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A Dialogue of Learning: The Exploration of a Service-Learning Practicum and the Development of Democratic Educational Values

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A DIALOGUE OF LEARNING:
THE EXPLORATION OF A SERVICE-LEARNING PRACTICUM AND THE
DEVELOPMENT OF DEMOCRATIC EDUCATIONAL VALUES

A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University

By

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Dedicated To
the extraordinary men in my life,

especially to my husband David,
with a heart full of gratitude for his support, patience,
and unwavering love over the past twenty-five years,

and to my three sons, Matthew, Lucas, and Bennett,
who keep me grounded, laughing,
and striving to be my best self,

and to my father, Ragan Thomas Phillips,
who has always believed in me,
even when I have not believed in myself,

and in memory of my brother, Patrick Ragan Phillips,
who died too soon and who helped me to learn the importance of
forgiving life and finding peace.

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Strive not to be a success, but rather to be of value.

~ Albert Einstein

Meg Pienkowski
Ashland, Virginia
May 2017

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Abstract

A DIALOGUE OF LEARNING: THE EXPLORATION OF A SERVICE-LEARNING PRACTICUM AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF DEMOCRATIC EDUCATIONAL VALUES

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Using a hybrid portraiture interpretivist case study methodology, this study explores the development of democratic educational values of pre-service teachers who participated in a "nested" service-learning practicum during their first semester in a secondary teacher preparation program. In this nested model, both the pre-service teachers and the middle school students with whom they worked participated in service-learning. The study is in response to the findings of previous researchers that democratic educational values have, in many classrooms, been pushed aside by the pressures of the standardization and accountability movement and by the belief that democratic educational values are critical to a public educational system which supports civic

identity and participation. Data collected over the course of one semester included reflective journals, blog postings, observations of the service-learning seminar, observations of teaching practices in the field, and audio-recorded semi-structured interviews. Four participants were interviewed three times each, and all four participants were observed both in the service-learning seminar and in their field placements. While this study did not find that participation in a nested service-learning model led to pre-service teachers becoming active agents of change, it did find that the nested service-learning experience helped the pre-service teachers to begin to lay a solid foundation in their understanding of basic democratic educational values, in their plans to embrace democratic educational values in their future classrooms, and in their view of themselves as democratic educators.

CHAPTER 1: INSPIRATION

While enrolled in a doctoral program in education, I had the opportunity to mentor pre-service teachers who were participating in a service-learning practicum. During the course of my work with these students, I not only learned about service-learning as a pedagogy, but I also began to wonder if service-learning might be a way to help pre-service teachers to recognize the power and potential of democratic education. In many classrooms, democratic educational values have been pushed aside by the pressures of the standardization and accountability movement (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Hochschild & Scovronick, 2003; Ravitch, 2010; Rothstein, 2008). This is a trend which not only hurts our teachers and students but which also undermines the democratic values of our society (Giroux & Schmidt, 2004; Ravitch, 2010). As Westheimer (2010) maintains:

> In recent years, some of the very foundations of democratic engagement, such as
> independent thinking and critical analysis, have come under attack. If being a good
> democratic citizen requires thinking critically about important social assumptions, then
> that foundation of citizenship is at odds with recent trends in education policy. (p. 259)

This dissertation begins with a brief overview of the contemporary focus of education in the United States, and then moves to a discussion of democratic educational values, arguing that we lack balance in our current approach to educating our youth. There are, of course, no easy answers or quick fixes to this complicated problem. If, however, service-learning is one way to

introduce pre-service teachers to the democratic values which I believe are critical to holistic and humanistic teaching and learning, then it is a pedagogy which deserves to be included in teacher education programs. Do pre-service teachers come to better understand the value of democratic education as a result of participating in a service-learning practicum? It is this question which I explored in my study.

Our Contemporary Educational Emphasis: The Historical Context

Not so long ago in our country, the "American Dream" was just that for many children: a dream. Countless children did not have access to education, and many schools discriminated on the basis of race, cultural background, language, gender, disability, religious affiliation, and sexual orientation (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Rothstein, 2008; Tamura, 2008). In 1954, the Supreme Court set the stage for desegregation of our nation's schools when it ruled for the plaintiffs in the landmark case of *Brown v. Board of Education*, finding that separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. *Brown v. Board of Education* together with *The Civil Rights Act of 1964* (which made discrimination based on race, religion, sex, national origin, and other characteristics illegal), *The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* (authorized as a part of the "War on Poverty" to address issues of education access for poor children and amended in 1974 under President Richard Nixon to include *The Equal Educational Opportunities Act*), and *The Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990* (which provided civil rights to people with disabilities), have greatly improved the accessibility of education to America's children.

Unfortunately, even after the passage of legislation which was supposed to ensure equal educational access for all children, inequities in our educational system persisted. Attending public school did not ensure that students received an education of quality; poorly educated

students often graduated with meaningless diplomas and a lack of basic educational skills. In an attempt to address these imbalances by imposing accountability measures, *The No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) *Act of 2001* was passed in January 2002 with bipartisan congressional support under the administration of President George W. Bush. A reauthorization of *The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* (that emphasized equal access to education for poor children and established high standards and accountability), the goal of NCLB was to accomplish standards-based education reform which would close achievement gaps and bring all students to proficiency. NCLB was founded on the premise that setting high standards and measurable goals would improve outcomes of the United States educational system. The law requires states to develop their own standards and assessments and to administer these assessments annually to students at grade levels mandated by the federal government. (Each state must measure every child's progress in reading and math in grades 3 through 8 and at least once during grades 10 through 12. Science assessments are to be administered at least once during grades 3-5; grades 6-9; and grades 10-12.) In addition to testing, areas addressed in NCLB are annual academic progress (as measured by test scores), teacher qualifications, and school choice.

The No Child Left Behind Act did address two critical goals of education by highlighting the importance of all students being held to higher academic standards and by stressing the critical nature of having high quality teachers in every classroom. However, NCLB has been largely unsuccessful at closing the achievement gap in the United States, and "test-driven external accountability, whether it was a state or federal initiative, has not advanced equity on a large scale, as the disparity in achievement among different racial and socioeconomic groups of students persists" (Lee, 2006, pp. 117 - 118). NCLB has also had the unintended consequence of compelling a myopic emphasis on test-based, rote instruction which has led to the neglect of

other more panoptic and universal goals of education. By requiring states to report scores only for language arts and math, NCLB has minimized and marginalized other essential curricula such as science, social studies, foreign languages, art, music, and physical education. This shrinking of the curriculum has resulted in many students receiving a subpar education lacking in depth and breadth (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Rothstein, 2008). As Orfield points out in the forward to Lee's (2005) report on NCLB's impact on achievement gaps, "For example, there is no accountability for whether or not students learn anything about American history and our democratic institutions. There is significant evidence that the students receive even less instruction than previously in subjects not tested…" (p. 7).

Even in the areas of math and language arts which are consistently tested, teachers and their students have often been "encouraged" to focus on test taking skills and strategies in order to meet testing goals (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Hochschild & Scovronick, 2003; Ravitch, 2010; Rothstein, 2008). In some worst case scenarios, such as the inner-city Chicago schools studied by Lipman (2004), "students spent hours taking mock tests, practicing filling in bubbles in scantron sheets, developing familiarity with the layout of the tests and the kinds of questions that are asked, and learning 'tricks' for eliminating incorrect answers," a focus which obviously "undermines more potentially rich educational experiences" (pp. 78-79). According to Rothstein (2008), programs such as NCLB which are based "exclusively on test scores of basic skills, corrupt schooling. They create incentives to downgrade many important goals of youth development" (p. 141). Unfortunately, testing has become not a measure of educational attainment, but the central focus of education, and an "end in itself" (Ravitch, 2010, p. 12).

Expanding Our Educational Emphasis

Given the current focus of our educational system, one has to wonder if we are adequately preparing our youth to live in a democratic society (Ayers, Kumashiro, Meiners, Quinn, & Stovall, 2010; Cohen, 2006; Westheimer, 2010). If our country is based on the principles of democracy, participation, and engagement, shouldn't the goals of our educational system reflect these values? If our democracy it to both survive and thrive, it is imperative that we begin to focus on teaching all of our students the skills they will need in order to live, work, and succeed in the 21st century, skills which are relevant to our increasingly diverse and interconnected world (Bell, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2006b; Ravitch, 2010). Teachers need to be prepared to provide their students with creative and innovative experiences that will lead to the development of skills such as competency in self-directed learning, problem-solving, critical thinking, and the ability to work collaboratively with diverse groups of people (Bell, 2010; Dede, 2010; Trilling & Fadel, 2009). We should not allow testing to drive our educational system, test scores should not be the only way in which we evaluate our students or their teachers, nor should we permit a "banking model" (Freire, 1970) of education to be teachers' "go to" pedagogy and students' primary experience of instruction. Our students and teachers deserve more, as does our nation.

Democratic Education

An Overview

Democratic education in the United States goes at least as far back as Thomas Jefferson. His *Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge* attempted to extend Plato's vision of education for an elite ruling class to include schooling for the masses so that they could exercise oversight over the government through selection of those with the most talent and virtue. While

Jefferson's bill proved too radical for early 19th century Virginia, in 1827 Massachusetts created a public school system for all children. Dewey and his Progressive counterparts took the idea of education further, sharing the conviction that a truly democratic society required an education for all people which would allow them to actively participate in social, economic, and political decisions and also foster the fullest possible development of each individual (Tozer, Violas, & Senese, 2002).

Dewey saw schools as institutions in which reform could and should take place, and he viewed education as an interactive social process in which students should be actively engaged by connecting experience to learning. In 1916 he critiqued traditional, hierarchical classrooms, cautioning that students'

> seeming attention, docility, memorizing and reproductions, will partake of intellectual servility. Such a condition of intellectual subjection is needed for fitting the masses into a society where the many are not expected to have aims or ideas of their own, but to take orders from the few set in authority. It is not adapted to a society which intends to be democratic. (p. 305)

Unfortunately, in some ways not much has changed in the past 100 years when it comes to the ways in which we approach education. In our attempts to provide a high-quality, standardized curriculum to all students, we have unwittingly perpetuated Dewey's "intellectual subjection," and we are not adequately preparing youth to live, work, and participate in today's multicultural, pluralistic society. Teaching students to learn should not preclude teaching them to think, nor should imparting content knowledge displace the transformative potential of helping students to discover a sense of their own agency.

In their article which addressed the need for balance in our educational system, Bass and Good (2004) stated that there are two different Latin roots of the word "education." The first, *educare*, means to train or to mold. The second, *educere*, means to lead out or to lead forth. Bass and Good argued that in order for our society to both survive and thrive we need a balance between these two concepts. Unfortunately, in our standards-based, accountability driven system, it seems we have chosen to put the emphasis on the educare portion of education while ignoring the equally important educere component, which would give students a voice, allowing them to be actively involved in their own education and to recognize their potential to make a difference in the world. As Bass and Good (2004) state so succinctly: "Clearly, the basics are important in the education of any individual. A person who is schooled only to pass the test, however, is ill prepared to cope with today's rapidly changing world" (p. 162). Democratic educational pedagogies may be one way to reintroduce educere into classrooms, and the inclusion of both educare and educere is a better, more holistic approach to education in today's world (Bass & Good, 2004; Huitt, 2011; Papastephanou, 2014).

A Definition

Democratic education requires that students develop a sense of their own agency since, as Stemhagen and Smith (2008) write, "the very meaning and value of democracy is found in the development of individual capacity and the subsequent demand that citizens give back to society" (p. 27). Democratic education provides students with the space to share their unique voices and to experience their ability to effect change in their world. It requires students to think critically, to work collaboratively, and to reflect deeply. It is an orientation to instruction which recognizes that good teaching is meaningful, engaging, relevant, and empowering (Apple & Beane, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Meier, 2002). As Meier (2002) argues, perhaps the

measure of a school's success should not be how many students can accurately recall facts on a test or how many graduates go on to college, but rather on how many students play active roles in their communities and otherwise engage in civic life.

Democratic education is not solely an intellectual understanding of democracy as a construct, it is more than a familiarity with the history of democracy as is taught in most schools, and it differs from, although it may embrace, civics education. For the purposes of this study I have melded descriptions of democratic education from Darling-Hammond (1996) and Parker (2003, 2006) to define democratic education as the teaching and learning pedagogies put to practice in a classroom which help to produce engaged citizens who are capable of free and independent thought, able to build common ground across diverse experiences and ideas, and prepared to act as agents of change in society. Democratic education provides students with the space to share their unique voices and to experience their ability to effect change in the world. It requires students to think critically, to work collaboratively, and to reflect deeply. Democratic education is an orientation to instruction which recognizes that good teaching is meaningful, engaging, relevant, and empowering (Apple & Beane, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Meier, 2002). Democratic education is also embodied in quality service-learning.

Service-Learning

A Brief History

Service-learning, a subset of experiential learning (Furco, 1996), is grounded in the 20th century works of John Dewey's educational philosophy (1916, 1938), Jean Piaget's developmental psychology (1936), and Kurt Lewin's social psychology (1952). Embraced by William Kilpatrick's (1918) "project method," by the Progressive Education Movement (founded in 1919) of which Kilpatrick was a leader, and more recently by David Kolb (1984) in

his famous learning cycle, proponents of experiential learning emphasize flexible, critical thinking and firsthand learning experiences in which students are actively engaged in their own education (Erickson & Anderson, 1997).

