed an interest in order to clarify the purpose of the study.

Each college student participant took part in three in-depth, semi-structured interviews, at the midpoint of the first quarter and at the conclusion of the second quarter. The same first interview protocol was used for each college student participant during which time I asked questions about their experiences at the predominantly white institution, their past life experiences leading them to this mentoring course, and the insight and growth gained or not through the service-learning course (Appendix C). The initial questions were intentionally broad and vague in order to allow for the participants to shape the course of the conversation and the issues/experiences to be explored. For instance, some students spent a lot of time talking about the experience of being racially

underrepresented at the college versus identifying as the majority in their hometown, high school, and neighborhood. Other students talked a lot about their prior mentoring work and experiences being mentored in relationship to what was happening in the service-learning course.

In the second interview, the prepared questions were tailored to themes I was interested in exploring more in depth from the first interview, document analysis done on their written work, and my observation field notes (Appendix C). As a result, there were some consistent questions between participants focused on their reflections on what the service-learning experience had meant upon its conclusion. However, much of the conversation was unique to each participant's experience.

The third interview with the college student participants was a member check at which time I explored themes that emerged during our previous conversations, my analysis of their reflective writing, my observation field notes, and any relevant reflections from the high school student interviews. During this meeting, I presented each student with a "write-up" of the emerging themes and asked for their reactions and challenges to my perception of their experience.

The high school student participants took part in a focus group conducted "for triangulation purposes or can be used in conjunction with other data gathering techniques...group interviews could be helpful in the process of 'indefinite triangulation,' by putting individual responses into context" (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 651). This focus group lasted forty-five minutes during one of their journal writing sessions and took place in the library of the high school. The objective of this focus group "is to get high-quality

data in a social context where people can consider their own views in the context of the views of others” (Patton, 1990, p. 335). This focus group was semi-structured and the opening questions were shaped heavily by the goal areas for the program, as articulated by two external funding agencies. I was very interested in how the students’ perceptions of the impact of the service-learning experience mirrored and diverged with external expectations. I was also interested in how these students make meaning in the presence of one another and their treatment “community service” and “mentoring” as constructs to which they were applying personal experience. The focus group was semi-structured to allow for the participants to explore areas that resonated within the group rather than solely reflecting external constituencies areas of interest.

The high school students also participated in one half-hour, semi-structured, in-depth, individual interview at the conclusion of their year-long experience with the service-learning course. The purpose of this interview was to explore themes that had emerged in the larger group as well as in my analysis of their reflective writing and my observation field notes.

Data collection for this project also included participant observation. For two, ten-week quarters, I attended all weekly college class sessions and visits/programs with high school students and participated in discussions and activities. By doing so, I formed relationships with all of the college and high school students over time and was able to observe them in each of these service-learning contexts. According to Angrosino & Mays De Perez (2000), my role in the course and service contexts could be characterized by the “observer-as-participant” role, allowing me “to interact ‘casually and nondirectively’

with subjects” (p. 677). The purpose of being a participant observer was to gain a greater understanding of the ways in which students confront and navigate issues of identity and serving/being served within and outside of one’s community in the contexts of class discussions and interactions in the service setting. The kind of observation I did was typical of a “focused observation” since such an approach “necessarily entails interview, because the insights gleaned from the experience of ‘natives’ guide the (researcher) in his or her discussions...” (Angrosino & Mays De Perez, p. 677). My observation field notes were critical to shaping individual interviews and adding depth to my data corpus.

Reflective writing was a component of this service-learning course’s design. All of the students were also asked to write stories about their life experiences, goals, obstacles, and emerging wisdom. As a result, there was a depth of information-rich documents to be analyzed. Document analysis was an important compliment to the data corpus and was solicited at the time of the individual interview for the college students and during the high school student focus group. Ryan and Bernard (2000) offer that analysis of these texts is appropriate since text is an object and is also a “window into human experience” (p. 769). Writing that focuses on “situating the self” in relationship to their “other” in the server/served or mentor/mentee arrangements were of particular interest considering the ways in which “the other” in this service-learning context was not neatly delineated. Their writing can be thought of as racialized artifacts of these students’ experiences in service-learning. Hodder (2000) offers artifacts as “the intended and unintended residues of human activity, give(ing) alternate insights in to the ways in which people perceived and fashioned their lives” (p. 705). He goes on to offer that this

information is “important and different insight from that provided by any number of questionnaires” (p. 705). All of the participants were incredibly generous and chose to submit their written work for inclusion into the study.

Data analysis

One of the “problematic” aspects of the chosen methodologies guiding the analysis of the study is that there is no defined method (Jones, Torres & Arminio, 2006; Phillips & Hardy, 2002; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). This is also liberating as it leaves open the methods of analysis. As a result, I engaged the data three different times in a way that stayed close to the stories of the participants, marked my own ruminations and vested interests, and remained open to multiple and conflicting reads on the ways in which the dominant discourses at play were shaped, perpetuated, and transgressed. An interesting analytic project emerged in which the data was coded three different times, allowing me to mark and explore the multiple and competing interests at work in this service-learning experiences for these students of color. Elizabeth Allan’s (2003) discussion of her analysis of policy discourse captures the path that guided this analytic project. She stated,

While coding provides a means for discerning similarities and patterns, it also provided a mechanism for fragmenting the data in ways that allowed for different kinds of explorations. I analyzed themes that emerged on multiple levels by examining data in its original form and in its fragmented form (p. 5).

Phillips & Hardy (2002) warn of using more “systematic labor saving forms of analysis” as “they aim at rapid consolidation of categories” in critical discourse analysis

(p. 74). They argue for a highly emergent coding scheme that is individualized to be meaningful in light of one's particular study, context, and questions. During my analytic process, it was clear that there were multiple and conflicting "reads" of the data and the choice between them felt like a decision to "rapidly consolidate categories" in order to navigate the complexities embedded in this study.

As a result, the data analysis progressed in three distinct coding processes. The first "read" of the data was conducted by applying the "progress indicators" of the governmental and private grants funding this service-learning experience. While examining the data, it was remarkable the extent to which the interests and wishes of the grantors played a formative role in the decisions made by the faculty member in terms of the things that needed to be "fit" in and the kinds of stories I was eliciting from the participants regarding "their" experience. I, as the researcher, was not expected to produce any specific data to any external agency. However, the service-learning experience was introduced to me as an exemplar of the kinds of service-learning programs that would be important for urban youth, a focus area of the governmental grantor, and could be replicated across the geographic region. I made the decision to make these "progress indicators" explicit through an "a priori" coding scheme and share the resulting "story" in the first read of the data. This read is offered in the first section of the next chapter.

The second read of the data was guided by critical race methodology (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002) and sought to juxtapose the racially underrepresented students' experiences against the student outcome research in service-learning (e.g. Eyler & Giles,

1999). I was particularly interested in the themes that emerged and did not emerge in creating a story of these participants' experiences in a service-learning course that is not reflected in the larger collection of stories about service-learning in higher education. Because critical race methodology leaves open the method of data analysis, I used a constant comparative method of coding data described in the *Handbook of Qualitative Research, 2nd edition* (Charmaz, 2000). Kathy Charmaz brings clarity to the process used in the second "read" of the data in the following statement.

Through coding, we start to define and categorize our data... We do not, or should not, paste catchy concepts on our data. We should interact with our data and pose questions to them while coding them. Coding helps us to gain a new perspective on our material and to focus further data collection, and may lead us in unforeseen directions (p. 515).

This constant comparative method involved comparing people, incidents and issues, data on the same person at different points and time, and finally comparing emerging categories with other growing themes (Charmaz, 2000). Line by line coding produced a variety of "codes" which then grew into groups of codes, or categories. These categories, when compared began to elicit themes that told a story about the experiences of these students. All of this comparison was done through a researchers lens informed by critical race theory and guided by critical race methodology.

The third read of the data is the "counter-story" to those presented in the first two instances and draws from critical discourse analysis as its methodological grounding. The goal is to trouble the certainty with which the first two analyses and their themes and

categories speak. Elizabeth Ellsworth (1994), in her well-known critique of critical pedagogy, argued that we think about our categories as perfect and finished goods in and of themselves. What would it mean to think of these categories and stories as,

partial knowledges from which to grasp a particular constructed reality...they are partial in the sense that they are unfinished, imperfect, limited; and partial in the sense that they project the interests of “one side” over the other...they hold implications for other social movements and struggles for self-definitions (p. 97)?

The first two analyses of the data are explicitly speaking to and against dominant stakeholders in the service-learning conversation. This third read adopts a view of discourse as “dynamic constellation of words and images that legitimate and produce a given reality” (Allan, 2003, p. 46).

The project in the third and final analysis is to trace how the discourse of service and service-learning has functioned in this experience for racially underrepresented college students of color and myself as the racially overrepresented, white researcher and shaped a reality through historically accepted, naturalized, and widely reproduced statements of the purposes and uses of service. The goal is not to merely reject service-learning and this specific experience out of hand but to, in the words of Michel Foucault (1972),

disturb the tranquility with which they are accepted. We must show that they do not come about of themselves, but are always the result of a construction of rules of which must be known, and the justifications of which must be scrutinized (p. 25).

By doing so I offer some possible insight into the ways in which an identity-neutral, colorblind conceptualization and practice of service-learning has been socially constructed to be a common sense and communal good at the very core of its own institutional justification.

Researcher subjectivity

In addition to the elements of this research's design described above, my identity as a white, middle-class, advanced-degreed woman is another critical part of this study. My identity frames my subjectivity and, is therefore, important to explore given the assumption, articulated in the beginning of this chapter, that the participants and I co-constructed our experiences in this service-learning course. As Fine, Weis, Weseen & Wong (2000) stated,

We have a responsibility to talk about our identities, why we interrogate what we do, what we choose not to report, how we frame our data, on whom we shed our scholarly gaze, who is protected and not protected as we do our work (p. 123).

As the researcher, my identities as white, middle class, and advanced-degreed have been particularly salient to me throughout this entire process. This research context was one in which I was the racial minority, a rare experience given my racial positionality in the Midwestern United States. I have spent much time throughout my adult life considering the ways in which my white identity unequally grants me “privileges” and access to resources with significantly unjust consequences for racially non-white citizens of the same country. In many ways, race is always a particularly salient identity for me because of my multi-racial family. My partner is a black male and

my two children are multi-racial. As a result, I bring to this research project a deep investment in finding ways to de-center discourses promoted by the Whiteness project. I have seen and heard plenty from students, practitioners, and researchers in service-learning who look a lot like me. I know intimately the ways in which the color of a person's skin impacts the lens she or he brings to bear on the world. This research project was conceived of and implemented with an agenda that ought to be made explicit. I want to know more about the pedagogy of service-learning and I want to be informed by people whose racialized lenses are different from mine and the majority of people who have spoken about it over the last twenty years.