In the 1950s, Teacher's College at Columbia University established the *Citizenship Education Project* (CEP), which focused on "active learning" and community involvement (Kraft, 1996). Supporting the basic tenets of progressive education, these educational paradigms were initially supported by the political concerns and activism of the 1960s, but they were eventually overshadowed as the launching of Sputnik in 1957 and the advent of the Cold War led to an increased focus on "basic skills" and accountability in American education. In 1965 Congress passed the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA) under President Johnson and this led to an infusion of federal funds into the public school system and to further demands for accountability with a focus on measurable outcomes.

Despite of, or perhaps in reaction to, the "back to basics approach" which dominated education at the time, in the 1970s and 1980s many of the progressive ideas that were introduced by CEP were updated and developed further. Scholars such as Newman and Rutter (1986) and Barber (1992) embraced progressive ideals in their attempts to both link democracy and American education *and* to renew a focus on responsible citizenship and community awareness. A number of individuals such as Boyer (1983) in *High School* and Goodlad (1984) in *A Place Called School* called for service opportunities and/or requirements in schools, and two Carnegie reports (Carnegie Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents, 1989; Harrison, 1987) emphasized the importance of community service for students in middle school (Kraft, 1996).

During the 1990s as the legislative focus on widespread accountability in schools continued to gain political traction, educators with a more progressive bent persisted in

advocating for an educational system which had a more experiential focus. These scholars thought that schools should place the student, rather than a test, at the center of learning and should strive to "escape the passivity of schooling and the 'irrelevance' of school to either students or the broader society" (Kraft, 1996, p. 134). Some of these scholars (Markus, Howard, & King, 1993; Nathan & Kielsmeier, 1991; Waterman, 1997) advocated for a pedagogy of service-learning which recognized the value of community service and volunteerism and which connected these pursuits to meaningful academic objectives, and they did so in spite of the continued legislative emphasis which focused on "the basics."

It should be noted that there have been some national attempts to expand the focus of our educational system, and several of these efforts involved furthering the service opportunities offered to students. Initiatives such as *The National and Community Service Act of 1990* signed into law by President George H.W. Bush and President Clinton's *National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993* aimed to increase community service programs in both K-12 schools and in colleges/universities. *The National and Community Trust Act of 1993* created the *Corporation for National and Community Service* an arm of which was *Learn and Serve America* (LSA). Until it was defunded in 2011, LSA was responsible for grants being given to PK-12 schools and institutions of higher education, and these grants supported school districts across 35 states instituting volunteer and community service requirements as prerequisites for graduation, many of which remain in place (Education Commission of the States, 2014). However, while certainly of value these requirements are seldom tied to curriculum, focusing instead on hours of service provided, and thus cannot be considered "true service-learning" (Furco, 2002; Sigmon & Pelletier, 1996; Toole & Toole, 1992). So what then, is true service-learning? I turn now to a definition of this complex, and often misunderstood, pedagogy.

A Definition

Butin (2003) stated that "viewing service-learning from multiple perspectives is crucial to the service-learning field because it can lead to alternative conceptualizations of foundational goals and pragmatic enactments" which are vital to helping the field to reach its full potential (p. 1684). While it is true the field of service-learning benefits from a diversity of interpretation and implementation, it is also true that on a more practical level this multiplicity of definitions, criteria, and labels can become confusing (Figure 1.1). Key elements of all quality service-learning include "active participation, thought-fully organized experiences, focus on community

Name	General Definition
Academic Service-Learning	Experiential learning that takes place in the community as an integral part of the curriculum (Furco, 2010)
Academically-Based Community Service	
Community Service-Learning	Community service-learning is the integration of meaningful service to one's school or community with academic learning and structured reflection on the service experience (Cairn & Kielsmeier, 1991).
Community-Engaged Service-Learning	
Community-Based Learning	
Community-Engaged Learning	
Change-Oriented Service-Learning	Experiential learning which helps students to develop a deeper understanding of social issues and promotes the developments of skills necessary to work toward social change (Iverson & James, 2013)
Critical Service-Learning	
Justice-Oriented Service-Learning	
Critical Community Service	

Figure 1.1. **Different Names for and Definitions of Service-Learning**

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needs and school/community co-ordination, academic curriculum integration, structured time

for reflections, opportunities for application of skills and knowledge, extended learning

opportunities, and development of a sense of caring for others" (Billig, 2000, p. 659).

For the purposes of this research, service-learning will be defined as a form of experiential

learning which intentionally connects curriculum goals to a community's needs. This definition

contains the fundamental elements of the main types of service-learning and can be expanded as

warranted to embrace service-learning projects that have a particular emphasis.

It is important to note that when talking about service-learning, *community* can be

variously defined as a geographic, institutional, or cultural concept (Battistoni, 1997). Thus in a

service-learning project a community may be a classroom, a school, a neighborhood, a city, a

state, a country, the world, or a particular ethnic or social group. It is also important to point out

that there are various names given to service-learning. In order to better understand service-

learning and its potential effect(s) on education, it is also essential to understand what service-
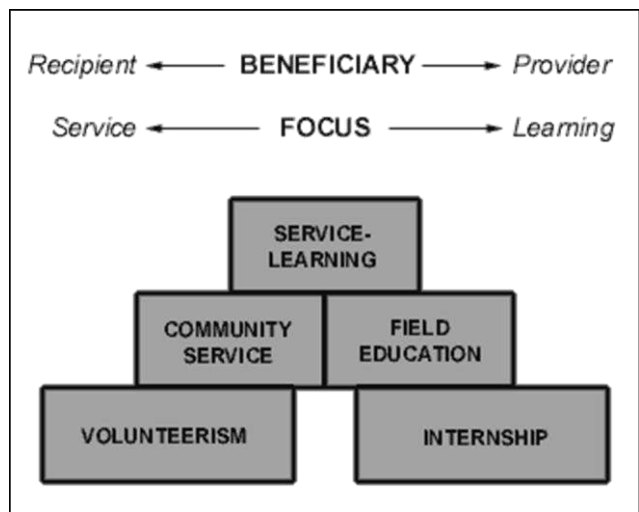
***Figure 1.2.* Furco's Definitional Schema of Service-Learning**

Figure 1.2 is from "Service-learning: A Balanced Approach to Experiential
Education" by Andrew Furco, 2003, *Introduction to Service-Learning Toolkit*,
Providence, RI: Campus Compact.

learning is *not*, as there tends to be confusion over the differences between *service-learning,*

volunteerism, and *community service* (Figure 1.2). Furco (2003) defines volunteerism as

 "activities where the primary emphasis is on the service being provided and the primary

intended beneficiary is clearly the service recipient," and community service as "activities that

primarily focus on the service being provided as well as the benefits the service activities have

on recipients" (p. 4). While both volunteerism and community service are worthwhile endeavors

that can and should be promoted by schools, they are not the same as service-learning. Unlike

volunteerism and community service, service-learning requires an intentional connection

between service activities and curricular goals (that is, the attainment of academic objectives

through service-learning); the deliberate use of reflective practice; and, that the partners involved

should be mutual beneficiaries of the service-learning project (Aston & Sax, 1998; Billig, 2000,

2010; Cairn & Kielsmeier, 1999; Epstein, 2005; Erickson & Anderson, 1997; Eyler & Giles,

1999; Furco, 2002, 2013; Jacoby, 1996; Shumer & Duckenfield, 2004). As Furco summarizes,

service-learning is unique in its "intention to equally benefit the provider and the recipient of the

service as well as to ensure equal focus on both the service being provided and the learning that

is occurring" (1996, p.5).

Another common source of confusion when it comes to service-learning is its relation to

different types of inquiry-based learning such as problem-based learning and project-based

learning (Figure 1.3). While each of these strategies are typically more learner-centered, open-

ended, and focused on real-world learning than are more traditional approaches to instruction,

neither of them necessarily incorporate the community partnerships, meaningful service,

diversity, youth voice, or reflection which make service-learning unique.

One final definitional obstacle which needs to be addressed when it comes to service-

learning is the valid concern that, when not approached thoughtfully and with great care, service-

learning can foster a "charity" mentality which highlights societal inequalities (King, 2004;

Problem-Based Learning	Project-Based Learning	Service-Learning
Similarities		
All three: • **Focus on an open-ended question or task** • **Provide authentic applications of content and skills** • **Build 21st Century Competencies** • **Emphasis student independence and inquiry** • **Are more complex and longer than traditional lessons or assignments**		
Differences		
Problem-Based Learning	**Project-Based Learning**	**Service-Learning**
Most often single-subject	Often multi-disciplinary	**Often multi-disciplinary**
Tend to be short	Tend to be long	**Last a sufficient duration to meet community needs and specified outcomes**
Follows traditionally prescribed, specific steps	Follows general, variously-named steps	**Although may follow some general guidelines, is by necessity, a flexible process**
The "product" may simply be a proposed solution expressed in writing or in an oral presentation	Includes the creation of a product or performance	**The project may be ongoing and not necessarily focused on a specific product; always involves meeting a community need**
Most often uses case studies or fictitious scenarios which pose a problem to be solved	Often involves real-world, fully authentic tasks and settings	**Always involves real-world, fully authentic tasks and settings**
Most often does not explicitly address diversity	Most often does not explicitly address diversity	**Addresses diversity**
Most often does not incorporate reflection	Most often does not incorporate reflection	**Incorporates on-going reflection**
Student voice not of central importance	Student voice not of central importance	**Student voice a critical component of the process**

Figure 1.3 **A Comparison of Experiential Learning Types**

Figure 1.3 is adapted from John Larmer: http://www.edutopia.org/blog/pbl-vs-pbl-vs-xbl-john-larmer. The "service-learning" column was added.

Rosenberger, 2000). As Pompa (2002) said:

>Unless facilitated with great care and consciousness, "service" can unwittingly become
>
>an exercise in patronization. In a society replete with hierarchical structures and
>
>patriarchal philosophies, service-learning's potential danger is for it to become the very
>
>thing it seeks to eschew." (p. 68)

Battistoni (1997) responded to this concern by delineating two distinct and contradictory

ethical foundations for service learning, philanthropic and civic. The philanthropic view has as

its focus charity and character building, a kind of "noblesse oblige of people lucky enough to be

where they are" (p. 151). The civic view on the other hand, emphasizes the interdependence of

rights and responsibilities. "The idea is not that the well-off 'owe' something to the less

fortunate, but that free democratic communities depend on mutual responsibility and that rights

without obligations are ultimately not sustainable" (Battistoni, 1997, p. 151).

Background for the Study:
The University-Middle School Service-Learning Partnership

Traditionally, pre-service teachers obtain their classroom experiences through clinical

practica, where they are placed in classrooms under the supervision of a cooperating teacher and

a university liaison. These placements are often diverse, are usually tied to curricular goals, and

help to socialize pre-service teachers to the school setting. However, as Baldwin, Buchanan, and

Rudisill (2007) point out, pre-service teachers do not usually have much agency in these

placements, generally following the lead of the cooperating teacher, and having little, if any,

input into the classroom routines, rules, or presentation of curriculum. "In such environments,

[pre-service teachers] may be more willing to accept the behaviors and practices they observe

rather than to question the status quo" (Baldwin, Buchanan, and Rudisill, 2007, p. 317).

Unfortunately, these traditional placements primarily benefit only the pre-service teachers and

the pre-service teachers have little opportunity to become familiar with the local school community (Guadarrama, 2000). Additionally, there is all too often a discrepancy between what pre-service teachers are taught in their methods classes about providing students with *both* standards-focused instruction and democratic, 21st Century skills and what they observe in their placements (Darling-Hammond, 2006a).

Recognizing this fundamental disconnect between theory and practice, in the fall of 2013 the School of Education began a unique service-learning practicum. The new model was the brainchild of several faculty members who felt that the traditional secondary practicum, which consisted of 30 hours of classroom observation, could be improved upon by providing pre-service teachers with a more active learning experience. The project, which came to be called *The University-Middle School Service-Learning Partnership,* was funded by a generous donor (and former teacher) from outside the university who enthusiastically supported the concept of a service-learning partnership between the university and local middle schools (Figure 1.4).

The general idea of the new practicum model was to have secondary pre-service teachers work with middle school students to develop service-learning projects which benefited the middle school students' community. In this "nested" model, the objective is to have *both* the pre-service teachers *and* the middle school students participate in service-learning. By connecting their pedagogical coursework at the university with the creation and facilitation of service-learning projects at the middle school, the pre-service teachers learn about service-learning as a teaching and learning method as they actively construct a service-learning course with middle school teachers and students. The middle school students are also learning by doing as they work with the pre-service teachers to identify and research issues of concern to them in their community. They then work and reflect together as they utilize curricular content to implement

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Figure 1.4 **The University-Middle School Service-Learning Partnership:**
A Nested Model
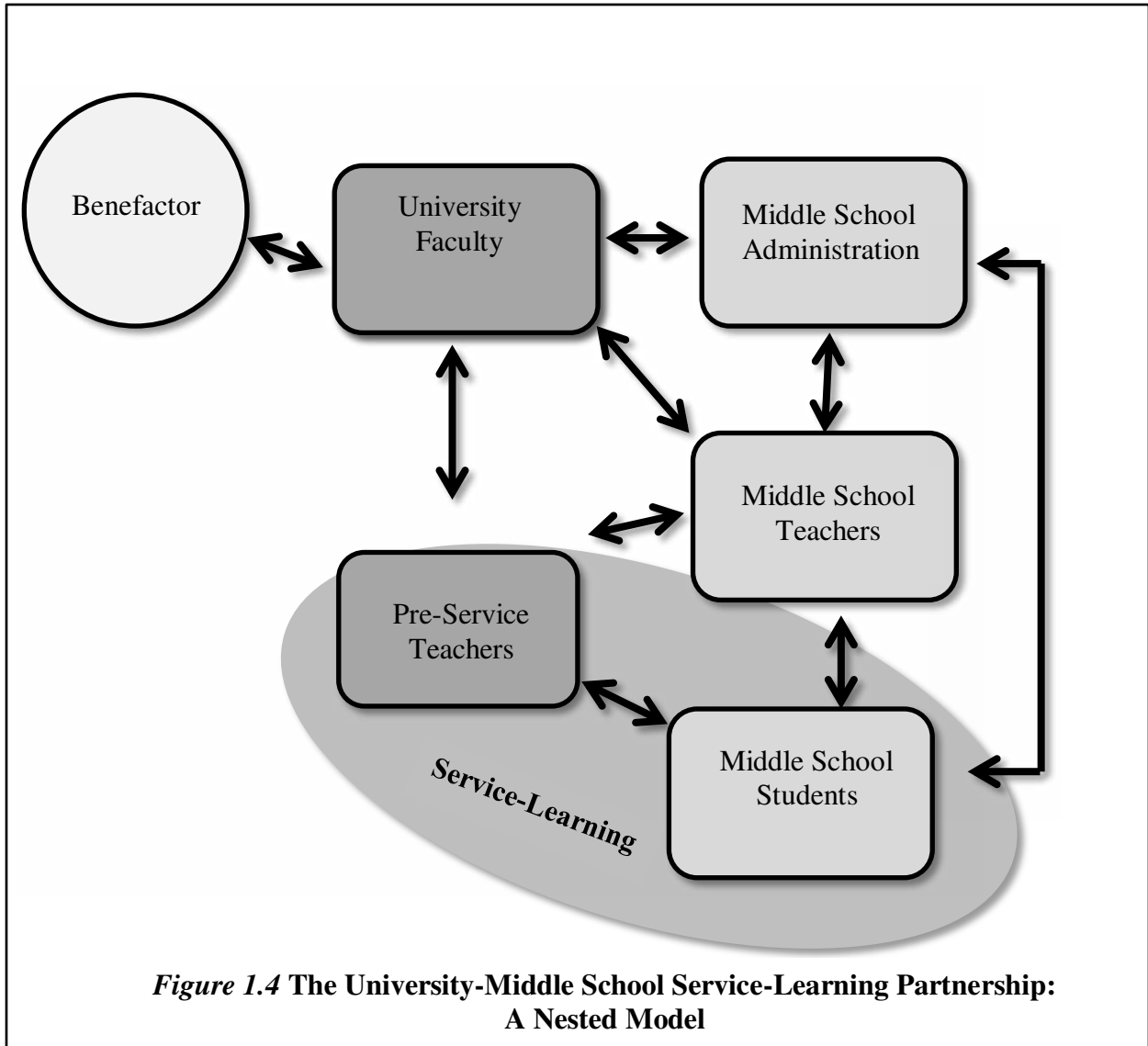
solutions to real world problems. Both groups of students, the pre-service teachers and the

middle school students are actively involved in experiential, purposeful, and collaborative

learning grounded in democratic educational values.

The University-Middle School Service-Learning Partnership moved from planning stages

to reality in the spring of 2014 when four pre-service teachers who were enrolled in secondary

teaching program implemented two after school service-learning programs at a local middle

school. This pilot of the service-learning practicum lasted for a semester and met, on average,

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once a week for two hours with the pre-service students required to spend a minimum of 20 hours on service-learning. (They were required to spend an additional ten hours on traditional classroom observations.) The pre-service teachers who participated chose to do so, and each of the service-learning programs undertaken at the middle school had been identified by administrators and teachers as ones which required additional support for effective implementation. In place of their traditional, observational teaching practicum, two pre-service teachers worked with a group of 20 to 25 middle school students who were interested in "growing" the learning garden. The other two pre-service teachers worked with ten students who wanted to form a student government association for their school. Middle school students volunteered to participate in the after school groups (the school system already had after school transportation in place), and each group was mentored by a middle school teacher who was interested in the project and who was willing to provide guidance and support to the pre-service teachers in their efforts.

The pilot of the partnership was very successful based on feedback from the middle school (students, teachers, and administrators) and from the participating pre-service teachers, and so the decision was made to continue with the program. The University-Middle School Partnership expanded bit by bit each year, and by the spring of 2017, it was entering its fourth year. No longer an option, the middle school service-learning practicum had become a requirement for all pre-services teachers in the secondary education program. The partnership had expanded to include four local middle schools, and employed two graduate student assistants for their full twenty hours a week. Most of the service-learning still took place in after school settings with middle school students who chose to participate in the "clubs," but some of the middle school service-learning took place during the school day.

Several components of this service-learning partnership are important to highlight. First is the *partnership* between the university and the middle schools. In order for these projects to be considered true service-learning for the pre-service teachers, they must connect their experiences to their course work and meet an identified community need (Furco & Billig, 2002; Jacoby, 2015). By working with students, teachers, and administrators at the middle school to identify needs, relationships between the university and the middle schools were developed and it was ensured that a true, reciprocal partnerships from which both parties benefitted was formed. It is also important to point out that the university has committed to having pre-service teachers return each semester to the middle school partners in order to continue with the projects that are implemented. Some of the projects are ongoing and the importance of continuity was both recognized and addressed.

Overview of the Literature

Scholars started to study service-learning as a pedagogy in the 1990s when its popularity began to increase as educators strove to move beyond accountability pressures. In general, research has shown that well-implemented service-learning programs have a number of positive outcomes for student participants as compared to their nonparticipating peers. These benefits can include enhanced academic performance (Davila & Mora, 2007; Novak, Markey, & Allen, 2007; Warren, 2012; Weiler, LaGoy, Crane, & Rovner, 1998); an increased sense of civic responsibility (Billig, Jesse, & Grimley, 2008; Melchoir,1998; Morgan & Streb, 2001; Simons & Cleary, 2006), and improved motivation and academic engagement (Billig, Jesse, & Grimley, 2008; Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Wulsin, 2008; Scales & Roehlkepartain, 2005). Similar findings have been found when researchers look at service-learning and pre-service teachers specifically and also when they focus on service-learning and its connection to democratic education. Scant research examines the intersection of service-learning, teacher education, and democratic

education although the literature which does exist supports similar outcomes (Dinkelman, 2001; Jarrett & Stenhouse, 2011; Kirkland, 2014; Maynes, Hatt, & Wideman, 2013; Root, Callahan, & Sepanski, 2002).

Service-Learning and Teacher Education

A growing body of research is finding that participating in service-learning has positive results for pre-service teachers in a variety of areas, and increasingly service-learning is being utilized in teacher preparation programs across the country (Karayan & Gathercoal, 2005). While the research on the effect of service-learning participation on pre-service teachers' academic success is relatively sparse and mixed in its findings (Hart & King, 2007; Strage 2000, 2004), research outcomes in other areas are more positive and largely reflect the findings in the more general service-learning literature. In particular, pre-service teachers participating in service-learning tend to experience an increase in self-efficacy (Griffith & Zhang, 2013; Iverson & James, 2013), as well as enhanced cultural responsiveness (Boyle-Baise, 2005; Brown & Howard, 2005; Theriot, 2006).

Service-Learning and Democratic Education

Given service-learning's focus on agency, participation and engagement, its connection to democratic education seems clear. Interestingly however, there is not much literature which deals directly with the connection between these two topics. Areas which are represented in the extant literature commonly reflect the findings of studies which focus on service-learning generally, with the difference being that in the studies cited here the authors explicitly link service-learning to democratic education. Areas in which scholars have connected service-learning to democratic education include appreciation of diversity (Battistoni, 1998; Boyle-Baise, 2002; Penner, 2013); critical thinking and intellectual understanding (Battistoni, 1998); civic skills and attitudes (Battistoni, 1998; Iverson & James, 2013; Roschelle, Turpin & Elias,

2000; Stokamer, 2011); an increased focus on issues of social justice (Boyle-Baise, 2007; Mitchell, 2008; Wade, 2000); and, service-learning as a pedagogy of democracy (Battistoni, 1997; Koliba, 2000; Mendel-Reyes, 1998; Sheffield, 2004).

Service-Learning, Teacher Education, and Democratic Education

Not surprisingly given the relative paucity of literature on service-learning and democratic education, very little literature exists which focuses on the intersection of service-learning, democratic education, and teacher education. One can speculate on why this is so, but given the need to provide today's teachers with pedagogical skills which allow them to both meet curricular demands and to provide their students with a more holistic schooling experience, the examination of this convergence seems critical. Areas of interest within this intersection for which literature was found, and which differs from literature previously discussed, includes personal transformation (Carrington & Selva, 2010; Kirkland, 2014; Maynes, Hatt, & Wideman, 2013; Vadeboncoeur, 1996); and, pedagogy (Dinkelman, 2001; Jarrett & Stenhouse, 2011). A larger study conducted in 2002 by Root, Callahan, and Sepanski looked at several of these areas as well as teaching efficacy, commitment to teaching, and the intention to utilize service-learning in their future classrooms.

<div align="center">

Statement of the Problem and Rationale for the Study

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While it is essential that we maintain high academic expectations for all students, we also need to provide a balance between teaching students to pass tests and teaching students to live, work, and participate in our diverse, rapidly changing world. Incorporating the values of democratic education into our schools is one way to address this requirement, and service-learning may be a pedagogy which provides teachers with a flexible framework that allows them to accomplish this goal. Service-learning may not be an appropriate teaching and learning strategy to adopt for every curricular objective. However, if service-learning is a means to bridge

the gap between teaching students to *learn* and teaching students to *think* and a way to encourage the transformative potential of student agency, then it is certainly a pedagogy with which teachers should be familiar, and it is unquestionably a pedagogy to which pre-service teachers should be exposed.

Research Questions

During the two years that I worked on the university-middle school service-learning partnership, I became increasingly interested in service-learning as a teaching and learning pedagogy which may be able to address some of the negative impacts of standardization and accountability which have undermined our educational system by increasing pre-service teachers' ability to incorporate the values of democratic education into their instruction. I was intrigued by the idea that perhaps service-learning is a way to introduce democratic ideals into our public schools while maintaining curricular integrity, and I wanted to gain an in-depth understanding of pre-service teachers' thoughts and feelings about the possible connections between service-learning and democratic education. Therefore, my guiding question as I explored this topic were: In what ways do pre-service teachers come to understand democratic In order to explore the potential intersection between service-learning and democratic education for pre-service teachers' participating in a service-learning practicum, my guiding research question was: In what ways do pre-service teachers come to understand democratic values in education as the result of their participation in a "nested" service-learning experience? values in education as the result of their participation in a "nested" service-learning experience? My dimensional organizers were:

1. Has a service-learning experience enhanced the pre-service teachers' understanding of democratic values in education? If so, how and why? If not, why not? Have they come to understand other educational tenets?

2. Has service-learning supported pre-service teachers' development of their views of themselves as democratic educators? If so, in what ways? If not, why not? Have they developed as teachers in other ways?

3. Has a service-learning experience influenced pre-service teachers' plans to embrace democratic educational values in their (future) classrooms? If so, how and why? If not, why not?

It is important to note that it was not the methodological intent of this study to discover what variables cause students' shifts in thinking. Rather I was interested in understanding how pre-service teachers' participation in a service-learning practicum led to changes in their thinking about democratic education over time.

Methodology and Study Design

Given that the goal of this study was to better understand the impact which a service-learning practicum experience had on pre-service teachers' understanding of democratic education, a hybrid portraiture-interpretive case study methodology was used. Yin (2014) defines a case study as an empirical inquiry which investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context may not be clearly evident. Interpretive case studies attempt to understand phenomena through the meanings that people assign to them, and focus on *how* and *why* people see the world in the way they do.

Developed by Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983), portraiture is a qualitative research methodology that bridges science and art, and which records the perspectives and experiences of individuals. The juxtaposition of a case study and portraiture approach, discussed in detail in

Chapter Three, allowed an in-depth exploration into the pre-service teachers' thoughts about whether, how, and why service-learning contributed to their understanding of democratic educational values. Portraiture also met my methodological needs in that it allowed me to acknowledge my active participation in the research process.

Data collection included interviews with four pre-service teachers who were participating in the service-learning partnership; observations (of pre-service teacher seminars and the middle school clubs/classes); and, the collection of reflective writing and blog postings that were completed by service-learning participants. Interviews were recorded and then transcribed. Once data had been collected they were critically reviewed and organized into thematic areas. As Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis explain, "The development of emergent themes reflects the portraitist's first efforts to bring interpretive insight, analytic scrutiny, and aesthetic order to the collection of data" (1997, p. 185).

Definition of Key Terms

Democratic Education the teaching and learning pedagogies put to practice in a classroom which help to produce engaged citizens who are capable of free and independent thought, able to build common ground across diverse experiences and ideas, and prepared to act as agents of change in society.

Dialogue as used in this study is more than simple conversation. Rather, dialogue is defined in the Bohmian tradition in which participants attempt to create a new understanding together by sharing equally and listening nonjudgmentally (Bohm, 1996).

A Nested Model of Service-Learning is one in which one service-learning experience is contained within another service-learning experience. In the case of the University-Middle School Service-Learning Partnership, *both* the pre-service teachers *and* the middle school students are participating in service-learning.

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Pre-service Teacher The use of the term pre-service teacher in this study refers to college students who are enrolled in a teacher education program. Most of these students have been admitted to a master's of teaching program; others are undergraduates.

Service-Learning is a multi-faceted approach to teaching and learning that integrates academic instruction and reflection to address genuine community needs.

Teaching Practicum A traditional teaching practicum as defined in this study is the observation of a classroom by a pre-service teacher. Practicums consist of multiple observations over the course of a semester and should not be confused with *student teaching* (during which pre-service teachers are more actively engaged with students in a classroom).