In the special edition of the *Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* (2003) dedicated to whiteness, Bergerson argues that it is inappropriate for white researchers to widely use Critical Race Theory in their work on race. She posits, "I believe this framework is too new and still emerging, thus particularly vulnerable to appropriation by whites...Currently there is too much danger of the power of CRT becoming co-opted by whites in ways that allow racism to persist" (p. 60). Audrey Thompson (2003) in the same issue of *QSE* takes this critique one step further. She suggests that while I might be a white scholar with deep anti-racist investments, my own investments in whiteness are less visible. As a result, we must work against taking for granted that:

our studied antiracism is the standard to which other whites should be held; at the same time, however, we may anxiously try to prove our antiracist credentials by positioning ourselves in unproblematic solidarity with scholars of color....white academics who take up the text (and lives and projects) of people of color for

progressive purposes risk exploiting them for our own insufficiently examined ends (pp. 10-11).

At the same time, and as evidenced by Tara Yosso's call in her article on Critical Race Methodologies (Solórzano & Yosso, 2004), there is a need to ask critical questions from a CRT perspective that have the potential to bring awareness and commitments to anti-racist work. It is important to consider, however, the ways in which my "good" intentions of bringing marginalized students' voices to the center is dangerous and may be another example of a white researcher co-opting the scholarship and voice of people of color for his/her own purposes. Reflecting on how my project is dangerous has opened me up to the emotional debate in whiteness literature about the possibility of displacing voices of the marginalized and replicating the pattern of white holding the center. Gayatri Spivak (1999) articulates the concept of erasure that has been vital to helping me move from this stuck place. There have been moments where my project feels so harmful and narcissistic that I can hardly consider moving forward. Placing my understanding and investments in anti-racist work by white people under erasure, along with my conceptualizations of social justice, equality, and freedom are all necessary acts to move me through this "aporia", or stuck place (Spivak). I can choose to act because of, including, and in spite of the complications. My work in a service-learning classroom, discussions with a diversity of students, and reading in critical race theories reminds me of the need, though complicated, for voice and representation to be examined when educational processes, tools, and institutions are named as powerful and transformative by the established power structures.

My rationale for carrying on with this project is deeply rooted in the ways I feel informed by poststructural feminist theory. “Poststructural feminists serve as eloquent models- savvy bricoleurs- women who, have duly struggled with the schizophrenia of language, move resolutely toward faint intelligibles they hope will enhance the lives of women” (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 479). Moving resolutely toward faint intelligibles given the complications and limits of our knowledge and language resonates powerfully for me. Anti-racist work and dedicating oneself to social justice struggles is about fighting the good fight. I own my belief in the claim that service-learning can be a powerful tool in anti-racist, social justice work. Poststructural theory demands, however that I “understand that your (my) knowledge of me (racial other), the world, and ‘the Right thing to do’ will always be partial, interested, and potentially oppressive to other, and if I can do the same, then we can work together” (Ellsworth, 1994, p. 115). Putting service-learning under the lens and centering a voice previously underrepresented in the research and literature across education, let alone service-learning, disrupts the “victory narrative” and seeks to make my and the establishment’s investments visible.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness, or validity, of this study is of central importance and requires intentionality of research design. “Research is trustworthy if the conclusions are faithful to the data” (Wideen, Mayer-Smith & Moon, 1998, p.131). The following methods were used in order to address issues of trustworthiness as derived from Lincoln & Guba’s (1989) parallel validity criteria. It is important to note here that these “methods” for “achieving” validity are in no way meant to enhance any claims about uncovering “the

real” in terms of the way in which racially underrepresented college students and their high school mentees of color experienced service-learning.. Susan Talburt (2002) articulates the danger in leaning on validity measures to ensure quality in qualitative research. She states:

I question the linear, teleological understandings of inquiry’s purposes based on a contention that ‘real’ about which research would produce knowledge is not necessarily desirable and is necessarily elusive to qualitative inquiry. I lean on an idea of inquiry as conversation but cannot conclude with certainty, and argue for research that encourages but does not necessarily direct thought and difference (p. 6).

It is with an eye for research offering different insights that produce new questions, rather than new definitions of service-learning, that issues of validity, or goodness arise. These methods are at once a means of articulating efforts I have taken, as the researcher, to be ethical in the work and as true as I can be to the stories and knowledge created between myself and my participants in this research experience.

Triangulation of methods

“Triangulation reflects an attempt to secure in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000,p.3). The use of multiple methods alongside researcher observation and journaling works against reliance on one method and allows for both convergence and divergence of stories. Individual interviews, focus group interviews, document analysis, researcher journaling, and participant observation were all data collection methods that sought to elicit divergence and congruence in the

experiences and understandings of the ways in which the service-learning project was experienced by these participants. Denzin and Lincoln argue that triangulation is not necessarily a tool for validation but Talburt (2002) argues for it as a discursive validity practice. “Placing perspectives and actions into relations that aren’t always neat highlights the very real contradictions, movement, and change subjects live out within and across contexts” (p. 14). Different settings and modes for the participants of telling their stories are more apt to offer different ways in which their experiences are constructed and relayed.

Peer debriefing

In order to avoid going this alone and relying solely on my own interpretation and proceeding in an unrestrained fashion, I asked two colleagues with experience in service-learning to serve as my peer debriefer and inquiry auditor. Peer debriefing offers a mechanism for discussion and reflection with a someone outside of the research experience in order to locate and manage my role as the researcher, hoping to both gain greater awareness of where my investments are at play and ways in which I may be crowding out the voices of my participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1989). Both the inquiry auditor and the peer debriefer know my study thoroughly, though the inquiry auditor followed my paper trail and the ways in which I analyzed and interpreted information. The peer debriefer was an important, though less evasive check on my thought process, design construction, and researcher reflexivity. I met weekly with these two colleagues for several hours during the months of data analysis and writing.

Negative case analysis

In my data analysis, I was very interested in examples of negative case analysis, or “the instances and cases that do not fit within the pattern. They may be exceptions that prove the rule. They may also broaden the rule” (Patton, 1990,p. 463). This helped give some assurance that I had worked the data and was paying close attention to what is unique and problematic about the stories. In many ways, the third “read” of the data was a process of negative case analysis. The fear with interpretivist work is that the researcher molds the data to fit his/her preconceived ideas and larger agenda. Negative case analysis helps work against this. For example, in the third “read” of the data, I delve into the perceived lack of college student engagement that is a dominant theme from my observation notes. While the first two “reads” of the data suggest some important and mostly positive themes, this third read inserts a complication presented in the data that speaks in a contrarian voice and, as such, offers a negative case analysis.

Member checks

Sharing my researcher interpretations with the participants early on in the process and at the end of the study was particularly important for trustworthiness. Data from these member checks is included in the analysis throughout the study. The member check allowed for more than just verification or clarification of what was offered by the participants. Susan Talburt (2002):

The member check can allow for clarification, explanation, or extension of questions and ideas, just as it can offer important insights into participants’ understandings of self and context...the points of consensus and dissensus that a

dialogic rendering of member checks can offer creates a more polyphonic text than one that only verifies the accuracy of the data and interpretations (p. 13).

The member checks were performed in the third interview with the college students and via email and in the individual interview with the high school students. I was particularly interested in their reactions and perspectives on what I was seeing and thinking. Some of the college students and many of the high school students seemed to value the opportunity to instruct me on what they thought about what I was seeing, feeling, and thinking. One student remarked, “This is so cool I think I’d like to talk to you later about if I should do a ph.d. in the future.” These member checks were more than getting permission or approval. Rather it was a deeper way to engage interested participants in the burning issues of the study. It is important to note that not all students were as interested in weighing in. Two of the college students and three of the high school students were not interested in participating in member checks and did not respond to emails or phone calls to arrange for these to happen.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree of description such that a reader understands enough about context, history, culture, and place to be able to determine whether or not the findings can be applied to other research and practice (Lincoln & Guba, 1989). I aimed to provide thick description of the themes and patterns emerging from the participants’ perceptions of their racialized experience in the service-learning course, at their predominantly white institution (in the case of the college students), and with issues of language around service and mentoring. Talburt (2003) pushes the use of

transferability to focus on not simply specifying things in such a way that its orientation is solely toward possible parallel context but “as invitations to readers to think differently about altogether different context. Inquiry may be most useful by simply offering new ways of thinking and interpreting” (p. 16). With this challenge in mind, my goal was provide depth of description and analysis so as to pose different questions and frameworks for others to use in context that may be similar, working with racially underrepresented students in service-learning, at predominantly white institutions, and with partnerships in which the boundaries between the server and served are up for negotiation.

Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations were at the core of conducting this research project in a responsible, reciprocal, and respectful way. As a bit of housekeeping at the first individual meeting with every participant they were asked to create a pseudonym, which opened conversations about the steps taken to hold our conversations with the utmost confidentiality. Processes for confidentiality were stated in the Statement of Informed Consent (Appendix D), Statement of Informed Assent (Appendix E), and the Statement of Parental Consent (Appendix F). Each of these statements made the voluntary nature of their participation clear. The students were given the statements well in advance of speaking with me to allow time to contemplate their involvement as well as discuss with guardians.

The nature of some of the things discussed between the participants and me was highly sensitive and their candor was critical to the quality of the data. For this reason,

invitations to participate in the study were not extended until the second quarter of the project. The first quarter was spent forming relationships based on trust and good fun. Students were able to read through my interpretations of their stories and offer insight and response in order to make sure they were comfortable with how my interpretations were coming along.

Conclusion

It is important to note that I have paid close attention to the principle of emergent design in this study (Janesick, 2000). Emergent design describes the flexible nature of a research design in qualitative inquiry. It is crucial to have a plan yet remain open to the changing directions the data may be illuminating. Hopefully, as a result of this process, the participants and I leave this experience with a deeper understanding of our own voice in the service-learning story and in the institutions in which we participate.

In this chapter I have outlined the structures undergirding this research project and the ways in which racialized epistemologies and critical paradigms inform the lens with which I viewed, understood, and interpreted the participants' points of view. The next chapter represents my "sense making" and the key findings this research design elicited. In line with critical and Foucauldian perspectives, it is my hope that my analysis has honored the complexities and complicities of service-learning in an effort to "open it up."

CHAPTER 4: ACCOUNTABLE TO COMPLEXITIES

FINDINGS

“Three Reads”

The purpose of this chapter is to walk through three distinct analyses, or “reads,” of data that emerged from this investigation of the experiences of college students of color in service-learning partnership with their high school students of color mentees. The first read is entitled, “A Priori Mapping with External Stakeholders’ Interests: An Instrumental Case Study.” This analysis draws from instrumental case study methodology (Stake, 2000) and examined the data looking through a research lens heavily informed by the pre-existing desired outcomes, or “progress indicators,” for the program as set forth by two external funding sources, the federal government and a private community foundation. The second read is entitled, “Constant Comparative Findings: A Critical Race Read.” This analysis drew from critical race methodology (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) and sought to stay close to the data and discern any themes coming from the voices and experiences of the participants as well as my own musings as a researcher and participant observer. The final read is entitled, “Critical Discourse Analysis: A Counter-Story.” This draws from critical discourse analysis and sought to trouble the certainty of the first two analyses through the lenses of Foucault (1972) and

Freire (1971). The data speaks in contrarian and complicated ways and this third read reflects the tensions and complexities of the experiences of the participants.