21st Century Skills are skills students will need in order to live, work, and succeed in the 21st century. These skills include (but are not limited to): competency in self-directed learning; problem-solving; critical thinking; the ability to work collaboratively with diverse groups of people; and, the need for creativity and innovation (Bell, 2010).

CHAPTER 2: PREPARATION

Theoretical Framework

Because of its complex nature, varying definitions, and the wide-variety of goals that are associated with service-learning programs, there is great diversity when it comes to the theoretical frameworks which are used in the implementation and study of service-learning, *if* such frameworks are even used at all. In 2002, Furco and Billig commented that of the few theoretical models proposed in service-learning literature, most were limited to the perspective of a single discipline, a practice which does not reflect the interdisciplinary nature of service-learning. It is not surprising therefore, that recently there has been a call for more research in service-learning which has been informed by relevant existing theory and for programs which are built on strong theoretical underpinnings (Whitley, 2014). Given the orientation of this study with its focus on service-learning and the development of pre-service teachers and democratic education, this research was guided by the educational theories of John Dewey and Paulo Freire. Although neither of these scholars specifically addressed service-learning in their writings, at their core their philosophies of education speak to the essence of what service-learning can and should be.

John Dewey

Although there is little consensus amongst service-learning scholars when it comes to which theories provide the best conceptual framework for service-learning, there does seem to be

general agreement that John Dewey and his work on experiential education are foundational to the field (Giles & Eyler, 1994; Saltmarsh, 1996). John Dewey (1859-1952) was one of the preeminent educational theorists of his time, and his influence extends into current educational work in a wide variety of areas (Johnston, 2010). Dewey's ideas about education were grounded in his philosophy of pragmatism and were central to the Progressive Movement in schooling. While traditional schooling had long relied on authoritarian methods and rote memorization, Dewey believed that children should be invested in their own learning, and that they best learned via meaningful, experiential, and inquiry-based activities (Dewey, 1938). He advocated for teachers who encouraged their students to explore ideas and ask questions, classrooms which connected the use of relevant hands-on activities to the real world, and schools in which the memorization of facts was not mistaken for knowledge (Dewey, 1916).

Dewey also emphasized the connection between education and democracy (Dewey, 1916). Defining democracy as a form of "associated living," Dewey recognized that humans are social beings who want to interact and communicate with one another, and he believed that we construct common values through these social interactions. In one of the most famous passages in *Democracy and Education*, Dewey had this to say about democracy:

A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience. The extension in space of the number of individuals who participate in an interest so that each has to refer his own action to that of others, and to consider the action of others to give point and direction to his own, is equivalent to the breaking down of those barriers of class, race, and national territory which kept men from realizing the full import of their activity. These more numerous and more varied points of contact denote a greater diversity of stimuli to which an individual

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has to respond; they consequently put a premium on variation in action. They secure a

liberation of powers which remain suppressed as long as the incitations to action are

partial, as they must be in a group which in its exclusiveness shuts out many interests.

(Dewey, 1916/1944, p. 99)

Connecting this statement to schooling, Robertson (1992) makes the point that while Dewey's

ideals for a progressive, experiential teaching and learning pedagogy are worthy goals, in and of

themselves their realization would be "an incomplete victory without a commitment to the

development of the radically democratic culture" which classrooms must "both model and help

produce" (p. 337). For Dewey, schools were places for students to learn about the democratic

way of life and its inherent values, but they were also a place to practice the democratic process

and put democratic principles into action.

Directly connecting Dewey's philosophies to the pedagogy of community service-

learning, Saltmarsh (1996) stated that Dewey's writings "analyze five specific areas of relevance

to service-learning: 1) linking education to experience, 2) democratic community, 3) social

service, 4) reflective inquiry, and 5) education for social transformation" (p. 13). Saltmarsh also

points out that Dewey called for the linkage of "action and doing on the one hand, and

knowledge and understanding on the other" (1932, p. 107) and that by doing so, Dewey

connected mind and action, but also practice and theory, academic learning with experiential

learning, the school and the community, and knowledge and moral conduct (Saltmarsh, 1996).

Paulo Freire

In addition to John Dewey, scholars also frequently reference Paulo Freire when

discussing the theoretical underpinnings of service-learning. Considered by many to be the

pioneer of critical theory in education, Paulo Freire developed a theory of education that focuses

on the transformational change of both the individual and of society at the local level and beyond (Bartlett, 2008; Glass, 2001). He believed that the process of education is never neutral and can either propagate passivity and oppression or engender transformation and positive action. He saw knowledge as a social construct and teaching as a political process in which teachers must work *with* their students to actively construct knowledge which is meaningful to the students and which can lead to the creation of new personal and social realities.

For Freire, "education must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction" (Freire, 1970, p. 72). Freire adeptly illustrated this contradiction with his description of conventional, narrative education as a "banking model," a model in which the teacher (the subject) actively transmits knowledge while the students (the objects) passively receive it. The fundamental problem with this model according to Freire, was that it perpetuated oppression by failing to teach students to think critically.

> (The) banking concept of education regards men as adaptable, manageable beings. The more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world. The more completely they accept the passive role imposed on them, the more they tend simply to adapt to the world as it is and to the fragmented view of reality deposited in them. (Freire, 1970, p. 73)

Freire's solution to the traditional hierarchical teacher-student relationship was a dialogic model in which the teacher-student relationship became an equal partnership, a partnership in which teacher-student and student-teacher were both teaching and learning. Freire also stressed the importance of mutual respect, stating that "true" dialogue must include "profound love for the world and for people," as well as humility and "intense faith in humankind" (Freire, 1970,

pp. 89-90). Using this dialogic model, Freire proposed a student-centered pedagogy which would lead to critical consciousness, a problem-posing approach to education that would recognize the experience, interests, and culture of students and teach students to question the accepted assumptions of the social systems in which they lived (Freire, 1970, 1974, 1997).

Freire believed that education should be a liberatory, transformative experience which overcomes a "culture of silence," an "unveiling" of social and political contradictions which leads to understanding, to critical consciousness, and to action (Freire, 1970). Using the dialogic model, Freire proposed a student-centered pedagogy which would lead to critical consciousness, a problem-posing approach to education that would recognize the experience, interests, and culture of students and teach students to question the accepted assumptions of the social systems in which they lived. Through the principal of "see-judge-act" (Freire, 1974), Freire proposed that a student must first *see* the systems that maintained injustice, then strive to reflect on or *judge* the assumptions that allowed this injustice to persist, and finally *act* to achieve equality and democracy. "Praxis" was his belief that "to exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it" (Freire, 1970, p. 88).

Freire's transformative views on education are most commonly linked in the literature to critical service-learning that has an explicit social justice orientation (Mitchell, 2008; Porfilio & Hickman, 2011). However, his views on dialogic, participatory education in which knowledge becomes meaningful through social construction and reflection as well as his opinions on community relationships are ideals that are closely aligned with all high quality service-learning programs.

Dewey and Freire in Dialogue

Dewey and Freire had much in common when it came to their theories of education. Both men argued that for real learning to occur, students must be actively engaged in their own education, and they both stressed the significance of the relationship between action, dialogue, and reflection in the educational process. Dewey and Freire also agreed upon the importance of the relationship between the individual and society, recognizing that community is central to meaningful educational experiences. As Deans (1999) explains, both Dewey and Freire discuss "how individuals learn through the active, collaborative tackling of complex and experiential problems, and how individuals and schools should function in society to promote a more participatory, curious and critically aware citizenry" (p. 20).

Perhaps the biggest difference between Dewey and Freire is how they framed the goal of education. One could argue that while Dewey saw education as a way to prepare students to live and work in a changing world, Freire saw education as a way to prepare students to change the world. In other words, Dewey's focus seemed to be on educating individuals to be thoughtful, active members of society. "Only by being true to the full growth of all individuals who make it up, can society by any chance be true to itself" (Dewey, 1922, p. 5). Freire's concentration was more on empowering individuals to effect change:

> Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. (1970, p. 34)

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In other words, while Dewey provided a "means of political action defined by mediation and gradualism" (Saltmarsh, 1996, p. 20), Freire was focused on provocation and revolutionary change.

Another difference between Dewey and Freire is the way in which they addressed both issues of power and of racial, ethnic, and cultural difference. Freire confronted these issues in a straightforward manner, taking an "anthropological approach to students, which accounts for culture, class and race" (Deans, 1999, p. 20). Dewey, on the other hand, infrequently addressed these topics leading some scholars to see this as a limitation to his work (West, 1993a, 1993b). Other scholars, however, believe that "Dewey's pragmatism is consonant with contemporary views on diversity even if in his idealism Dewey avoided discussing the dynamics of power and dominance in American culture" (Deans, 1999, p. 18). An example of this is seen in *The Principle of Nationality* (1916/1983) when Dewey writes:

> No matter how loudly any one proclaims his Americanism, if he assumes that any one racial strain, and one component culture, no matter how settled it was in our territory, or how effective it has proved in its own land, is to furnish a pattern to which all other strains and cultures are to conform, he is a traitor to an American nationalism. Our unity cannot be a homogenous thing…; it must be a unity created by drawing out and composing into a harmonious whole the best, the most characteristic which each contributing race and people has to offer. (pp. 288-289).

The educational theories of Dewey and Freire are certainly not incompatible and in many ways one could argue that Freire's emphasis on transformation is a natural extension of Dewey's beliefs or at least a different means to somewhat similar ends (Stemhagen, 2016). Dewey himself stated:

Social efficiency as an education purpose should mean cultivation of power to join freely

and fully in shared or common activities. This is impossible without culture. One cannot

share in intercourse with others without learning – without getting a broader point of

view and perceiving things of which one would otherwise be ignorant. And there is

perhaps no better definition of culture than that it is the capacity for constantly expanding

the range and accuracy of one's perception of meanings. (1916, p. 122)

Neither Dewey nor Freire had, or claimed, flawless theories, but both had philosophies with

much to offer our current educational system. As bell hooks stated in an interview when

discussing the sexist orientation of Freire's work, "the fact that there was some mud in my water

was not important…I was able to take what was nurturing to me and be more compassionate

toward the aspect that was threatening…" (Olson & Hirsh, 1995, p. 121). Certainly, Dewy and

Freire would agree that given the current hierarchical, banking model that exists in most

classrooms today, finding ways to actively involve and engage students in their learning and to

provide them with opportunities to experience agency and voice are both the first critical steps

toward transformative education and an extremely worthwhile accomplishment.

A Conceptual Model

While the philosophies of both Dewey and Freire provide a strong foundational

understanding of the theory that underlies service-learning, a conceptual model proposed by

Cone and Harris (1996) provides a practical framework for service-learning implementation

(Figure 2.1). The authors drew upon Dewey and Freire, but they also employed additional

theoretical perspectives from psychology and social theory (Bruner, 1968; Gardner, 1987; Kolb,

1984; Piaget, 1970; Vygotsky, 1978).

Cone and Harris began their model with the learner and stressed the importance of

recognizing the individuality of students, each of whom comes to service-learning with different

learning styles, life histories, perceptions, interests, values, expectations, and skills. The second

component of this model focuses on the need for thorough preparation prior to the actual service-

learning experience, preparation that provides students with an understanding of the theoretical

concepts of service-learning and an awareness of their own preconceived ideas. About the

Figure 2.1 **A Lens Model for Service-Learning Educators**

Figure 2.1 is adapted from "Service-Learning Practice: Developing a Theoretical Framework" by Dick Cone and Susan Harris, 1996, Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, 3, p. 45. Copyright 1996 by the Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning.
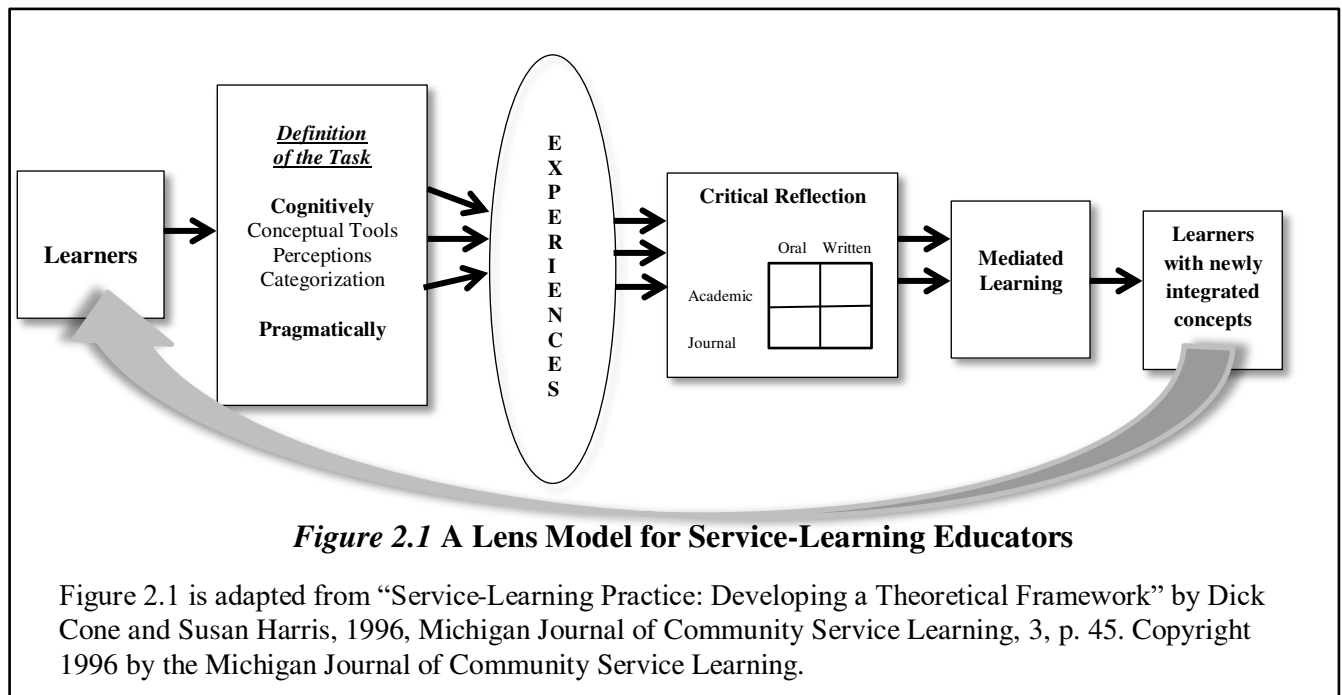
cognitive piece of this component, Cone and Harris stated "we think Dewey had it right when he

talked about encountering a problem, formulating a set of questions to be asked, and gathering

information – in other words, approaching experience with a set of conceptual tools" (p. 47).

"Experience," or the actual service-learning activity, is the next element, and experience

is followed by critical reflection. The authors argued for a holistic approach to reflection, one

which utilized the students' intellect and emotion in conjunction with their writing and oral

skills. Reflection is followed by "mediated learning," a concept which highlights the importance

of having a teacher or mentor who is able to facilitate students' learning processes. The final element in the Cone and Harris model returns to the learner who now has newly integrated concepts, "recognizing that service-learning is not simply an abstract pedagogical tool, but an experience that has potentially profound effects on a student's intellectual and personal growth" (p. 46). By adding an arrow from this final learner component back to the beginning of the model, I hoped to underscore that learning is an ongoing process rather than a finite progression with a set endpoint.

Research Synthesis

Overview

Service-learning is a multifaceted field practiced in a wide-variety of settings with a large diversity of stakeholders. It is a pedagogy which has been extensively studied from multiple perspectives, and researchers have found that different types of service-learning experiences can lead to a variety of different outcomes. This review is not, therefore, intended to be an exhaustive discussion of service-learning but rather a purposeful selection of literature which contributes first to a very general understanding of service-learning, and then more specifically to service-learning as it relates to teacher education, to democratic education, and to the complex intersection of these areas.

After a brief explanation of both the search procedures used and the limitations of the extant body of service-learning research, this chapter moves to a very broad overview of some of the influential research in service-learning. This synopsis is followed by more detailed examinations of the service-learning literature which is relevant to teacher education and to democratic education. The final section of the review examines the limited literature on the

juncture of service-learning, teacher education, and democratic education, and ends with a look at the gap in the service-learning research which this study hopes to address.

Search Procedures

All of the research included in this literature review was obtained from scholarly peer-reviewed articles which met the standards of the American Educational Research Association (AERA, 2006). Articles were obtained from searches of EBSCOhost, Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), Google Scholar, *The International Journal of Research on Service-Learning in Teacher Education,* and *The Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*. It should be noted that, given the widely varied definitions of service-learning, each search which was performed identified articles which were not relevant to the current study and thus were not included in the literature review.

In the general overview of service-learning, an attempt was made to provide a summary based upon important works in the field as the amount of extant literature on service-learning is vast. (A Boolean/phrase search of peer-reviewed articles in EBSCOhost using the descriptors "service-learning" or "service learning" returned 19,776 articles, the earliest of which was published in 1900. A more refined title search including the same descriptors resulted in 9,231 articles with the earliest publication date of 1974, although 96% of this research has been published since 2000, 46% since 2010.) For the section on teacher education and service-learning, a Boolean/phrase search of EBSCOhost using the title search terms "service learning" and "teacher educ*" or "service learning" and "preservice teach*" not "music" not "health" returned 221 results. After reviewing the abstracts, there were 14 studies which included information potentially applicable to this section of the literature review. A search of the other

four data bases were then cross referenced with the EBSCOhost results and yielded an additional 4 articles.

A similar search was conducted on democratic education and service-learning, and a Boolean/phrase search of EBSCOhost (no field selected) using the search terms "service learning" and "democratic educ*" returned 41 results, of which 11 seemed to contain information relevant to this review. A search of the other four data bases yielded another 3 articles. It is important to note that this search returned many articles which focused on civics education which, while certainly of value, were not necessarily pertinent to this study.

For the final section of the literature review, another Boolean/phrase search of EBSCOhost using the descriptors "service learning" and "teacher educ*" and "democratic educ*" (with no field selected) produced 39 articles, of which 8 were found to be potentially relevant to this study. A search and cross reference of the other four data bases resulted in an additional 2 articles.

General Limitations of Extant Research

Prior to reviewing the service-learning literature, it should be pointed out that there are some limitations of the extant research of which scholars in the field are quite aware. Seventeen years ago eminent service-learning researcher Shelley Billig (2000) commented that research on service-learning was not very robust. In the years since this pronouncement while service-learning pedagogy and practice have flourished, the research remains comparatively underdeveloped (Eyler, 2011; Giles & Eyler, 2013; Holsapple, 2012; Whitley, 2014). Andrew Furco, another well-known and highly respected service-learning scholar, stated that "although the quality of the (service-learning) research has improved in recent years, very few studies of service-learning have met the highest standards of scientific inquiry" (2013, p. 11). Furco went

on to make recommendations for strengthening the quality and rigor of service-learning research by conducting studies which employ experimental design, valid measures, and more detailed analyses, all of which would lead to more generalizable findings. Although Furco himself is an advocate of service-learning and believes that, overall, the research to date supports the use of service-learning, he also recognizes that much of the research has been done by proponents of the pedagogy who have "witnessed positive outcomes of the practice and have bought into its promise and potential" (2013, p. 15). Furco goes on to state that "a consequence of building a body of research primarily from advocates is that the level of scrutiny applied to the evidence for service-learning is likely lower than might be applied by skeptics and other detractors" and the "making the case for service-learning in an era of testing and accountability" will require more rigorous research designs which can do a better job of making the case for service-learning as an evidenced-based practice. (2013, p. 15). Other researchers in the field have called for more studies on service-learning which are grounded in a strong theoretical framework (Steinberg, Bringle, & McGuire, 2013; Whitley, 2014).

Perhaps in part because rigorous quantitative research on the multi-dimensional impacts of service-learning is difficult to conduct (Furco & Root, 2010), Furco's pronouncement that there are relatively few service-learning studies which meet the quantitative research criteria emphasized by today's educational environment is not surprising. Nevertheless, there does appear to be an accumulating knowledge base about the value of high-quality service-learning programs and their effect on participants, and the value of qualitative studies and program analyses should not be dismissed (Billig 2000, 2002, 2010; Celio, 2011; Furco, 2013). In fact I would argue, as Flyvbjerg (2001) does in his discussion of the importance of *phronesis* (or "practical wisdom") in social science research, that attempts to reduce complex social practices

to analytical, scientific, or technical knowledge are "misguided." While Flyvbjerg believes, and I agree, that there is a need for both quantitative research and qualitative research, he also believes that due to the fundamental differences between the natural and social sciences these two types of science should not be held to the same research criteria.

> The social sciences are strongest where the natural sciences are weakest; just as the social sciences have not contributed much to explanatory and predictive theory, neither have the natural sciences contributed to the reflexive analysis and discussion of values and interests, which is the prerequisite for an enlightened political, economic, and cultural development in any society, and which is at the core of *phronesis*. (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 3)

A Broad Examination of Service-Learning

Before delving into more specific research on service-learning, teacher education, and democratic education, a general overview of a sampling of works in the field of service-learning provides a foundational understanding of this complex topic and a point of departure for a more focused inquiry. In an attempt to respond to those who question the lack of robust service-learning research, I have made a concerted effort to include in this section large sample studies, longitudinal studies, and meta-analyses which report participant outcomes as well as studies which are often cited in service-learning literature. Studies conducted in both K-12 schools and universities are included.

In keeping with much, but not all, of the research, the service-learning studies which follow have been categorized into the three groups of 1) academic performance; 2) civic responsibility; and, 3) motivation and educational engagement. It is important to mention that while it may be necessary to categorize service-learning outcomes in this way for research purposes, this separation by category is both awkward and somewhat artificial. Several of the

studies cited below fit into more than one category and thus speak to the complex nature of service-learning and to the interdependent nature of the various relationships, disciplinary perspectives, and outcomes which are associated with service-learning.

Academic Performance. Given the current educational climate which focuses on standardized curriculum and test scores, the effect of service-learning on academic achievement is an important area of exploration. Furco (2013) reports that there are approximately 500 published studies of service-learning cited in the literature and that about 6% (28 studies) of these studies include assessments of student academic outcomes. The majority of these studies find "positive student outcomes in the areas of subject matter learning, standardized test performance, school attendance, earned grades, motivation for learning and engagement in school" although the overall effect is usually small and it is generally agreed that additional study is needed (Furco, 2013, p. 12).

In 2007, Novak, Markey, and Allen assessed service-learning on cognitive outcomes in a meta-analysis of nine studies which compared university courses with and without service-learning. The studies included in the analysis were conducted from 1993 to 2001 (n =1,610), and used one of two methodologies to measure cognitive outcomes: student self-reporting/faculty testimonial or faculty determination (i.e. course assignments and grades). The meta-analysis found that the addition of a service-learning component to a course increased learning outcomes by 53% (*d* = .424). Warren (2012) extended this meta-analysis in an attempt to provide a more accurate picture of the impact of service-learning on cognitive outcomes. Unlike the previous study, the new meta-analysis took into account unpublished literature in order to avoid an upward bias in effect size and differentiated between student/faculty self-reports and concrete measures of achievement such as grades. Warren's meta-analysis consisted of 11 studies

conducted from 1994 to 2008 (n = 2129) and, like the earlier meta-analysis, compared courses with and without a service-learning component. As did Novak et al., Warren found that service-learning had statistically significant and positive effects on student achievement outcomes with a mean effect size of $d = .332$.

An older study of subject matter outcomes which is often cited in the service-learning literature is the 1998 study of California schools by Weiler, LaGoy, Crane, and Rovner which explored the differences in students' language arts achievement between a group of primary and secondary school students. In their study of "well-designed and well-implemented" service-learning programs, Weiler et al. compared the students in 15 service- learning classrooms (n=775) to eight "matched" comparison classrooms (n= 310) in which service-learning was not utilized. The data were collected by evaluation and included student achievement tests; student attitude surveys; school record data; interviews with teachers, principals, students, program coordinators, and community partners; and observation. The results showed a statistically significant difference between the two groups, with the students who participated in service-learning scoring higher on the language arts portion of the state examination (the California Test of Basic Skills) than their peers who did not participate in service-learning. It should be noted that the information which is cited here, and in other service-learning literature, is based upon an executive summary of a study which the authors conducted for the California Department of Education (DOE). The executive summary does not include the statistical analyses, and my attempts at obtaining the original study from the California DOE were unsuccessful.

In another study which focused on academic achievement, Davila and Mora (2007) examined student panel data (n=15,340) from the 1988 to 2000 National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS) to empirically analyze the relationship between two forms of civic

engagement—student government and community service—and the educational progress made by students in the years after eighth grade. In general, the researchers found that civically engaged high school students made greater academic progress and were almost 14% more likely to graduate from college ($R^2 = 0.138$) than were their peers who were not civically engaged, findings which held true even when the researchers controlled for a variety of socioeconomic and demographic characteristics. Looking at more specific academic outcomes, Davila and Mora found that there were small positive relationships between community service and test scores in math ($R^2 = 0.011$), science ($R^2 = 0.014$), and history ($R^2 = 0.007$), although they found no such relationship between community service and reading ($R^2 = -0.006$). It is interesting to note that while this study is cited extensively in service-learning literature, Davila and Mora did not necessarily look at service-learning, but at "community service" as this is the terminology which was used when the NELS data was collected. While some of the service reported may, in fact, have been service-learning, this cannot be assumed. Also, the researchers were unable to determine from the data if student participation in the service projects was voluntary or involuntary (i.e. a class requirement).

In another large study which sought to explore the relationship between service-learning and the academic achievement of low-income students, Scales & Roehlkepartain (2005) analyzed existing data sets (a national survey of principals; a survey of a large aggregate sample of U.S. middle and high school students; and, surveys completed by a sample of 5,136 middle and high school students from Colorado Springs, CO). A key finding of this study was that involvement in service programs appears to contribute to lessening the achievement gap between low and high-income students. Although students with a higher socioeconomic status (SES) who served did better on all seven outcomes (achievement motivation; school engagement; homework; bonding

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to school; reading for pleasure; consistent attendance; high grades) than did any other group, low-income students who participated in service did better than high SES students who did not serve on all but two measures (consistent attendance and high grades), and they did better than low SES students who did not serve on all outcomes. For example, 64% of low-socioeconomic status students who did not serve had consistent attendance as compared to 70% of low SES students who did serve, a 9% difference between the two groups; 8% of low SES students who did not serve had high grades as compared to 11% of low SES students who did serve, a difference of 38%. While the authors acknowledge that none of their analyses show cause and effect relationships and admit that it is possible that, regardless of their poverty status, students who participated in service-learning were already more academically motivated, they also stated that "the consistency of the new findings across different datasets is interesting and promising" (p. 15).