A racialized epistemology grounds all three analyses and, as such, I seek to understand the ways that a dominant perspective on schooling generally, and service-learning specifically, is experienced by these students and both disrupted and perpetuated given their locations on the margins. The perspective of students of color is dramatically underrepresented in both the research and application of service-learning. I maintain that the students of color who participated in this study have much to share about the workings of a whiteness-dominated ideology and its impact on whether and how students of color generally participate in a pedagogy highly lauded for its socially and personally transformative potential.

Critical race theory (CRT) informs the theoretical lens through which I viewed the data. Despite the literature on service-learning from a social justice or Freirean perspective, there has been very little research that has used this lens to view any number of research questions related to service-learning, let alone questions regarding the experiences of students of color (Verjee, 2006). This study's potential contribution may lie in the use of CRT as a theoretical lens and the racialized understandings that may stem from such an approach. CRT emerged from promises delayed or reneged upon by legal action and civil rights legislation since the progress of the 1950's and 1960's. Colorblindness has been a central tool in retaining whiteness's hold on the social and economic order, allowing only the most overt and "egregious" racial acts and policies to be redressed. This colorblind stance has permeated the research in service-learning,

allowing the ways in which race has shaped a dominant world view and its subsequent social and educational practices to go unacknowledged, let alone under-researched. The analyses that follow stay close to these epistemological and theoretical assumptions as an intentional effort to discern new understandings about the rhetorical promise of service-learning with the goal of turning rhetoric into reality.

A Priori Mapping with External Stakeholder Interests: An Instrumental Case Study

The interested stakeholders, the federal government through funding from the Corporation for National and Community Service and a private community foundation, provided funding that made the partnership between the college service-learning course and the high school college aspiration program possible. The funding made logistics like transportation of students between the college and the high school and dinners at the campus cafeteria possible. These logistics were central to the service-learning design of this course entitled “Theories of Mentoring” offered through the communications department. These external stakeholders largely defined the desired outcomes of the experience and this first analysis used their grant progress indicators as an “a priori” coding scheme.

This analysis applied the coding scheme comprised of the stated “progress indicators,” or outcomes, of the grant funding across the high school and college student data. As a result, the high school and college student voices are combined in this read, though it becomes quickly apparent that the high school students’ voices and experiences dominate. It was as if the external stakeholders’ interests rarely applied to the college

students and their experiences, allowing for the high school students to be seen as “at risk” and, therefore, targeted in the desired outcomes.

Decrease in risky behavior

The themes emerging from this analysis spoke to a positive impact on the high school student participants on a variety of dimensions not shared with the college students. The high school students spoke of risky behaviors and their intentional decisions to reduce or avoid gang activity, to decrease or stop drug use, marijuana use specifically, and to engage in safer sex practices. They also spoke of and demonstrated an increased self-confidence and resiliency in the face of significant hardships like losing mothers to dementia and AIDS, experiencing sexual and physical abuse, intermittent homelessness, severe economic poverty, and teenaged parenthood.

Robert, a high school freshman, typifies this impact. He began the program as a distracted and disruptive presence in the first few weeks he attended. Something changed and he became more focused and present during discussions leading to a moment when he was musing about the connections between “meta-computational skills” and Robert Frost. When I spoke with him about the relative quick and dramatic change in his behavior he explained:

I used to smoke weed and so when I did it I started to come to College Club and I started to lose my focus. I thought to myself- wow I can’t listen or pay attention to anything. So imagine if I was still smoking weed when I was in college trying to focus. There was no way I would be able to understand what they were talking about. Coming to College Club made me think wow my attention span is getting

worse and I would sit there and blink hard or stare like this or laugh in the middle of class.

Robert's story resonated with many of the other high school students' stories about choices to disengage in risky behaviors because of the negative consequences that no longer seemed "worth it" or would make them look "stupid" in the eyes of their middle school mentees. There was an overall sense of increased confidence and belief in their ability to handle what has and may come as a result of the meaning they were making about themselves and their place stemming from this service-learning program, "College Club."

College aspiration

The other important theme that emerged from this first analysis was an increase in knowledge of and aspiration to college. Consistently the high school students talked about important new awareness of issues related to college financing, faculty/student relationships, workload, "extracurricular" realities of college life, requirements for admission, and the broad range of majors and opportunities available at a college or university.

Hearing from college professors and traveling to different campuses exposed the high school students to some important new information. The topic of college cost was a frequent point of conversation as well as new information. There was certainly awareness that costs were associated with college but hearing from the college students drove home the reality of loans and working multiple jobs in school in order to make ends meet and caused some consternation for the college students.

The weight of the financial burden of college was offset by a growing awareness of the enormous range of opportunities at college that far exceeded early ideas about being a basketball player, doctor, or teacher. A trip to a major Research I University illuminated this point. The students were sitting in a cafeteria on this campus that overlooked the new recreation center facility. Students saw “adults” doing things that looked like work around the recreational facility, which sparked a conversation about “what do you have to do to get that job.” Suddenly a discussion about athletic-related majors and careers broke out between me and some of the college and high school students led by the high school students’ observations and insights. This was followed by a larger group discussion with faculty and staff about the university and the wide range of majors, admission requirements, and programs for in-state citizens, etc. This visit served to redirect some of the males’ foci to include more than playing Division I college sports and going pro. One student was going to plan a campus visit with an advisor in sport organization and another student began considering his “plan B” in case the pros didn’t work out which included majors like athletic training and recreation. College’s role in these children’s lives became more functional and possible.

While many of the students had a sibling, cousin, aunt, or parent who had either attended or graduate from college, the role of the popular media in shaping their prior perceptions of “college” was made very clear. Many of the students talked about being concerned that college students pursued one of two paths. College was either about drinking and partying or it was about a life spent in solitary study. As a result, many students were uneasy at the prospect of having to fit into one of those two molds prior to

participating in this service-learning program and spending time on the college's campus. They came to an understanding that your college experience is yours to shape and fundamentally your responsibility. From this they discerned something very powerful, that they had the skills to be successful in college because college was not some extraordinary event. College was the next step in a real life that has its challenges.

In a group discussion about this new understanding one high school student, Keisha, stated,

In high school and middle school, if you were absent you have people write you an excuse. In college you can't write no excuse why you are late- do you work, if you miss you have to catch up. College professors rely on you to do everything yourself. Let's say they give you a 1000 word essay to write. If you don't turn it in when it was due then they don't ask you about it, they don't say you didn't turn that it or your missing that. They expect for you to know what you are missing and find out what you are missing. Everything is on you- you are your own teacher and your own student. I'd say that is far less complicated.

The opportunity to get to know a college professor, regularly attend meetings on a campus, eat in the cafeteria, and talk with college students made the experience less of a mystery from their perspectives. The ability to make the connection with their own capacity to handle life's very significant challenges and their ability to navigate collegiate terrain was very directly connected to their experiences in the program.

Persistence and retention

In this analysis, the only finding that emerged across the high school and college student participants was an increase schooling persistence and retention. Many of the participants at the high school and college levels of the program were strikingly aware of the reasons behind their daily decision to persist in school. While their stories varied, involvement with the service-learning program was playing a very active role in encouraging their persistence. The service-learning program brought a relevance and motivation to persevere. The external funders' interests in increased retention were primarily focused on the high school students, labeled as at-risk and in need of assistance. Interestingly, motivation to stay in school emerged from the college student participants' voices and perceptions. The impact on retention was evident in three of the five college students. Tanner and Marci'a were both women who arrived on this predominantly white campus with a sense of purpose and confidence in their academic capacities. Marci'a was successfully creating an identity as a college journalist in the campus community. She was frequently audio and video taping the service-learning sessions and was the first to volunteer to take pictures. My observation notes at the beginning of the service-learning program frequently noted Marci'a's scattered demeanor and preoccupation with gadgets to the detriment of the group's focus and her engagement. Looking across my observation notes, I noticed a shift in my comments about Marci'a. I began seeing her more frequently engaged in one-on-one conversations with some of the high school students and her attendance became more regular. I explored my perception with Marci'a and the following exchange offers some insight into what happened and why:

Jen: How would you characterize it (her initial distraction)?

Marci 'a: I wanted to reach out more, but me personally, not knowing how or what to do.

Jen: It could be characterized by “looking lost” or another dynamic being distracted- texting, doing homework. Did you notice that? The ability to not be there fully?

Marci 'a: Yeah, I have noticed that myself at times.

Jen: What do you think was happening?

Marci 'a: It became better, I have noticed. For more it is more personal issues and the aspect of having more of a connection with the students it became easier and (distractions) happened less.

When I explored how this compared with other courses she was a part of in college she began to think about how she usually felt in class and the issues around identity and campus climate became salient for her.

Jen: How would you describe your experience in terms of campus climate?

Marci 'a: My comfort level is pretty low. Generally speaking from what I see and what not. I think part of the reason is that if you look at me, most people do not think Latina or inter-racial, and so I notice that I draw back...it was my freshman year I noticed that there was a divide, but I didn't intermix much because I was new here. I would sit with predominantly white students and they would even speak about it- “that is where all the black students sit.” There is that knowledge

about it but they won't speak about it openly. Or they will not acknowledge it openly.

Jen: Have you experienced any kind of climate difference between any other academic course and the mentoring course? Has this class felt different for you?

Marci'a: That is a good question because I never really thought about it. I guess you could say that I felt more at ease with the mentoring course.

Jen: How so?

Marci'a: I guess because I began to have a level of understanding or experience. Maybe not exactly but the fact that we are underrepresented. Having to deal with things like stereotypes and expectations of each of the individual races. Those issues don't come up like that (in the service-learning course).

Jen: What impact has having the relationships in the course had on you because it seemed like the impact grew as the connection grew?

Marci'a: For me it is more of an issue that I have learned more from them. I am getting more of a positive learning experience from them than I am giving at times, because I look at them and a lot of them are so amazing and strong. They have gone through so much yet you see them and they have a smile on their face. They are really...pulling through and it is inspiring.... I noticed that I have a more positive outlook on things. If they can overcome this and stay in school then so can I. It is in every aspect (of my life). I don't know if I can say specifically.

This exchange stood out to me as an interesting reflection on the connect between issues that became salient for her in the service-learning course, her contested racial

identity on campus and her lack of engagement as a way to feel safe, and a path towards sticking it out and taking care of business. When offered the opportunity to reflect on the service-learning experience, she drew lines between her growing connectedness with the service-learning students and a growing sense of resiliency because of what she gained from them compared to the ways she daily felt on her predominantly white campus.

Micah explicitly linked being a mentor in the service-learning program and its connection with his persistence in college and at this predominantly white institution (PWI) specifically. He did not experience college as a particularly welcoming environment for someone from the working class coming from an urban neighborhood with rich racial diversity. He reflected often that he “shouldn’t be there” in “other people’s eyes” and so he made a habit of sitting in the front of class and felt like it was his job to prove “others” wrong. His connection with the younger “mentees” was critical to giving him a reason to continue with this conflicted collegiate journey.

Micah: It kinda makes me glad I came to this (PWI). I like working with the kids and I like seeing them being happy and joking around and being kids. That pretty much makes this place (PWI) worthwhile.

Jen: So you feel like it was one of the reasons you stayed?

Micah: Yep, one of the reasons I stayed. I wouldn’t want the kids to be like “I like Micah” and then all the sudden I am gone and then have to tell them I am gone.

That would be messed up and I wouldn’t like it if I was a little kid.

When asked to think about his connection with his students keeping him in school, Micah offered the following:

Ability – we all have. There is more to us (African-American students) than what tests show. We can do more than what school claims we can do.

This service-learning program helped him connect why he stayed at the PWI with his desire to change the path for kids that he saw as “his community.” This was far more motivating than any external platitude offered from some well-meaning source. Micah struggled with his time in college but was clear why he engaged in the fight.

The impact on retention was also evidenced in the high school participants’ reflections on their experiences. Adam, whose brother was recently jailed for an extended term, talked a lot about the fact that the service-learning program has helped him make sense of why not to follow in his brother’s path. He had heard and received the message that he should not “be like his brother” but had not internalized his own reasons as to why. He was reflecting on some of the things he knew at the end of the program and he offered the following insight:

Jen: What are some of the things you know now?

Adam: To take my time and watch more than do because jumping into stuff doesn’t work because you don’t know the outcome but if you sit back and watch and talk to people who have been there and done that, they can tell you how to go about it...Just clear understanding of things, talking to people, listen to what people say and understand what they are talking about. It is a lot about the resilience it takes- I realized that- because there were a lot of people I had to cut loose as far as handling business- it is not about laughing and fun it is about time to play and time to be serious. Majority of time we have to be serious.

Jen: Are you thinking about any other goals for yourself?

Adam: Trying to aim very high as far as putting my fullest effort into everything I am doing so if I don't make it I can fall back... I don't plan on going any lower than that so aim high and fall short or aim high and be successful...if I am not good at something I am not going to continue that because that would do nothing but drag me down...I can't put my full effort in it- that would pull me down so I put more effort towards doing what is going to keep me maintained.

This rising senior left the year with a greater understanding and belief in his own capacity. Adam clearly tied this emerging need to stay in school and take care of his business to participating in this service-learning program. He was able to discern those things that will keep him on the path, the idea that there will be challenges, and a belief that he just needed to aim high. Staying in school, at all cost, and despite his family need for him to work 40 hours a week while in school, was central to that plan without question.

Shawntey, a high school sophomore with a three-year-old child, was one of the most consistent participants throughout the entire year. She rarely missed an event or class meeting and took a lot of pride in her commitment. Her academic record was of considerable concern and, coupled with her significant learning challenges and financial pressures of working while in school to raise her son, could have resulted in dropping out. However, when asked to reflect on why she was so steadfast in coming to the program, she stated:

It is helping me understand that I can do two things at once. I can be me and I can be mommy. At first I never thought about going to college having a kid. I was going to drop out of high school. I ain't got no other options. I joined college club (service-learning program) and I learned I can get an off campus apartment, finish my 4 years of college, graduate, and do two things at once and I was like, OK.

Her options became clearer and she ended the year with better information about what choices were at hand. Nearly all of the college and high school participants were juggling major personal commitments and pressures while trying to be a student. Though Shawntey's responsibilities included a child, as did some others, the weight of the burden across the participants was very similar. Helping students get in touch with their personal agency and resiliency was clearly a theme in the journey towards staying in school.

This first read of the data finds much agreement with the service-learning literature in terms of positive impact. The high school students reflected on important progress indicators like increased college aspiration, risky behavior, and persistence and explicitly linked them to the opportunity to participate in this service-learning program. The college student voices' emerged only in the area of persistence, which I found to be an interesting phenomenon. This read offered an opportunity to come to some quick conclusions about the experience but with a skepticism because of the critical race lens informing the entire study. Race was remarkably absent from the progress indicators and applying them to the data as codes created the same phenomenon in the telling of the story from this a priori, external perspective. My experiences as a participant observer

pushed me to try another read with a different set of analytic tools given my desire to speak both with and against the victory narrative of positive impact, a narrative the high school students found familiar but was simply not congruent with the college students' perspectives or performance in the service-learning course.

Constant Comparative Findings: A Critical Race Read

The second analysis brings forth the emergent themes from the voices of the participants, with a focus on the experience of the college students of color in this service-learning course. Two major stories emerged in this read of the data. The first story is about the college students viewing the idea of “community service” as a racialized construct typified as a “white, do-gooder” phenomenon. Despite this disconnect with “service” as marketed and enacted on their predominantly white campus, the second story is about the service-learning space being a critical environment to release and relax in the midst of their experiences as racially and socioeconomically underrepresented on campus. These two stories sit awkwardly together in this analysis and allude to a complex dynamic theorized in the third and final read of the data.

Service as racialized construct

The college students were somewhat incredulous when I spoke with them about the sense they were making of this “service-learning” experience. In fact, interesting responses to explicit questions about “service-learning” were repeatedly offered such that I probed this area in follow up interviews and member checks. These students simply did not view their involvement with the high school students as “service.” They often

shrugged off questions about motivations with responses like, “I am simply helping out where I can” or “It is the right thing to do.”

In unpacking these responses, these students explained to me that this service-learning experience was about being involved within their own community. Four out of five college participants identified both racially and socioeconomically with the high school students. While only one of these four were actually from the same geographic location, all four college students identified with these students both culturally and through shared experiences being metaphorically from “the neighborhood.” The fifth student, Marci’a, did not identify socioeconomically and was an international student from Canada with Palestinian and Venezuelan parents. However, she considered the high school students to be “of her community” because she shared the experiences of sexual violence with many of the high school women. The idea that they were in a service relationship with the high school students was received as an absurdity. Tanner, a college sophomore, summed up this disconnect in the following conversation during our second interview together.

Tanner: I think it is more about community building than community service.

That (community service) feels like I am obligated to do it. I think community service- there is an element of benevolence in it

Jen: Is benevolence a bad thing?

Tanner: Kind of. It (community building) is more about relationship building or empowering people and myself through this experience. I feel like it is centered around a relationship than doing the right thing just because you should do it.

As I continued to wonder about the resistance to the idea of “service,” I had a conversation in my second interview with Micah, a college junior, that seemed to illuminate this complex dynamic.

Micah: I don’t believe in community service because it is a dumb idea. Why should we be doing community service when you should be doing it anyway? That is why I don’t believe in it...It’s all good for them. I just don’t like the ones who do a ton of community service programs so it looks good on a sheet of paper...It seems like the people with the money that do stuff always feel better when they help out others, so they don’t feel bad that they can afford this, this, and this and splurge on things.

Exasperated and getting somewhat animated he stopped speaking and said:

Micah: I am going to stop there

Jen: What I hear you talking about...people with excess resources want to do something so that they don’t feel bad. When you do it, it is not about who has what. It is about being there for the person. Is that what I hear you saying?

Micah: Yea.

Jen: Does race get involved at all?

Micah: Yes.

Jen: Sometimes it is characterized as a “white, do-gooder” phenomenon. Is that close? I don’t want to put words in your mouth but I am trying to-

Micah interrupted me and with seeming to conceal a smile he said:

Micah: Yeah! I didn't want to say that myself, but yea! They are the champions who come to everyone else's rescue.

This conversation was important because Micah's non-verbals seemed to suggest a deeper understanding that he just didn't feel like he could share. We had developed a joking and friendly rapport over the year and this second interview took place in March of the academic year. This exchange seemed to signal both an unwillingness to be rude to a white woman, me, and a desire to name the white "noblesse oblige" that permeated his reaction to service programs on his predominantly white campus. Following up with other college students, it was clear that Micah had accurately captured the distaste and unmasked the ugliness of whiteness as racial superiority.

Service-learning space as release

Despite this reaction to the notion of service and because of the predominantly white environment in which these underrepresented college students of color were living and learning, it was very clear that the service-learning space was a resting place. The students frequently spoke of the class being a release and a time to "let your hair down." Their identities and abilities were placed under suspicion and doubt on their white campus and in this space the faculty member and I were the only white people. They walked into a room at least once, and sometimes twice, a week with black and brown faces of all ages from very similar economic circumstances. The stories in the room, regardless of school age, felt familiar. I also think it was not insignificant that this room was also an academic, credit-bearing environment for the college students; a fact that legitimized the space within the larger, white academy.

The college students were able to come and speak their first or second language in many instances without fear of odd glances or making people “uncomfortable.” They spoke of feeling like people in the room understood the pressures due to what it took for them to be in college. Four out of five of these students were working at least two jobs. Dawn and Carmen, first year college women, were both coming from family circumstances in which their mothers and siblings were at risk of being without a home and spent much time tracking which aunts were housing their mothers. This required not only a large expenditure of emotional energy but an increase in work hours in order to send money home.

Added to this were the daily “microaggressions” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002), or subtle actions and ignorance, which put their abilities and identity under scrutiny by their racially and socioeconomically different peers. In a conversation early in our first interview Dawn, an African-American woman, described what this course environment meant to her in the midst of the larger educational context.

Jen: Has the makeup of the class mattered to you?

Dawn: When I am in the class I am a little more relaxed than other classes because that is what I am used to and I still haven’t adjusted to the way (the college) is. So when I am in there I feel like I can be myself a little more.

Jen: Less to prove?

Dawn: Definitely

Jen: What kinds of things do people say?

Dawn: Not really saying anything directed towards me or black people period, but sometimes white people are a little- about some things they are undereducated.

Dawn went on to tell a story about the day Rosa Parks died and a discussion that ensued in a class when the professor acknowledged her passing. Dawn remembered that she was the only black person in the class and lots of eyes were turning her way at the mention of Rosa Parks, including the professor. The students' eyes were looking at her quizzically when one white woman finally broke the silence and asked, "Well, who is Rosa Parks?" Dawn was incredulous in the telling of this story and said that she simply looked at this student and mentally checked out as she refused to educate in the face of such hurtful ignorance.

In a conversation with Micah about his experience as an African-American male in this service-learning course as compared to his other courses he explained how he goes about proving his ability and right to be at the college. He began the conversation by telling me how he always sits in the front of the class.

Jen: Why do you sit in the front and not the back?

Micah: Because they expect me to sit in the back so I'm sitting in the front. They think I just don't want to be there and learn anything and think I'll sit in the back and fall asleep.

Jen: Do you think it has to do with the fact that you are a black male?

Micah: Yea. I shouldn't be here like the rest of us.

Jen: So you enter the mentoring class that is not largely white. Has it mattered to you? How do you feel in the class?