Civic Responsibility. In addition to service-learning contributing to students' academic performance, several studies have found that participation in quality service-learning projects strengthens students' sense of civic responsibility. In their quantitative study, Morgan and Streb (2001) examined the impact of service-learning on students' self-concept (efficacy and personal competence), political engagement (political attentiveness and social action), and attitudes toward "out-groups" (attitudes towards the elderly and attitudes towards the disabled). Data were collected from pre- and post-surveys given to more than 200 high school students in 10 different schools, and the researchers used a regression analysis to assess the impact of student voice in a service-learning project on each of the six dependent variables. In each of the six cases, results were substantively large and statistically significant at the .01 level (efficacy $R^2 = 0.22$; personal competence $R^2 = 0.28$; political attentiveness $R^2 = 0.35$; social action $R^2 = 0.29$; attitudes towards

the elderly $R^2 = 0.63$; attitudes towards the disabled R2 = 0.28). The authors to concluded that

"although much work is left to be done, these initial findings are very strong; by having a voice

in service-learning projects, students are becoming more educated, more tolerant, and more

active. Service-learning can indeed build better citizens" (Morgan and Streb, 2001, p. 167).

In an evaluation of the national Learn and Serve School and Community-Based Programs

conducted between 1994 and 1997 for the Corporation for National Service, Brandeis

University's Center for Human Resources and Abt Associates Inc. found that students engaged

in service-learning had an increased understanding of community needs (Melchoir,1998). The

evaluation examined the Learn and Serve program in 17 middle and high schools across the

United States, each of which was determined to have well-established and well-designed service-

learning programs. Researchers used a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods which

included the analysis of survey data and school record information for approximately 1,000

Learn and Serve program participants and comparison group members; surveys of teachers at the

seventeen schools; telephone interviews with staff at community agencies where students

performed their service; and on-site interviews and observation of program activities. Key

findings of this evaluation were that program participants displayed positive short-term impacts

on educational and civic behaviors and attitudes ranging from attitudes about cultural diversity,

to the importance of volunteer activities, to attitudes about school, to the importance of grades.

The initial study also found statistically significant (at the .05 level) increases in math grades and

school engagement for participants as compared to comparison group members. Interestingly,

while the overall increase in math grades was 10%, the increase for women was 17% and for

minority youth it was 22%, suggesting that "while students on average may experience a small

improvement in school performance through service-learning, some students are likely to benefit more substantially" (p. 27).

It is important to note that the results of a follow-up study to the Learn and Serve School and Community-Based Programs evaluation found that even in well-implemented and well-designed service-learning programs, many of the positive outcomes of participation faded over time, with "only marginal impacts on service leadership, school engagement, and math grades evident one year later" (Melchoir, 1998, p. 91). The follow-up study also found however, that students who continued with an involvement in service-learning over time "experienced statistically significantly impacts on the measures of service leadership, hours of volunteer service, and school engagement, as well as marginally significant impacts on involvement in volunteer service, college aspirations, and consumption of alcohol" (p. 44). These findings raise important questions about service-learning programs' cumulative effects, longevity, and sustainability while also highlighting the need for more longitudinal service-learning research as few studies have been conducted which evaluate service-learning participation outcomes over time.

In their quasi-experimental study of a four year service-learning character education grant implemented in Philadelphia middle and high schools, Billig, Jesse, and Grimley (2008) found that students who participated in service-learning programs that were run by well-prepared teachers experienced positive gains in several areas. In this study, researchers matched participating (n=840) and nonparticipating (n=155) groups of middle and high school students by grade level and content area, and administered pre- and post-surveys to both groups. Students who participated in the service-learning character education program outperformed their nonparticipating peers on measurements of school community (41.4% versus 34%), citizenship

and civic engagement (41% versus 30.7%), valuing school (41% versus 32.5%), and caring and altruism (40.5% versus 38.9%). Significant differences were also found between service-learning participants and nonparticipants when it came to school suspensions (1.8% of the service-learning participants versus 15.6% of the nonparticipants) and other "serious incidents." It should be noted that this study examined a service-learning program with a specific focus on character education and the results cannot be generalized to service-learning programs without such an emphasis, and the authors of this study did note that moderators of outcomes included both the quality of the service-learning program and teacher experience.

In a study on the influence of service learning on personal and social development, Simons and Cleary (2006) used both quantitative and qualitative methods to test for pre- and post-service differences. Participants (n = 142) in the study were college students enrolled in an undergraduate educational psychology course who voluntarily participated in a service-learning project at one of three sites. The majority of the students were placed in an elementary school, while the remaining students were placed in either a community learning program or in an after-school program. In their evaluation of the learning, personal, and social outcomes of the service-learning participants, the researchers found that the students showed improvements in community self-efficacy and in political and diversity awareness. Additionally, increases in students' community involvement, academic learning, and personal and interpersonal development "were detected as major benefits from engaging in service-learning" (p. 307).

Motivation and Educational Engagement. In addition to finding a generally positive relationship between well-designed service-learning programs and academic achievement and civic responsibility, researchers have also found a positive relationship between service-learning participation and increased student motivation for learning and educational engagement.

Although motivation and engagement may not be direct measures of academic achievement, "they are widely considered important mediators for student academic performance and school success. Students who are more motivated to learn and more engaged in school have been found to perform better academically" (Furco, 2013, p.13).

An illustration of service-learnings' impact on motivation and engagement is detailed in a study by Scales and Roehlkepartain (2005). The authors reported that well-implemented service-learning programs may be an important, though often overlooked, strategy to help reduce the achievement gap in American schools. Analyzing the Search Institute's (http://www.search-institute.org/) aggregate data base of 217,000 6th through 12th graders who were surveyed during the 1999 – 2000 school year in schools across the United States, Scales and Roehlkepartain found that low-income students who served others on a regular basis for as little as an hour a week appeared to do as well or better when it came to a variety of academic outcomes (achievement motivation; school engagement; homework; bonding to school; and, reading for pleasure) than did both higher income students who did not serve and other low-income students who did not serve. Low-income students who served also had more consistent school attendance and higher grades than did their low-income counterparts who did not serve. Again, it is important to note that while the authors themselves draw conclusions about service-learning programs and their impact on closing the achievement gap, it was "service participation" (and not participation in "service-learning") which was measured in the survey.

In a report which focused on student retention, Bridgeland, Dilulio, and Wulsin (2008) shared findings which support the assertion that service-learning can play an important role in keeping students attending school and on track to graduate. After analyzing surveys of 807 high school students, leading focus groups with teachers, and conducting individual student

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interviews, the authors concluded that students were more likely to stay in school when they participated in classes which incorporated service-learning because these classes were found to be more "relevant and engaging" by both students and their teachers. "Service-learning helps to keep students engaged by offering hands-on applications of curricular lessons, using real-world experiences to make school relevant" (p. 2). While not a universal link, there is an abundance of literature which confirms the relationship between school engagement and academic achievement (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2006; Dotterer & Lowe, 2011; Larson & Rusk, 2011).

The broad examination of research provided above speaks to the multifaceted nature of service-learning. I now turn to more the focused inquiries of service-learning and teacher education, service-learning and democratic educations, and the complex intersection of service-learning, teacher education, *and* democratic education.

Service-learning and Teacher Education

In the academic classroom setting, teacher training programs often emphasize the need for pre-service teachers to develop skills in providing both standards-focused instruction and democratic, 21st Century skills to their students (Darling-Hammond, 2006b). However, the practicum experiences in these same teacher training programs all too often consist of observation only experiences in standards-focused classrooms (Darling-Hammond, 2006b; Ball & Cohen, 1999). By contrast, in well-designed service-learning placements, pre-service teachers work actively and collaboratively with their school community partners (their cooperating teacher and the students) in a reciprocal relationship which is meaningful to everyone involved (Barnes, 2016; Harkavy, 2004; Jacoby, 2003). Typically, the need or desire for a particular service-learning project is initiated by the school, and pre-service teachers work to achieve project objectives "while simultaneously accomplishing course goals and assessing their learning

from their experiences through critical reflection" (Baldwin, Buchanan, & Rudisill, 2007, p. 320).

The service-learning and teacher education studies which follow have been organized into the three main groups of 1) academic performance; 2) self-efficacy; and 3) increased cultural responsiveness. It is also important to note that I was unable to locate any studies which examined or discussed a "nested" model of service-learning (like the University-Middle School Partnership) in which both pre-service teachers and the K-12 students participated in a service-learning experience.

Academic Success. In a mixed methods study designed to respond to the call to provide more evidence of the effects of service-learning on academic achievement, Hart and King (2007) conducted research in which they compared service-learning participants (n = 34) to nonservice-learning participants (n = 28). Both groups were pre-service teachers enrolled in a literacy methods course. One group of pre-service teachers participated in a literacy tutoring service-learning experience, while the other group of pre-service teachers participated in independent, self-selected literacy tutoring. The quantitative data indicated no statistically significant differences in mean performance on the two groups' pretest score, but statistically significant differences on the literacy content knowledge posttest with the service-learning group scoring significantly higher than the nonservice-learning group (t(61) = -6.29; p<.0001). In the qualitative portion of the study, the researchers used open-ended questionnaires and focus groups to determine that service-learning positively impacted student achievement and, interestingly, that "service-learning has its greatest influence over student learning through its power to promote student ownership of their learning" (pp. 331 – 332).

In a study which attempted to better understand the lasting academic advantages that might come from participation in service-learning experiences, Strage (2004) examined the academic records of 477 students who had taken a Child Development course as part of their education major. Using one-way ANOVAs to compare the service-learning and nonservice-learning groups in four kinds of courses (lecture courses, discussion courses, lab practicums, and the Senior Capstone course), Strage found that "differences in student performance in upper division Child Development coursework favored the 'service-learning' students, although they failed to reach conventional levels of statistical significance. For example, the students who had participated in service-learning previously earned grades that were 4.8% higher than those students who had not participated in service-learning ($F = 1.9972$, $p = .1588$).

Self-efficacy. "Mastery experiences" and opportunities for reflection and collaboration have been shown to promote self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Hoy & Spero, 2005; Walker, 2003), and each of these elements is an integral part of service-learning. In fact, there is evidence that service-learning leads pre-service teachers to increased self-efficacy and to a more in-depth understanding of how students learn. For example, in their qualitative study Griffith and Zhang (2013) looked at two groups of pre-service teachers in a reading methods course, one of which participated in a service-learning practicum ($n = 23$) while the other participated in a traditional practicum placement ($n = 20$). Both groups completed the same course assignments, although the service-learning group kept reflection logs while the others did not. By using interviews and examining course documents and reflection logs, the researchers determined that the group of students who participated in the service-learning component of the course had a more in-depth understanding of teaching reading and an increased confidence in themselves as teachers of reading as compared to students who did not participate in service-learning.

In their qualitative case study, Iverson and James (2013) analyzed pre- and post-course writings on citizenship as well as reflection logs to determine that undergraduate students' involvement with change-oriented service-learning contributed to their civic-political identity cognitively, through a more in-depth understanding of the meaning of citizenship; intrapersonally, through a developed sense of political-efficacy; and, interpersonally, through an increased awareness of themselves in relation to their communities. Students participating in this study were pre-service elementary teachers (n = 22) enrolled in a social studies methods course a core component of which was participation in a community service project of their choice which had as its focus a social issue (i.e. homelessness; sweatshops; or global warming). The authors discussed the importance of both dialogue and critical reflection as critical components to the development of the students.

Increased Cultural Responsiveness. In a world where there continues to be large cultural gaps between an increasingly diverse student population and teachers who remain predominantly white, monolingual, middle-class, and female (Baldwin, Buchanan, & Rudisill, 2007; Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Cockrell, Placier, Cockrell, & Middleton, 1999; Sleeter, 2000), there is evidence that many teacher preparation programs are not adequately addressing issues of equity and diversity with their pre-service teachers (Merryfield, 2000; Nieto, 2000). Service-learning experiences may be one way to address this issue, and a relatively large body of literature exists which examines the connection between service-learning experiences and pre-service teachers' ability to succeed in a complex educational system comprised of culturally and linguistically diverse students. In her 2005 case study for example, Boyle-Baise found that pre-service teachers who participated in a service-learning project became more culturally aware. Participants were 24 pre-service teachers who collected oral histories and documents from

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alumni of the Benjamin Banneker School, a segregated school which served African American youth from 1915 to 1951. At the end of the project, the pre-service teachers reported greater understanding of and empathy for those with whom they had worked. While these pre-service teachers were not working within a contemporary school system, the service-learning project helped them to begin to overcome stereotypes and misconceptions which may have hindered their interactions with students.

In their case study of five secondary pre-service teachers, Brown and Howard (2005) found that participating in a service-learning project was more successful at bringing about culturally responsive teaching than was the traditional field placement. Brown and Howard state:

> Using this service learning format can expand pedagogy acquired in the classroom into applicable experiences that connect theory and practice to increase cross-cultural cognizance, instill the commitment to create equitable and inclusive classroom environments, and promote social justice and life-long learning in a student-centered and culturally relevant and supportive environment. (p. 6)

Preparing tomorrow's teachers to be innovative, thoughtful, empathetic, and intelligent stewards of our nation's diverse student population is a daunting and complex undertaking, but according to some scholars a growing movement began over a decade ago "to integrate academic service-learning into teacher education in order to improve the quality of teacher candidates and to prepare them to use academic service-learning in their own classrooms" (Callahan & Root, 2003, p. 78). Other scholars have noted, however, that 59% of teacher education programs educate their pre-service teachers about service-learning as an instructional strategy, and only about 24% of teacher education programs provide opportunities for pre-service teachers to participate in a service-learning activity. Additionally, only 20% of the programs placed pre-

service teachers with cooperating teachers who were experienced in using service-learning, and only 18% of teacher education programs provided pre-service teachers with opportunities to write lesson plans which utilized a service-learning pedagogy (Anderson & Erickson, 2003). If, in fact, some of the characteristics of high-quality teacher preparation programs are to connect learning about teaching to the real world and prepare culturally responsive teachers (Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Sleeter, 2001), then incorporating service-learning into teacher education might help to provide these essential elements.