Micah: Yea it matters. I feel alright- a little bit more open ‘cause I know most of the stuff they’re going through. I went through it too or I could have gone through it. I can relate to them.

The college students were grateful for the chance to not feel like the “other” during the course of their week. This space was characterized as a time to rejuvenate and feel understood. This stands in contrast to the high school students’ description of the environment as a chance to tell your story so as to help someone else who might be in the same boat. The high school students were also grateful for the opportunity but it was more about being a guide for others in the midst of difficulties. The college students were far more inwardly focused, seeming exhausted every week and in need of a release. This dynamic had significant impacts on their approaches to the “service” or mentoring in the service-learning program.

As stated at the beginning of this second read, these two findings sit awkwardly together. In many ways this awkwardness typified the way in which these college students were situated on this campus. There was a deep and enduring stress alongside an underlying sense that one should be grateful for this college experience. There was an uncomfortable tension between feeling like the service-learning space where the people who were “like them” included and extended beyond the campus walls was critical to their collegiate survival while simultaneously rejecting the very idea of “service” in which they too engaged. They were clear that it was different and that they were not like the white and/or upper-class do-gooders like the others on their campus. However, there was an exhaustion and grasping for words to describe what it was they were doing. In the

search for words, the next read provides a critical discourse analysis to begin to discern the rules governing what could be spoken and the disconnects in this experience.

Critical Discourse Analysis: A Counter-Story

This final analysis of the data draws heavily from Michel Foucault's (1972) theorization of discourse and Paulo Freire's (1968) concept, "conscientization." Discourses are constituted by statements in their social contexts which contribute to the ways that context is understood, experienced, imagined, and permitted to exist (Mills, 2000). An examination of the discourses constructed and operating in this service-learning environment allows us to see the ways that phenomenon like "mentoring" and "empowerment" are constructed and where the dominant understandings are operating in ways that shape both reality and its subsequent enactment.

Freirean notions of "conscientization," or consciousness generated through the social practices in which we participate, and "praxis," or reflection and action upon the world in order to change the world, are also important in this analysis because of how both are central to service-learning's theorization and application as well as misunderstood or thinly applied as rhetorical devices to suggest rigor or authentic engagement. This analysis seeks to better understand a complex dynamic that unfolded during the course of the year, one in which the college students were largely absent as active participants and committed mentors and the high school students were eagerly engaged and enthusiastic about nearly every assignment or project undertaken in the course and their own mentoring roles with middle school students.

Discourse of duress

The college students participated in a discourse of duress that permeated their approaches to mentoring and their behavior in the classroom. My observation notes consistently commented on a perceived lack of engagement coming from the college students. I found myself musing about whether or not I was seeing resistance and wondering what was its subject. The college students were personally connected to the professor and spoke of him as a role model or as someone who has the job they would want one day. But weekly I would see most of the college students texting or openly having conversations on their cell phones. They would pull out their laptops and start working on other coursework in plain view. The professor would ask them to greet the mentees when the high school students arrived and they would remain sunken into their chairs, sometimes with their hoods on the heads and their MP3 players in their ears.

I probed my observations in interviews with the college students and they were all keenly aware of this dynamic as well, much to my surprise. Consistently the students told me that it frustrated them and they could also see where they were playing a part in this sense of disengagement. It was not that there was something happening that they did not like in the class or that they felt like this was not worth their time. Rather, they talked about a suspicion of mentoring and messages that were being sent to these high school students regarding a need to do well and overcome obstacles in order to get to college.

Four out of five of the college students spoke of never having any mentors that mattered. Micah talked about never even liking any of his “assigned” mentors in

summer programs in which his mother enrolled him. He laughed and mused about often trying to steal another kid's mentor. Dawn and Carmen both spoke of never remembering having any mentors assigned or otherwise. Somehow the mentoring push in their urban district missed them altogether. The one student, Tanner, who spoke at great length about a mentor with whom she kept in close contact also reflected on the idea that although she deeply respected her mentor, "life wasn't any better because of having a mentor and it certainly wasn't any better because of college."

This comment about life not being any better also resonated throughout the college student participants and is, perhaps, central to what constituted a discourse of duress operating in dramatic ways within this service-learning environment. Statements from the students illustrate the construction of this discourse and give some insight into what I was seeing as resistant behavior in the classroom. They are as follows:

- There is so much bad stuff and I don't want them to see it. (Marci'a)
- This college doesn't even think these kids should even be here. (Micah)
- I don't want to put my stuff on them. (Dawn)
- How can you mentor when you have so many problems? (Carmen)

These students had a fear of failure that loomed not only in their academic lives but also in their roles as mentors and the approach to mentoring became one of just hanging out and not getting too "out in front." The high school students read this as college students being stuck up or not caring about them. With the exception of Micah, the high school students were often at a loss to remember the college students' names and cited many instances in which they tried to make a connection with their mentors but to

no avail. The college students, in many ways, were completely exhausted and simply had little left to offer. They were constantly negotiating how much to give and seemed to hope that their mere presence was enough, as had been the case with mentors that had not mattered for them in the past. Oddly, their suspicion of past mentors or of mentoring in general was passed on despite their awarenesses and desire for this not to be the case.

Discourse of merit

The high school students, at first glance, seemed to stand in stark contrast to the college students' presence in the service-learning course. These younger students constructed and participated in a discourse of merit that permeated their approaches to mentoring and their behavior in the classroom. The high school students walked on the college campus with great pride and showing no outward sign to suggest that they were nervous or uncomfortable. I often commented in my observation notes that, but for the fact of puberty, it would be difficult to separate the high school students from the college students.

In probing the reasons behind their deep engagement and enthusiasm for the program that characterized this discourse, the students showed a steadfast belief in the power of merit. The larger message of the course was one of working through obstacles and achieving goals in order to become meritorious and able to get to college. There was a focus to these students' participation that looked forward and sought to help others look forward too. During a focus group discussion, one student summed it up. He said:

You have to be able to relate to things they went through in the past whether it is personal or non-personal and feel comfortable with them...you should be able to help them plus more.

Vonte, a high school female, shared:

It (the service-learning program) has been helpful cause being a mentor makes you think about – what would you do if you were in front of the kids or how would you act for them, even while I am out of the program. It helps me think about them and I try to better myself outside so I would not be a hypocrite and so I can get somewhere.

Their classroom behavior reflected this sense of purpose and “helping plus more.” Many of the high school students were active participants in complex discussions about metacognition, paradigms, and other concepts meant to enrich theorization of mentoring. Cameron, a high school junior and expectant father who had just become independent from his mother and was supporting himself financially, came to a session one day with deep bags under his eyes. He was quiet during a discussion of paradigm shifts that focused on helping people think about the lenses with which they viewed their own success and obstacles. The goal was to reconstruct a lens in order to achieve. The group ended the discussion and was adjourning to dinner when Cameron popped up with a burst of energy and ran up to the professor. He announced, “I think I got it,” and proceeded to reflect on its connection to his own personal, extremely challenging circumstances.

The group was also working on a writing project that was taking the form of a diary that would include reflections of college, high school, and middle school students

on obstacles, goals, and strategies for achievement. This project was grounded in a belief in the power of merit. Eve, a talented high school freshman whose mother was institutionalized for dementia and who subsequently was going between sister and cousin's home to stay, saw this writing project as a way to shed some baggage and to help others do the same. She reflected:

When I write and I hear it read- well I did good on the story. I figure like, hey, the story might help one of the kids out you know. So it is a good experience for me to hear my stuff read and hear how it sounds...I learn some grammar mistakes and I learn about going through something and just hearing about it. Hearing it makes me look at it from a different side-outside looking in. So I can do stuff differently now. Me acting out and stuff- I could do that differently. I could talk about it or write about it instead of acting out. It helps me decide what am I going to do different....It is fun too, writing, it helps getting your thoughts out and I like writing my stories and the thing I get out of it is that I learn things from the kids like, what they like and stuff like that.

Their mentoring behavior was also clearly tied in to this sense of taking the program seriously. These students felt like it was important to share their stories in order to warn students about taking middle school seriously, surviving sexual assault, dealing with parental drug use, and managing anger due to fathers' absences. They drew links between their ability to survive their circumstances up until this point and the usefulness of mentoring middle school students to encourage the same. It is important, however, to note here the seriously challenging context in which these students' are operating. While

these students are talking about resiliency and, in many cases, their mere presence never mind contributions to the service-learning program were a testament to the power of human spirit there was an uneasy tenuousness about these positive statements that needed to be explored.

A disconnect

The high school students were eager to try out ideas and engage in mentoring while operating in circumstances laden with ties to the depleted economic life chances that plagued their families and the community. There was a wide-eyed innocence to these students that belied the conditions around them. On one hand, this was the goal of the program. Make a plan, keep your nose to the grindstone, and keep your eyes on the prize despite all other messages to the contrary. The analysis of what was happening could stop there and simply conclude that the college students ought to find similar inner-fortitude and drive.

However, Foucault (1972) and Freire (1971) both demand that discourses of merit ought to be viewed with some amount of suspicion and the systemic context within which the individual actors are operating must be considered. These high school students are reflecting on barriers and obstacles that are present for reasons far more complicated than poor personal choice. These barriers of economic poverty, unsafe home situations, substance abuse, and the litany of other pressures lead these students to be enrolled in this large, urban high school perennially in academic emergency with administration that changes with each change in the academic calendar. While personal choice may work to

mitigate some of the effects of these situations, a systemic pressure exerts itself in such a way that survival becomes far more the exception rather than the rule.

The college students were, in many ways, standing on the other side of the much heralded hurdle of college admission and attendance. As expressed so often by those students, college has not made life any easier and certainly did not prevent mothers from losing jobs and homes nor did it pay the bills and ease any financial hardships. In the end, it turned out that Dawn and Carmen did not return to college at the end of the year due to their personal circumstances and abilities to manage those pressures as well as schooling demands. Carmen remarked, “My high school just didn’t make me work this hard.” Her high school was in the same urban district as the high school in this program but with a higher academic profile.

It was as if the college students were standing on the other side of high school graduation and were simply overwhelmed by their view of the systemic pressures clearly shaping their college experiences. Personal choice became now only part of the puzzle on how to succeed instead of the ticket to achievement and becoming more merit worthy. When it was time for them to speak or take a leadership role in conversations about obstacles and goals, what looked like resistance to my eyes at first glance now appeared to be speechlessness. They simply did not know what to say as exemplified in their comments about shielding students from the bad stuff. Silence and goofing around became their mentoring tools.