Service-Learning and Democratic Education

As has been mentioned previously, the varying names for and definitions of both service-learning and democratic education can make finding literature which is directly relevant to this project something of a challenge. Some of the literature which is included in the review below, did not necessarily make an explicit connection between "service-learning" and "democratic education" as I have conceptualized them in my study. I included this literature however, because it does help to add depth and breadth to an understanding of the topic. It should be noted that much of the literature related to service-learning and education cited below contains arguments which are not substantiated with research.

Appreciation of Diversity. Much of the extant literature on service-learning discusses how service-learning programs can be effective in promoting an understanding of diversity, and given the ever-increasing pluralistic nature of our society and the realities of the global world in which we live, the importance of this understanding is difficult to overstate. Few authors however, have made the direct connection between service-learning, diversity and democratic education. In a diverse classroom, service-learning allows students to share their own perspectives and to be exposed to those of their classmates. When students work collaboratively

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on service-learning projects, students from a variety of backgrounds are able to share their experiences and interests, discuss and reflect on their own perspectives and those of their classmates, and unite in the pursuit of a common goal (Battistoni, 1997). In classrooms which are not particularly diverse, service-learning can be an effective way to engage students with community members from a variety of different backgrounds, age groups, and walks of life (Boyle-Baise, 2002; Furco, 2013). In his article on community service learning, Penner (2013) argues that given its opportunities to engage students with diverse communities, service-learning has great potential for raising issues of race, multiculturalism and social justice. He goes on to state however, that addressing these issues successfully requires thoughtful planning, intentionality, and foregrounding by educators.

Civic Skills and Attitudes. In a qualitative study which explored how undergraduate students' involvement with change-oriented service-learning contributed to their civic identity, Iverson and James (2013) found that participation in service-learning resulted in increased cognizance of self in relation to others and their communities, a developed sense of efficacy as citizens, and deeper knowledge of citizenship. Similarly, in their examination of students who combined coursework with service-learning in their local communities, Roschelle, Turpin and Elias (2000) found that outcomes for students included increased self-efficacy in relation to community engagement and long-term commitments to working for social change. Both of these studies highlight some of the connections between participation in service-learning and the values of democratic education.

In a study that tested a new theoretical model and examined the relationship between the pedagogical practice of community-based learning and civic competence, Stokamer (2013) looked at five years of survey data from 10,974 college students who were enrolled in 150

different courses at an urban research university. Four components of civic competence were analyzed (knowledge, skills, attitudes, and actions) using item and factor analysis. The model was found to be very robust (r = .917) for civic competence, and results indicated that participation in community-based learning which was deliberately and well integrated into education practices resulted in deeper understandings of the issue of diversity.

Social Justice. In 1990, Kendall stated that the goal of service-learning should be to move students from a philanthropic or charity view of service to a view which sees the goal of service-learning as promoting social justice. Whether-or-not contemporary scholars of service-learning would agree with this observation is unclear. However, while a specific social justice orientation may not be required in all service-learning projects, there is a consensus that service-learning should not be philanthropically oriented, with the potential to exacerbate societal inequalities, but rather should have a civic focus which highlights mutual responsibility (Battistoni,1998), and there are scholars who advocate for "justice-learning" or "critical service-learning." This division of service-learning has as its focus the questioning and disruption of societal inequalities (Butin, 2007; Hart, 2006; Mitchell, 2008), and there are several studies which have looked at social justice outcomes specifically.

Mitchell (2008) in advocating for "critical service-learning" as opposed to "traditional service-learning" states that, although often the assumption, service-learning is not inherently linked to issues of social justice. Many scholars agree with this assessment and state that in order to truly practice critical service-learning, practitioners must adopt a social change orientation to service-learning which emphasizes the active involvement, diverse encounters, and critical reflection which allow for truly transformative experiences (Boyle-Baise, 2007; Hart, 2006; Mitchell, 2008; Wade, 2000).

In their constructivist investigation of a university-sponsored AmeriCorps program, Einfield and Collins (2008) looked at how AmeriCorps participation related to the development of students' multicultural competence and to their understanding of and commitment to social justice. Participants were chosen from amongst a group AmeriCorps members who had successfully completed at least 300 hours of service in a local non-profit agency. The results of this study were inconclusive, and the authors stated that the "wide range of attitudes, beliefs, and levels of commitment to social justice, multicultural competence, and civic engagement expressed by participants in this study underscores the complexity of service-learning experiences" (p. 103). Interestingly, despite sustained references to service-learning throughout the article (the title of the article is *The Relationship Between Service-Learning, Social Justice, Multicultural Competence, and Civic Engagement*), the authors state openly that the "AmeriCorps program is not tied to any curriculum" (p. 98). As connecting service to curriculum is one of the cornerstones of service-learning, one has to question whether this study, while certainly of value, was looking at service-learning at all. In fact, the inconclusive results of the study could be seen as an argument for the need for service-learning as several of the AmeriCorps participants had negative stereotypes reinforced by their experiences. Perhaps if these volunteer experiences had been true service-learning (embedded in a multicultural education course which required a variety of relevant readings and provided opportunities for discussion and reflection), positive outcomes might have been more prevalent. Certainly this study highlights once again the "messy" field of service-learning with its multiple definitions and understandings.

Service-Learning as a Pedagogy of Democracy. There is scant literature which discusses service-learning as a teaching and learning pedagogy which fosters democratic

education. One article which does make this explicit connection is *A Pedagogy for Citizenship: Service Learning and Democratic Education* written by Mendel-Reyes in 1998. In the article, Mendel-Reyes discussed teaching in the Democracy Project at Swarthmore University, a project which was designed to "deepen students' understanding and commitment to democratic citizenship in a multicultural society" (p.32). College students involved with the project took classes in democratic theory while concurrently working in semester-long service internships. In this article, the author draws a very clear connection between service-learning, democratic ideals, and the ways in which people work to improve their lives. However, Mendel-Reyes also points out that it is the democratic pedagogy of service-learning in which students share their own experiences, practice collaboration, utilize reflection, and experience a sense of agency (as when they choose where they would like to intern) which offers students the opportunity to develop a true sense of democracy. The students in this project actively learned *about* democracy by their education *through* the practice of democratic education.

In another article which connects a service-learning pedagogy to democratic education, Battistoni (1997) points out that if advocates of service-learning want it to contribute to education for democracy, they must value service-learning as a method for developing in students an "other-regarding ethic appropriate to democratic citizenship" (p. 150). Similarly, Sheffield (2004) argues that service-learning can be a powerful pedagogy but only if it is both understood and practiced as a form of democratic education. He points out that in order to foster the skills of reflective-deliberation, social activism, informed decision making, nondiscrimination, and non-repression, service-learning must also actively practice these skills.

In a series of case studies which were sponsored by the John Dewey Project on Progressive Education at the University of Vermont, Koliba (2000) looked at nine schools (three

elementary schools; two combined elementary and middle schools; one middle school; two high schools; and one K-12 school) which had attempted or were attempting to connect the school's curriculum to the local community through service-learning projects. Each of the schools was working on projects which brought the community into the school and the students into the community, and researchers at each site were examining both "manifest" and "latent" curriculum that helped to develop students' dispositions towards democratic participation. The majority of the preliminary findings at the end of the first year of research were inconclusive and seemed to revolve around issues of application (a lack of tie-in to the curriculum; a lack of reflection) or issues of implementation (a lack of teacher training and time; perceived limitations of students). More positive findings included students being exposed to democratic ideas and given opportunities to utilize them and "evidence to suggest that service-learning and related experiential education opportunities can help to enliven the learning process for alienated and marginalized students," It should be noted that this preliminary study was reported in 2000 and my attempts at finding subsequent research have failed.

Service-Learning, Teacher Education, and Democratic Education

Not surprisingly given the paucity of literature on service-learning and democratic education, very little literature exists which focuses on the intersection of service-learning, democratic education, and teacher education. One can speculate on why this is so, but given the need to provide teachers with pedagogical skills which allow them to both meet curricular demands and provide their students with a more holistic schooling experience, the examination of this convergence seems critical. Areas of interest within this intersection for which literature was found, and which differ from literature previously discussed, include the topics of personal transformation and pedagogy.

Personal Transformation. Maynes, Hatt, and Wideman (2013) conducted research to determine if liberatory learning, or transformational shifts in social consciousness, occurred for pre-service teachers during a four-week service-learning project in placements other than schools. Participants in the study were 7 pre-service teachers and their supervisors, all of whom completed questionnaires. In findings which underscore the importance of the reflection component of service-learning programs, Maynes et al. found that while service-learning has the potential to result in liberatory learning for pre-service teachers, "learning may remain tacit rather than explicit unless substantial opportunities for reflection are included in the service learning experience" (p. 80).

Another study which looked at the transformative potential of service-learning experiences was a study by Kirkland (2014) in which he used interview data to investigate whether-or-not the service-learning experiences of three pre-service teachers led to transformative growth. In findings somewhat similar to Maynes et al. (2013), Kirkland found that in order for service-learning to serve as an effective social justice methodology for pre-service teachers it must "interrupt biases" that may very well be "firmly in place" (p. 580). The author suggests that in order for this transformative learning to occur biases must be identified and discussed prior to sending pre-service teachers into the field, as this preparation and in-depth reflection may allow for transformation rather than a confirmation of previously held beliefs.

Pedagogy. In their qualitative analysis of 22 projects involving 135 pre-service teachers, Jarett and Stenhouse (2011) examined six years of implementation of the *Problem Solution Project*. This project involved pre-service teachers and an assignment in which they helped students to tackle real problems. Although they investigated both service-learning and problem-

based learning, the authors found that participation in hands-on projects resulted in the empowerment of *both* the teacher and the student participants.

Finally, in a qualitative inquiry of one social studies pre-service teacher, Dinkelman (2001) sought to examine whether-or-not the pre-service teacher found incorporating service-learning into his curriculum would help him to develop insights into the role of social studies in educating for democratic citizenship. Interestingly, while the pre-service teacher did not connect service-learning to his understanding of social studies, he did find that service-learning was his "most powerful and effective teaching during the semester" because "students were actively engaged, found the subject matter content relevant, learned to take perspectives of others, and developed a greater sense of community" (p. 626). In order to help pre-service teachers make the connections between the implementation of service-learning and their own theories of teaching and learning, Dinkelman concludes that teacher education programs must provide adequate support and opportunity for reflection.

Evidence of Needs

Although there are several studies which examine pre-service teachers and their experiences with service-learning in a variety of areas, few studies examine the intersection of service-learning, teacher education, and democratic education. I was able to find only one study (Dinkelman, 2001) which looked at the connection between service-learning, democratic education, and a theory of teaching, and this study (n =1) was really focused on democratic citizenship in the context of a social studies class.

As I sought to understand how pre-service teachers participating in a university-middle school service-learning partnership developed both their understanding of democratic education and a democratic teaching identity, I expanded upon the literature presented above by providing

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an in-depth exploration of the perceptions and experiences of pre-service teachers. In what ways do pre-service teachers understand democratic values in education through their participation in a "nested" service-learning experience? While the literature on service-learning is clear that service-learning can provide positive outcomes for many different students in many different situations, little has been written about the effect participating in a "nested" service-learning practicum has on pre-service teachers' beliefs, experiences, and skills as they relate to democratic education. It is this gap that this study begins to address.

CHAPTER 3: ILLUMINATION

The aim of this qualitative study was to explore how pre-service teachers' experiences in a service-learning practicum deepened their understanding of democratic education. The objective of this chapter is to outline the research design and methodology which was used in the exploration of this complex topic. In order to provide a comprehensive and contextualized explanation, this chapter begins with a section on "researcher perspective" which explains why this topic of study was important to me and how my teaching experiences and my involvement with the university-middle school partnership influenced my stance as a researcher. The section on researcher perspective is followed by a restatement of the research questions, a description of the study's design, a brief discussion of the research participants, and explanations of data collection and analysis.

Researcher Perspective

It is important for all researchers, whether they be qualitatively or quantitatively oriented, to be aware of how their personal history shapes their study. Reflexivity, or the "introspection and acknowledgement of biases, values, and interests…represents honesty and openness to research, acknowledging that all inquiry is laden with values" (Creswell, 2003, p. 182). Reflexivity requires the examination of "conceptual baggage," a self-searching process during which researchers share and make explicit their history, assumptions, and potential agenda (Kirby & McKenna, 1989). Such sharing with the reader overtly acknowledges that a

researcher's background has a profound impact on what is studied, why it is studied, and how it is studied. In other words, it is through reflexivity that researchers acknowledge that their personal dispositions, values, and assumptions will have an effect on how they conduct their study and on the conclusions that they will ultimately make (Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Maxwell, 2013; Merriam, 2009).

In order to share my study as openly as possible, it is important that I practice reflexivity and disclose some of my own history and "conceptual baggage." To that end, I now move to a synopsis of my years as a classroom teacher and my personal experiences with the impact of NCLB. I then explain how I came to be involved with the service-learning partnership, since my role in the creation and implementation of this partnership has impacted my stance as a researcher. Both my teaching experiences and my role in the service-learning partnership are integral to my study and to the ways in which I conducted my exploration.

My Years as a Teacher

For almost twenty years I worked as an elementary public school teacher and a teacher educator, first in California and later in Virginia, and these experiences have certainly influenced my views about education. These experiences also, I believe, add credibility and weight to my concerns about the impact of the *No Child Left Behind Act* and to my assertion that democratic education has a place in our nation's classrooms. I have been "in the trenches" and am not speaking solely from an academic ivory tower; I have firsthand experiences with both the positive and the negative effects of accountability and real-world knowledge of what is required of teachers and students.