This view troubles the Freirean concepts of “Conscientization” and “Praxis” that are so often heralded as hallmarks of service-learning, particularly with articulated goals

of advancing the common good or doing the work of social justice. This course was clearly situated in this service-learning orientation. The high school students, alongside the schools at both the college and high school levels, had bought into an individualistic, meritocratic discourse that belied the very real systemic poverty and oppression exerting itself at every turn. Even the signs of inspiration on the walls of the high school seemed to taunt its passersby with phrases like, “Education is the Key” and “You Can Do It” written on old paper signs browned and dog-eared by age and poor construction. It was as if the challenge was not in doing these things but rather in believing it in the face of enormous evidence to the contrary. Do we really want high school children reflecting on the world so as to change their worlds or is it more systemically appropriate for them to reflect on their own insufficiencies and talents in order to do what? Do we really take seriously the idea that they can change their own lives without changing the systemically-ordained circumstances within which their lives operate? There is much rhetoric to suggest that we believe that but we do not have to scratch very far to see there is something far more complicated at play. All we really have to do is to see these college students of color who came from these kinds of circumstances as they stare at a system that has now rendered them speechless.

Conclusion

I have offered a view of service-learning that flirts with and weaves between complacency and complexity. On the one hand, the external funders’ interests can be neatly satisfied by one read of a story coming from these students of color. The “progress” indicators, it could be argued from the data, appear to be met and we might

feel assured that the “fix” worked. In other ways, a critical race read offers some sense of reassurance about the promise of service-learning from these students’ perspectives alongside some difficult and complex feelings of where “they” belong in a white conceptualization of service. On the other hand, employing a Foucauldian lens delved into the complexities of the discourses and troubled both the promises of service-learning as well as any complacent or reassured “read” of these students’ experiences.

I have tracked the ways in which external interests can and have informed one “read” of service-learning that leaves us feeling prematurely sure of its goodness. I have offered another “read” built with the wisdom and theorization of people of color that range from highly published and recognized scholars to the participants in this study offering their ruminations in the contexts of their complex circumstances. This story elicits some hope but hints at a troubling undercurrent. The third “read” delves into the undercurrent and is “accountable to the complexity” (McCall, 2005) of these students’ experiences. I leave this analysis with a keen awareness of the limits of language. What is left to say let alone do?

The next chapter is my attempt to say something and emerge from the troubled waters while working against offering a sense of reassurance and surety. As Lather (1998) suggests, the project is to be “reflexive without being paralyzed, working the ruins of modernist philosophies and knowledge toward possible practices of the impossible...with/in the ordeal of undecidability” (p.5). There are important implications I draw from these reads in terms of the implementation of service-learning believing, in the words of Barack Obama (2008), “We are better than this.”

CHAPTER 5: TAKING FREIRE SERIOUSLY

Implications for Further Research and Practice

The results of this study suggest a complexity to the ways in which service-learning, through the course and the subsequent mentoring roles, was experienced, understood, and enacted. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the results in relationship to the questions and frameworks that informed this study. This chapter will consider implications for practice that stem from the findings previously discussed. It will conclude with a “post-post Freirean” framework for service-learning that seeks to honor both the personal and structural development necessary to disrupt the dominant social and economic order in ways that might be more meaningful and relevant to these students of color and beyond.

Discussion of findings

The purpose of this study was to use a critical race and “raced” lens to explore the perceptions and experiences of racially underrepresented college students participating in a service-learning course. Such an investigation might better illuminate the ways in which the dominant “colorblind” discourse of service-learning operates and impacts students of color. The utility of these new insights is the focus of this discussion and is grounded in a Freirean view of not only the practice of service-learning but also the

research. This research must serve as a reflection on the work of service-learning and its socioeconomic context in order to take action to change both.

Putting students of color first: Homogeneity in the face of heterogeneity

The first major implication of this research is a need for homogeneous, academically credit bearing spaces for students of color on predominantly white campuses. Service-learning courses with partnerships that extend into the community and share similar race and social class dimensions, as well as life experiences, with the underrepresented college students can be powerful environments for enabling students to release, explore one's self, and grow into agents for change on their own and their communities' behalves. As evidenced by both this research and the body of research on extracurricular racially homogeneous spaces for students of color, retention is positively impacted. This may seem to be in opposition to the larger trend of "diversifying" and "integrating" predominantly white college campuses. I would suggest that the two are not mutually exclusive. Rather, a call for racially homogenous academic spaces in the midst of the larger campus simply seeks to remain vigilant about those elements that facilitate success for students of color rather than solely focus on strategies that often serve to benefit and educate white students from racially homogenous communities.

Critical theory talks to service-learning and mentoring

A second implication is the need for a wider diversity of explicitly critical theoretical perspectives to be applied to the service-learning research. The purpose of this implication is not to prove service-learning's claims to be fraudulent and guilty of a conspiracy to oppress. Rather, it is my belief supported by some (e.g. Butin, 2007; Jones,

Gilbride-Brown & Gasiorski, 2005) that multiple theoretical lenses open up multiple and potentially fruitful possibilities. Applying a critical and racialized lens to the service-learning research brought certain troubling silences to the fore, particularly as it related to the voices of people of color. This study shows that when the voices of the silenced or marginalized are foregrounded, atypical understandings and unique perspectives become centered and offer calls for further research and practice that disrupt the tranquility of an otherwise largely victorious narrative.

Borders are being crossed, or not

A third implication of this research is a call for further study of the “border crossing” phenomenon that is treated in the service-learning research as an inevitable component of the experience. College students will cross borders created by race, class, gender, sexual orientation among others and this experience creates a dissonance that must be engaged in the best of service-learning pedagogy (e.g. Hayes & Cuban, 1996; Jones, Gilbride-Brown, Gasiorski, 2005; Nieto, 2000). But what if these borders are borders crossed in every other educational context but the service-learning experience for students of color at predominantly white institutions? What if the borders that are, in fact, crossed through the service-learning experience are not about race and class but other identities or dynamics much more difficult to discern from an instructor’s perspective? How do assumptions of race and class differences between students and community inform research and practice? These are all questions elicited from this study and in need of rigorous examination in future research.

In this study, the border crossing being navigating by the college students during every other moment of their day other than the service-learning course was exhausting and, as such, the ways in which the service-learning literature theorizes this activity in the course did not mesh. There were certainly borders and differences between the college students and high school students but these were in some ways muted by race and class similarities and, in other ways, were unspeakable due to the knowledge held by the college students about what would likely be ahead of these high school students should they persist to college. The college students felt this border and navigated it by simply acting like the younger students or choosing not to engage with them altogether. This dynamic is not typically conceptualized as a border but I would argue it functioned in the same way.

Paying attention to discourse

A fourth implication of this research is a need to conduct more critical analyses of discourses shaping service-learning research and practice. An individualistic, “server-centered” discourse inscribed by whiteness dominates how researchers and practitioners think about service-learning and, therefore, structure the research and program design. There are calls in the research for thinking through what is the impact on the community (Cruz & Giles, 2000 ; Jones & Hill, 2002; Sandy, 2007). However, this study suggests that another question must be asked. How is service-learning situated or not to address larger structural issues as a function of “impact,” and how would we know this kind of macro-level impact if we saw it? With a focus on the individual and a lack of attention to the macro-issues, I am not sure service-learning is currently equipped with the tools to

measure or discern change on that level. William Julius Wilson (1996) aptly captures the limitation of this discourse in his analysis of urban poverty, *When Work Disappears*. He states,

Discussion of behavior and social responsibility fail to mention the structural underpinnings of poverty and welfare. The focus is mainly on the shortcomings of individuals and families and not on the structural and social changes in the society at large. (p. 53)

Unless this dominant, individual-centered discourse is disrupted, we will simply never know what the communal impact of this pedagogy is or could be. Calls for further research in this area fall on rocky ground and simply cannot be conceptualized in the current discourse.

The “Wingspread Principles of Good Practice” (Honnet & Paulsen, 1989) are considered a foundational statement for service-learning in the United States. As such, it has been an important factor shaping the discourse in service-learning. The first principle is, “Engages people in responsible and challenging action for the common good.” This principle is quickly glossed over as an assumed goal, particularly in service-learning that has an explicit interest in social change. I argue that an individualistic, server-centered discourse that has obscured the need for research on community impact has done the same for interrogating the actualization of advancing “the common good.” Like with the mentoring research, “the common good” has significant definitional ambiguity. Rather than engaging this lack of clarity as an opportunity to debate and work against premature closure, “the common good” stands alone as both unquestionable yet thinly understood.

The colorblind and class-neutral characteristic of the dominant service-learning discourse also obscures the issue of “responsible and challenging action” for whom. Who is responsible and challenged? How are those people structurally situated and who is assumed to be part of this action (i.e. the server) and who is out (i.e. the served)? What do those people look like and what are their economic life chances? These questions are all put forth by an interrogation of discourse in service-learning and mentoring and have received scant attention in theory or practice heretofore. Service-learning scholars would do well to seriously consider poststructural feminist and critical race critiques of critical pedagogy in an attempt to take these questions seriously. The overarching goal is that service-learning becomes a more inclusive pedagogy because of a better understanding of the ways in which identities like race, class, and gender mediate how this socially complex educational context is experienced. If service-learning is to live up to its transformative potential, we must be more inclusive of our understandings of who and what is transformed and where are the places where alienation and marginalization are perpetuated as a result of this pedagogy.

“Post-post” Freirean imperative for service-learning

The final implication of this research is a need to consider a serious implementation of Freirean concepts of conscientization and praxis. A “Post-Post” Freirean imperative is a call to revisit Freire in light of the insights provided by poststructural feminist and critical race critiques but with an eye to Freire’s call to stay grounded in structural change rather than being complacent with activities to better individuals. It is important to take praxis and conscientization seriously though always

with some discomfort with its grand narratives and an awareness of its always potential complicities. While the activity of praxis, or reflection and action, are foundational components of service-learning, the next step is missing in any demonstrable way. Freire called for reflection and action upon the world in order to change the world and, tied with a call for consciousness-raising, enable people who are marginalized to obtain the tools for themselves to change the world on their terms. This is not an obvious component of mentoring relationships in service-learning despite the many ties between service-learning and social justice education in the literature (e.g. Butin, 2007; Kahne & Westheimer, 2007; O'Grady, 2000).

bell hooks, in her 1995 book. "Teaching to Transgress," wrote of the ways in which reflecting on Freire informed her commitment to teaching as a practice of freedom. In doing so, she offered a model for how to "take Freire seriously." She was highly critical of breezy rhetoric around conscientization and praxis when the reality was far more emotional, difficult, and transformative for herself as student/teacher and her students. She reminded me that Freire never intended for "conscientization" and consciousness-raising to be an end goal. Rather, she argued, using Freire's words:

That means, and let us emphasize it, that human beings do not get beyond the concrete situation, the condition in which they find themselves, only by their consciousness or their intentions- however good those intentions may be. The possibilities that I had for transcending the narrow limits of a five-by-two foot cell in which I was locked after the April 1964 coup d'etat were not sufficient to change my condition as a prisoner. I was always in the cell, deprived of freedom,

even if I could imagine the outside world. But on the other hand, the praxis is not blind action, deprived of intention or of finality. It is action and reflection. Men and women are human beings because they are historically constituted as beings of praxis, and in the process they have become capable of transforming the world-of giving it meaning (pp. 47-48, Freire as quoted in hooks).

What might it mean to offer tools to students of color through these service-learning experiences that were meant to “dismantle the master’s house” on the students’ terms (Lorde, 1983). The dominant service-learning discourse is simply not adequate as demonstrated by the actions and words of the college students in this study. The students are staring at enormous and potentially debilitating structural inequalities and there is nothing in the service-learning experience, let alone their larger college experience on a predominantly white campus, that would intentionally facilitate an educational experience that enabled these students to craft socially transformative tools on their own terms and for their “community’s benefit.” The exuberance of the high school students could be read as a “prescription” to “fix” the college students’ attitude but the power of a critical race framework in this study lies in its lack of complacency with this kind of theorization and conclusion.

Critical race theory combined with a Freirean approach to service-learning demands the integration of a social justice framework that enables these students of color to hone their skill of “double-vision” (Ladson-Billings, 2000) in order to think and act on their personal choices and journeys as well as the social structures that must be transformed in order to truly liberate. Jones, Gilbride-Brown & Gasiorski (2005)

considered such a framework in their theorization of white students' resistance to anti-oppressive approaches to service-learning. In their attempt to forge ahead out of theorizing, they mused,

Although critical service-learning and critical whiteness, emphasizes the importance of teaching to disrupt oppressive structures, to interrupt taken-for-granted assumptions, and the central role of praxis or "reflection and action upon the world" (Freire, 1997, p. 33), the lived experience of applying such noble principles to practice is far less tidy. (p. 10)

This is certainly true of moving beyond a theorization of the connections between social justice education and emancipatory service-learning. I am buoyed by the idea Schultz (2007) offered that social justice is fundamentally about both goal and process. She states,

Social justice is an ongoing process that requires communicative engagement particularly in the diagnosis of social injustice, assessing prevailing rationales for such injustice, and devising communicative strategies for equitable redress. (p.8)

Oden and Casey (2007) articulated a framework that serves as a starting point for me. They articulated three categories that must be present in order to link social justice and service- learning. Their categories are:

- an assessment and understanding of the impact of race both historically and in the present;

- an assessment and impact of social class in order to discern the economic and structural constraints that *influence economic life changes* (emphasis mine); and
- an examination of issues leading to historical and contemporary forms of gender and sexual inequality. (p. 36)

Oden and Casey (2007) offer a way forward but I do not think it goes far enough in order to push beyond reflection on individual action into reflection on social action. They do not discuss the ways in which community engagement must also reflect these categories through meaningful activity that seeks to facilitate growth and development on BOTH the personal (micro) and social and economic structural (macro) levels. While rhetorically they offer some important calls for tighter linkages between social justice and service-learning, the micro-focused discourse is undisturbed in many ways because the examination of macro issues is not necessarily translating into on the ground work. What remains is wishing for macro change and pedagogies that might serve to inspire hope but as the college students are asking us, is hope enough? What do I DO now?

Implications for current and future research

This current research has had direct and immediate implications for the “theories of mentoring” course that provided the context for this research. The instructor and I have presented the results of the study at conferences and reflected on its implications for the next academic year. Previously, the “product” of the mentoring was on the creation of the “Writers’ Diary.” This diary compiled the reflections of the college, high school, and middle school students on their lives with its obstacles and opportunities. This diary

has been shared with middle school students across the urban district as a tool to increase college aspiration and personal development. As a result of this research, the focus of the mentoring relationships will extend beyond the diary to include work on structural issues facing the neighborhood within which the high school is located. This neighborhood has a “development” commission appointed by the mayor and these students will have the opportunity to work on policy advocacy and community organizing in order to impact the work of this commission. The other result of this research has been on a restructuring of the course to provide more intentional focus on the college students’ experience. In many ways, their struggles became lost in the business and logistics of making the larger mentoring initiative happen. Future offerings will include reflection meetings with only the college students in attendance as well as individual check-ins by the instructor. The work of partnership with this larger urban district and a perennially new high school administration is all-consuming but this study suggests a need to stay closely connected with these college students of color who are facing complex issues that put their experience “at-risk” as well.

The implication of this study for future research is a need to broaden the scope of the study to include underrepresented college students of color in service-learning courses that are not as homogenous as this experience. Research of this kind would include more cases and a greater number of participants across institutional types. Doing so would broaden the perspectives and offer the opportunity to discern lessons about course design, partnership contexts, and students’ experiences. I am also interested in finding ways to foreground the service-learning work happening on the campuses of

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic-Serving Institutions, and Tribal Colleges. I am interested in how these experiences are similar and unique as well as the ways that “community” and “borders” are conceptualized by the students. It is my hope to continue this research for the foreseeable future.

Conclusion

I believe, emboldened by this study that we are and must be better than this. We know both theoretically and in practice that structural change is possible but when will we take it seriously. It is not enough to facilitate dreams of change. It is simply oppressive to stand alongside a student and say that the course of their educational, economic, or life path is entirely up to her/him without providing real experiences delving into structural change that links the dream with socially just action. Perhaps then will we come to language with which to speak of the way forward and what is possible. Perhaps then will service-learning actually “show up” in the socially just struggle instead of simply hinting at participation. This cannot be done until service-learning is held up to scrutiny that believes in its potential but is unsatisfied with its reality. This cannot be done until all voices are at the table in theory and practice, speaking with conflicting voices, and reveling in the ruins of social justice work.

APPENDIX A

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN STUDY: SCRIPT READ TO CLASS

Script read to combined group of COLLEGE students and High School students with faculty member and High School Program Director present.

I am a Ph.D student in the College of Education at The Ohio State University and am inviting you to consider participating in my dissertation research. I'm interested in learning about the experiences of the Otterbein College and Linden McKinley High School students in the Ubuntu mentoring program. Rather than having you fill out a survey or answer a few short questions, I want to learn by listening to the stories that you tell about your lives and what you think about your experiences in school and in this mentoring program, specifically. Your stories will be the focus of the research. I am interested in stories about who you are as a person, about school, and about ideas of who you are as a mentoring and what mentoring really means to you, and, finally how you identify yourself racially, religiously, socioeconomically, etc., and who you include in your definition of community in terms of giving back and being connected.

The Otterbein students- Your involvement will include participating in three interviews with me, each approximately one hour. We'll do the interviews based on your schedule and can connect them to times around the mentoring class. I hope that you will also review summaries of your interviews and help me think about what we're learning from the study. Doing so should take about three hours over the next 10-12 weeks. I would also like for you to share your writing for this class as they provide important insights into who you are and how you are experience this course, life at Otterbein, and the world in general

The Linden McKinley students- Up to 10 of you- your involvement will include participating in one interview lasting between 30-60 minutes. We'll do the interviews while you are on campus or at the high school during the mentoring program. I hope that you will also review summaries of your interviews and help me think about what we're learning from the study. I would also like for you to share your writing for this class as they provide important insights into who you are and how you are experience this course, life in school, and the world in general

By participating in this study, you will have the opportunity to share with me, a non-judgmental listener, stories from your life. I hope you will find this to be a rewarding experience that allows you to better understand how the various parts of yourself come together to shape who you are as a person. Your participation will also help educators

and counselors better understand important issues for underrepresented students in service-learning at both the college and high school levels.

You only need to discuss with me topics that you are comfortable discussing. It is not my intention to force you to talk about anything that makes you uncomfortable. Also, please be assured that I will take great care to treat all information confidentially and that whenever I write or talk about this study, I will not use your name or describe you in a way that others can recognize you. You get to choose your own pseudonym. Your participation is voluntary and you may discontinue at any time without penalty.

If you're interested in being part of this study please complete and return to me the consent forms (for the Otterbein students) and the assent AND guardian permission form.

APPENDIX B

LETTER TO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS AGREEING TO PARTICIPATE

January 2007

Dear [insert name of student]:

Thank you for your interest in participating in the research project that I am conducting on the mentoring class and the college and high school students involved. I am delighted to invite you to participate! I hope you are still interested in doing so.

I would like to talk with you for about an hour in a taped interview setting about your experiences with the mentoring program in general and your thoughts on its impact, in particular. We will meet during your regular mentoring program time at Otterbein or at Linden McKinley High School for approximately 30-60 minutes.

You can e-mail me (jengb72@gmail.com) or feel free to call me at (614) 561-7276. I have voice mail and am the only person with access to my messages. Please don't hesitate to call or e-mail with any questions. Please also let me know as soon as possible if you have changed your mind and are no longer interested in participating.

Again, thank you so much for your interest in this study! I am excited to meet you and am very much looking forward to listening to stories about your life.

Sincerely,

Jen Gilbride-Brown

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

As you know, what I am interested in learning about through this research are stories from your life. The interview questions are very open-ended and I want you to share with me only what you are comfortable sharing. It is not my intention to pressure you into telling me anything that you are not comfortable talking about. Please let me know if at any time during the interview you become uncomfortable, and we can stop the interview or change the nature of some of the questions so that you are less uncomfortable. Do you have any questions before we start?

- (1) Beginning at any point in time that you want, tell me about your life.
- (2) What parts of your school life have been most central to shaping who you are as a person?
How so?
- (3) Tell me about a time or times you felt you could be your “true self.”
*What is your true self?
- (4) Tell me about a time or times when you felt you could *not* be your true self.
- (5) If you could tell a different life story than the one you told at the beginning of the interview, what would it be? What parts of your life would you *not* change?
- (6) As you know, what I am especially interested in is what you think about your experience with the mentoring program at Otterbein, can you can talk some about that?
- (7) Give definition of service-learning, how- if at all- do you think this kind of learning environment has impacted your sense of who you are, your sense of who is your community, and your ideas about mentoring.
- (7) Can you tell me the story or the stories about how your experience at Otterbein (or at Linden McKinley High School).
- (8) How, if at all, has your being a mentee and a mentor shaped any of these stories or do you expect them to shape these stories?

(9) Do you feel as if you have conveyed to me the most important stories about who you

are as a person or what you are thinking about in terms of the mentoring program and how you see yourself? If not, what other stories from your life should I know?

Note: If I sense during the interview that the participant is uncomfortable, I will check in with her to see if she is doing alright and ask whether or not she wants to continue.

The protocol for Interviews 2 and 3 will be developed after the first round of interviews is completed. Questions in the second and third interviews will draw from their reflecting writing and further probe the nature of the participants' identity dimensions, conceptualizations of what they think mentoring is or is becoming, and elaborate on the stories told during the first interview. For instance, while in the first interview I will ask questions specifically related to schooling, mentoring etc., I will ask in the second interview questions about how race, social class, gender, and religion relate to their experiences with how they define community, mentoring, and their sense of service-learning. Some of the questions will be the same for all participants; others will be individualized based on responses during the first interview. Examples of some of the questions I might ask are:

- In the first interview you indicated that your [race, religion, etc.] has been important to shaping who you are as a person, have there ever been times when you felt that your [race, religion, etc] affected how you think about community service, mentoring, or schooling?
- In the first interview you didn't mention anything about your school experiences, have there ever been times when you've considered your to be important to who you are?
- What has your experience been like on a predominantly white, middle to upper-middle class campus? What has this experience been like for you? How has it affected how you think about who you are as a person?

APPENDIX D

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE

ASSENT
Behavioral/Social Science

IRB Protocol Number: 2006B0353
IRB Approval date: 1/24/2007
Version: 11/21/2006

The Ohio State University Assent to Participate in Research

Study Title: In the service of and for whom?: An analysis of discourses constructed by underrepresented students in service-learning

Researcher: Jen Gilbride-Brown, Ph.D. Candidate

Sponsor: Dr. Patti Lather, Professor

- **You are being asked to be in a research study. Studies are done to find better ways to treat people or to understand things better.**
- **This form will tell you about the study to help you decide whether or not you want to participate.**
- **You should ask any questions you have before making up your mind. You can think about it and discuss it with your family or friends before you decide.**
- **It is okay to say “No” if you don’t want to be in the study. If you say “Yes” you can change your mind and quit being in the study at any time without getting in trouble.**
- **If you decide you want to be in the study, an adult (usually a parent) will also need to give permission for you to be in the study.**

1. What is this study about?

This study is about the experience of college students and urban youth from similar backgrounds in service-learning. I am interested in learning about what you think about your experience with the college and other high school students, what issues are

important to you, and what you like and do not like about what you are experiencing, thinking about, and talking about in this program.

2. What will I need to do if I am in this study?

To be in this study, you will need to complete the assent and permission forms. You will also need to agree to participate in one, one hour interviews over the course of the 10 week course. You will need to allow me to read your writing done as homework or during program time. You will also be asked to review my analysis of your experience, offering your reactions and thoughts.

3. How long will I be in the study?

You will be in the study for the duration of the 10 week course.

4. Can I stop being in the study?

You may stop being in the study at any time.

5. What bad things might happen to me if I am in the study?

I will keep the information you share in the interviews and in your reflective writing in strict confidence. You will select a pseudonym as an identifier that cannot be attached to your actual name. There is always, however, a small risk that the other people in the course or the faculty member/teacher could link the things you share with me with what they already know about you. The faculty member, school administrator, and I have agreed that nothing shared in this study will have any impact on your ability to be successful in this program.

6. What good things might happen to me if I am in the study?

You will have the opportunity to talk more about issues that matter to you, things you are experiencing, and ideas that you are developing. This continued reflection has positive

benefits for your own personal growth, leadership development, and academic achievement.

7. *Will I be given anything for being in this study?*

You will not be paid to participate in the study.

8. Who can I talk to about the study?

For questions about the study you may contact **Jen Gilbride-Brown (614) 561-7276**
OR Dr. Patti Lather

To discuss other study-related questions with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251.

Signing the assent form

I have read (or someone has read to me) this form. I have had a chance to ask questions before making up my mind. I want to be in this research study.

_____	_____	AM/PM
Signature or printed name of subject	Date and time	

Investigator/Research Staff

I have explained the research to the participant before requesting the signature above. There are no blanks in this document. A copy of this form has been given to the participant or his/her representative.

_____	_____	
Printed name of person obtaining assent	Signature of person obtaining assent	
	_____	AM/PM
	Date and time	

This form must be accompanied by an IRB approved parental permission form signed by a parent/guardian.

APPENDIX E

COLLEGE STUDENT: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

CONSENT
Behavioral/Social Science

IRB Protocol Number: 2006B0353
IRB Approval date: 1/24/2007
Version: 11.21.2006

Consent to Participate in Research

Study Title: In the service of and for whom?: An analysis of discourses constructed by underrepresented students in service-learning

Researcher: Jen Gilbride-Brown, Ph.D. Candidate

Sponsor: Patti Lather, Professor

This is a consent form for research participation. It contains important information about this study and what to expect if you decide to participate.

Your participation is voluntary.

Please consider the information carefully. Feel free to ask questions before making your decision whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and will receive a copy of the form.

Purpose: This study is about the experience of underrepresented college students and urban youth from similar backgrounds in service-learning. I am interested in learning about what you think about your experience with the college and high school students, what issues are important to you, and what you like and do not like about what you are experiencing, thinking about, and talking about in this program.

Procedures/Tasks:

You will participate in three (3), one-hour individual interviews during the course of the quarter. You will also be asked to submit to me writing that your homework or in class. Finally, you will be asked to read my analysis of the stories you have told me about your experiences and offer input and your reactions.

Duration:

You may leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision will not affect your future relationship with The Ohio State University.

Risks and Benefits:

I will keep the information you share in the interviews and in your reflective writing in strict confidence. You will select a pseudonym as an identifier that cannot be attached to your actual name. There is always, however, a small risk that the other people in the course or the faculty member/teacher could link the things you share with me with what they already know about you. The faculty member, school administrator, and I have agreed that nothing shared in this study will have any impact on your ability to be successful in this program.

You will have the opportunity to talk more about issues that matter to you, things you are experiencing, and ideas that you are developing. This continued reflection has positive benefits for your own personal growth, leadership development, and academic achievement.

Confidentiality:

Efforts will be made to keep your study-related information confidential. However, there may be circumstances where this information must be released. For example, personal information regarding your participation in this study may be disclosed if required by state law. Also, your records may be reviewed by the following groups (as applicable to the research):

Office for Human Research Protections or other federal, state, or international regulatory agencies;

The Ohio State University Institutional Review Board or Office of Responsible Research Practices;

The sponsor, if any, or agency (including the Food and Drug Administration for FDA-regulated research) supporting the study.

Incentives:

You will not be paid to participate in the study

Participant Rights:

You may refuse to participate in this study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you are a student or employee at Ohio State, your decision will not affect your grades or employment status.

If you choose to participate in the study, you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. By signing this form, you do not give up any personal legal rights you may have as a participant in this study.

An Institutional Review Board responsible for human subjects research at The Ohio State University reviewed this research project and found it to be acceptable, according to applicable state and federal regulations and University policies designed to protect the rights and welfare of participants in research.

Contacts and Questions:

For questions, concerns, or complaints about the study you may contact **Jen Gilbride-Brown- jengb72@gmail.com or 614-561-7276.**

For questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251.

If you are injured as a result of participating in this study or for questions about a study-related injury, you may contact **Jen Gilbride-Brown- jengb72@gmail.com or 614-561-7276.**

Signing the consent form

I have read (or someone has read to me) this form and I am aware that I am being asked to participate in a research study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

I am not giving up any legal rights by signing this form. I will be given a copy of this form.

_____ Printed name of subject	_____ Signature of subject
	A M / P M
	_____ Date and time
_____ Printed name of person authorized to consent for subject (when applicable)	_____ Signature of person authorized to consent for subject (when applicable)
	A M / P M
_____ Relationship to the subject	_____ Date and time

Investigator/Research Staff

I have explained the research to the participant or his/her representative before requesting the signature(s) above. There are no blanks in this document. A copy of this form has been given to the participant or his/her representative.

_____ Printed name of person obtaining consent	_____ Signature of person obtaining consent
	A M /P M
	_____ Date and time

APPENDIX F

PARENTAL PERMISSION FORM: HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

PARENTAL PERMISSION
Behavioral/Social Science

IRB Protocol Number: 2006B0353
IRB Approval date: 1/24/2007
Version: 11/21/2006

The Ohio State University Parental Permission For Child's Participation in Research

Study Title: In the service of and for whom?: An analysis of discourses constructed by underrepresented students in service-learning

Researcher: Jen Gilbride-Brown, Ph.D. Candidate

Sponsor: Dr. Patti Lather, Professor

This is a parental permission form for research participation. It contains important information about this study and what to expect if you permit your child to participate.

Your child's participation is voluntary.

Please consider the information carefully. Feel free to discuss the study with your friends and family and to ask questions before making your decision whether or not to permit your child to participate. If you permit your child to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and will receive a copy of the form.

Purpose: This study is about the experience of underrepresented college students and urban youth from similar backgrounds in service-learning. I am interested in learning about what these students think about their experiences in the mentoring course and program, what issues are important to them, and what they like and do not like about what they are experiencing, thinking about, and talking about in this program.

Procedures/Tasks:

You will participate in one (1) one-hour individual interview during the course of the program. They will also be asked to submit to me writing that they do during the program as homework or in class. Finally, they will be asked to read my analysis of the stories they have told me about their experiences and offer input and their reactions.

Duration:

Your child may leave the study at any time. If you or your child decides to stop participation in the study, there will be no penalty and neither you nor your child will lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision will not affect your future relationship with The Ohio State University.

Risks and Benefits:

I will keep the information the children share in the interviews and in their reflective writing in strict confidence. They will select a pseudonym as an identifier that cannot be attached to their actual name. There is always, however, a small risk that the other people in the course or the faculty member/teacher could link the things they share with me with what they already know about the student. The faculty member, school administrator, and I have agreed that nothing shared in this study will have any impact on your ability to be successful in this program.

There are also benefits for participating. The students will have the opportunity to talk more about issues that matter to them, things they are experiencing, and ideas that they are developing. This continued reflection has potential positive benefits for their own personal growth, leadership development, and academic achievement.

Confidentiality:

Efforts will be made to keep your child's study-related information confidential. However, there may be circumstances where this information must be released. For example, personal information regarding your child's participation in this study may be disclosed if required by state law. Also, your child's records may be reviewed by the following groups (as applicable to the research):

- Office for Human Research Protections or other federal, state, or international regulatory agencies;
- The Ohio State University Institutional Review Board or Office of Responsible Research Practices;
- The sponsor, if any, or agency (including the Food and Drug Administration for FDA-regulated research) supporting the study.

Incentives:

You will not be paid to participate in the study

Participant Rights:

You or your child may refuse to participate in this study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you or your child is a student or employee at Ohio State, your decision will not affect your grades or employment status.

If you and your child choose to participate in the study, you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. By signing this form, you do not give up any personal legal rights your child may have as a participant in this study.

An Institutional Review Board responsible for human subjects research at The Ohio State University reviewed this research project and found it to be acceptable, according to applicable state and federal regulations and University policies designed to protect the rights and welfare of participants in research.

Contacts and Questions:

For questions, concerns, or complaints about the study you may contact Jen Gilbride-Brown (jengb72@gmail.com) or 614-561-7276.

For questions about your child's rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251.

If your child is injured as a result of participating in this study or for questions about a study-related injury, you may contact Jen Gilbride-Brown (jengb72@gmail.com) or 614-561-7276.

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Signing the parental permission form

I have read (or someone has read to me) this form and I am aware that I am being asked to provide permission for my child to participate in a research study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to permit my child to participate in this study.

I am not giving up any legal rights by signing this form. I will be given a copy of this form.

Printed name of subject

Printed name of person authorized to provide permission for subject

Signature of person authorized to provide permission for subject

Relationship to the subject

Date and time

AM/PM

Investigator/Research Staff

I have explained the research to the participant or his/her representative before requesting the signature(s) above. There are no blanks in this document. A copy of this form has been given to the participant or his/her representative.

Printed name of person obtaining consent

Signature of person obtaining consent

Date and time

AM/PM

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