Although I did not identify them as such when I began my career, democratic educational values were integral to my philosophy of education as I strove to both teach and reach all of my

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students. I deeply valued building relationships with the individuals in my care, and I took into account their interests, likes, and dislikes as I planned our lessons. I appreciated listening to students' creative ideas, to their astute observations, and to their probing and complex questions about the world. These insights informed our time together in the classroom. I welcomed the challenge of finding ways to encourage curiosity and to excite diverse student populations about learning, whether my students were five year olds in an inner-city kindergarten, twenty-five years olds pursuing a career in teaching at a university, or somewhere in-between. Gradually, however, and in conjunction with the increase in a data-driven, top-down, standardized emphasis in the field, I began to question the direction in which my chosen profession was heading. I still loved my students and I was more than willing to put in the growing number of hours demanded by my job, but I was increasingly uncomfortable with the changing focus of education. The new prescriptive norms and concentration on test scores began, in my opinion, to keep my students from reaching their full and true potential and caused me to begin questioning the overarching goals of education in contemporary American society. While I recognized the need for high standards, the overriding educational emphasis on teaching students to memorize facts and take tests too often usurped equally important skills such as critical thinking, creative problem solving, and working with diverse people and ideas. I was sure that these two seemingly disparate notions could coexist and I continually struggled to find a balance between them as I strove to meet the increasingly diverse needs of my students.

My last three years in the public schools were spent in a kindergarten classroom, and during this time my discomfort with educational expectations intensified. As they did at all grade levels, the rigors of the kindergarten curriculum continued to increase, and a number of students were simply not ready, due to a lack of prior educational experience and/or to a lack of

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developmental readiness, to meet these benchmarks. Often the students who were not ready for the new kindergarten standards were young five-year olds from poor families who, through no fault of their own, had not had the exposure to a quality preschool experience or the educationally rich home life which allowed other more affluent students to begin kindergarten more prepared. These children began school at a disadvantage when compared to their more economically advantaged peers and, despite their academic progress over the course of the school year, often had not reached the prescribed grade-level expectations by the end of the year. Additionally, these students faced the likelihood of summer learning loss or falling even further "behind" during the summer months (Borman, Benson, & Overman, 2005; Cooper, 2003). The majority of these children did not have special needs, rather they were average, young children just entering the public school system who needed time, patience, and developmentally-appropriate curriculum to give them confidence in their abilities and to teach them to love learning. I felt I knew what these children needed, but I did not feel I was able to adequately provide these most basic of requirements due to standardization and the ever-intensifying focus on escalating academic expectations. When it was mandated, despite my research-based protestations, to remove recess once a week in the quest to "increase instructional time," I decided that I had a choice to make. Either I could remain in the classroom loving and teaching my students but increasingly frustrated and disillusioned, or I could leave and find a way to effect change. With more than a few regrets but also with great anticipation, I packed up my classroom and enrolled in a doctoral program in education at a large, urban research university. My hope was that intellects greater than mine could help me to find solutions to the problems that were driving me (and countless other teachers like me) out of our public school system.

My Introduction to Service-Learning

When I entered a doctoral program in education in the fall of 2012, I was fortunate to obtain a twenty hour per week graduate student assistantship that led to me helping to design, pilot, and work as the project coordinator of a service-learning partnership between the university and a local middle school. I worked as the project coordinator for this endeavor through the spring semester of 2015, and I was deeply immersed in the implementation of the partnership. I worked with the university professors who proposed the idea, with the middle school teachers and administrators to ensure that our project was meeting their needs, and with the pre-service teachers who participated in the service-learning practicum placement.

Prior to my work on this service-learning partnership, I was unfamiliar with service-learning and unacquainted with what, if any, benefits such a teaching and learning strategy would have for participants. As I worked on the project however, I began to see many potential advantages to service-learning and to wonder if such an approach might be one means of addressing my concerns about the over-standardization of our educational system. Could well-implemented service-learning projects be a way to bring democratic education into our nation's classrooms? Would providing pre-service teachers with a service-learning experience and teaching them about service-learning as a viable teaching and learning approach be one way to effect this change? These possibilities intrigued me and ultimately led to my research questions.

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Research Questions

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When using portraiture (described later in this chapter) as a methodology, researchers first decide upon a central guiding question, and then identify a small number of dimensions to serve as organizers for data collection and project analysis (Pickeral, Hill, & Duckenfield, 2003). My dimensional organizers were:

1. Has a service-learning experience enhanced the pre-service teachers' understanding of democratic values in education? If so, how and why? If not, why not? Have they come to understand other educational tenets?

2. Has service-learning supported pre-service teachers' development of their views of themselves as democratic educators? If so, in what ways? If not, why not? Have they developed as teachers in other ways?

3. Has a service-learning experience influenced pre-service teachers' plans to embrace democratic educational values in their (future) classrooms? If so, how and why? If not, why not?

Study Design and Methodology

As I began to think about how I would approach my study, it was relatively clear to me that I would be conducting an interpretivist case study. An interpretivist, or relativist, orientation acknowledges "multiple realities having multiple meanings, with findings that are observer dependent" (Yin, 2014, p. 17). A case study involves the in-depth exploration of a single phenomenon which is bounded by activity and by time (Creswell, 2003; Yin, 2014) and is, according to Stake (2005), less of a methodological choice and more of "a choice about what is to be studied" (p. 443). Merriam further defines case studies by explaining that they are particularistic, heuristic, and descriptive (Merriam, 2009). My study was particularistic in that it looked at a particular phenomenon: the development of democratic educational values by pre-service teachers who were participating in a service-learning practicum. My study was heuristic in that my goal was to "illuminate the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study" (p. 44). Finally, my study was descriptive in that I provide descriptions of the pre-service teachers' perceptions and experiences. Flyvbjerg (2006) stated that "social science research may be strengthened by the execution of a great number of good case studies" (p. 219). Or, as

Eysenck more colloquially stated: "Sometimes we simply have to keep our eyes open and look carefully at individual cases – not in the hope of proving anything, but rather in the hope of learning something" (1976, p. 9).

Although defining my research as an interpretivist case study was relatively straightforward given *what* I want to investigate, choosing the lens through which I wanted to view the case study proved to be more difficult as there were several criteria that I felt it important to incorporate. The first was that I wanted my research to accurately reflect my beliefs as an educator. That is to say, I wanted to design a study that would allow for participants' voices to be heard in a dialogue with mine and which positioned them as co-creators of a collaborative effort rather than as objects of study. I also wanted my study to focus on what was working rather than on what was not. Next, I felt that it was important to construct a research design which embraced my involvement with the service-learning partnership and which openly recognized that this association had inevitably impacted my explorations. Finally, I wanted to unapologetically design a study which acknowledged and embraced the complexities inherent in education, rather than one which attempted to tease these complexities into separate, unrelated components which can be empirically tested and valued. Just as I believe that NCLB has been detrimental to educational practice in its myopic and one-dimensional assessment of education, so too do I believe that NCLB has negatively impacted educational research with its identification of randomized, controlled field trails as the preferred (and therefore funded) methodology of choice (Erickson & Gutierrez, 2002; Slavin, 2004). As Biesta (2007) states, "The extent to which a government …actively supports and encourages researchers to go beyond simplistic questions about 'what works,' may well be an indication of the degree to which a society can be called democratic" (p. 22).

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Fortunately, I found a methodology that meets my criteria. Portraiture, developed by Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot and comprehensively explained in the book *The Art of Science and Portraiture* (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997), is a qualitative research methodology which bridges science and art. Lawrence-Lightfoot describes her creation of portraiture as beginning with her experiences of having her portrait made by different artists using various media at different points in her life. She explains that while none of these portraits were exactly how she saw herself in the mirror, in each of them she recognized something of her essence as well as something of the perspective of the artist and of the artist's developing relationship with her. When, more than decade later, she began "searching for a form of inquiry that might capture the complexity and aesthetic of human experience" (p. 4), Lawrence-Lightfoot created portraiture. Portraiture is well-suited to an interpretive case study and it incorporates many of the democratic educational values with which I attempted to infuse into my work such as dialogue, active involvement, and relationship building.

Just as good teachers truly listen to and talk with (not at) their students, portraiture celebrates the voices of the participants, and "portraits are shaped through dialogue between the portraitist and the subject, each one participating in the drawing of the image" (p. 3). Ideally, this dialogue, in both education and in portraiture, leads to an understanding which acknowledges the "richness, complexity, and dimensionality of human experience in social and cultural context" and embraces the "perspectives of the people who are negotiating those experiences" (p. 3). In other words, just as quality teaching is a collaboration between teacher and student which requires a trusting relationship, so too is portraiture a collaborative relationship between the researcher and the participants. Participants are viewed not as dissociated objects of a study, but

as co-creators whose unique and complex perceptions are recognized, valued, and used to shape the final product.

In another parallel to what I believe is an important educational emphasis, portraiture incorporates a focus on what is healthy and resilient rather than on the more traditional focus of social scientists on pathology and illness. Tuck (2009) refers to this as research which is "desire-based" rather than "damaged-based," research which is concerned with "understanding complexity, contradiction, and the self-determination of lived lives" (p. 416).

> Portraiture resists this tradition-laden effort to document failure. It is an intentionally generous and eclectic process that begins by searching for what is good and healthy and assumes that the expression of goodness will always be laced with imperfections. The researcher who asks first "what is good here?" is likely to absorb a very different reality than the one who is on a mission to discover the sources of failure. (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 9)

This is not to say that portraiture denies vulnerability or weakness but rather that portraiture, like good teaching, begins by focusing on what *is* working rather than on what is *not* working, and sees vulnerability, weakness, and contradiction as providing fertile ground for learning and growth.

Portraiture also met my methodological needs in that it allowed me to acknowledge my active participation in the research process. As the project coordinator for the service-learning partnership for two years, I felt that it would be both difficult and somewhat disingenuous to attempt to completely remove my voice from this study. In portraiture however, the portraitist sketches herself into the context. As Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) state,

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In portraiture, then, the place and stance of the researcher are made visible and audible, written in as part of the story. The portraitist is clear: from where I sit, this is what I see; these are the perspectives and biases I bring; this is the scene I select; this is how people seem to be responding to my presence. (p. 50)

Finally, portraiture appealed to me in that it blurs the lines between empiricism and aesthetics, recognizing that our world is a complex place which is not best captured in any single approach. Both education and service-learning are multifaceted, complicated, and polychromatic, and portraiture is a methodology which allows for and welcomes this multiplicity. The ultimate goal of portraiture is not to "capture and present the total reality…but rather the selection of some aspect of – or angle on – reality that would transform our vision of the whole" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 5).

Research Precedents

My integration of case study and portraiture is not without precedent in educational research, nor is my use of portraiture to explore service-learning. Case study and portraiture were first utilized by the developer of portraiture Sarah Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983) in her book *The Good High School: Portraits of Character and Culture*. In this award winning book, Lawrence-Lightfoot wove together individual portraits to ultimately offer collective portraits of six diverse high schools each of which was known for its excellence. Using portraiture, Lawrence-Lightfoot sought to "describe schools as cultural organizations and uncover the implicit values that guided their structures and decision making" (p. 13). Portraiture allowed Lawrence-Lightfoot to insert herself, her thoughts and her feelings, into her descriptions of the schools, thereby providing a depth and dimensionality to her writing that is not often seen in more traditional forms of research. In her attempt to answer the question "What makes a good school?" Lawrence-

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Lightfoot created artful narratives of the educational aims of the schools and the complexities of the cultures in which each school was situated. Among her conclusions are that good schools are conscious of their own imperfections, have strong and consistent leadership, recognize and value teachers and strive to meet their needs, and encourage mature and giving relationships between the teachers and their students.

In another example of combining case study and portraiture in the field of education, Holder and Downey (2008) used a hybrid portraiture-instrumental case study methodology to examine and compare student learning which took place in either a school-based or a community-based location. In their study, the authors collected narratives from students enrolled in an undergraduate educational psychology course, ten from each locale, with the goal of "describing PT (pre-service teacher) learning during early field experiences via the construction of portraits" (p. 14). The authors explain their use of portraiture as aligning with the description of Lipstein and Renninger (2007) as "a method of creating case descriptions that reflect the responses of a like group" (p. 119). Upon analysis of the narratives, Holder and Downey found that multiple types of learning were found to exist in both locations but they recommended further exploration of the similarities and differences of types of learning by locale.

Seeking to explore the serious problem of female dropouts in Botswana and citing a lack of in-depth exploration into the topic, Makwinja-Morara (2009) drew on both case study and portraiture methods to examine the feelings and experiences of female dropouts and the role of education in their lives. Makwinja-Morara interviewed 24 young women and did numerous observations at both a junior secondary school and at a nongovernmental agency designed specifically to help young mothers who have dropped out of school. Through portraiture, Makwinja-Morara was able to enter into dialogue with the women in her study and to create rich

and detailed portraits of them, portraits which were informed by her own experiences. In her conclusions, she noted that becoming pregnant was one the primary reasons young women dropped out of school, and she cited the need for a more open dialogue between a wide-variety of stakeholders to address the limited knowledge many students have about their own sexuality.

Another study which incorporates both case study and portraiture and which looks at the impact of a music methods class on beginning pre-service teachers is Moore's (2011) dissertation, *Allow the Music to Speak: A Portraiture Case Study of Pre-service Teachers' Experiences in a Music-Integrated Literacy Methods Course*. In her dissertation, Moore explored the experiences of pre-service teachers who participated in a music-integrated literacy course and developed portraits of six pre-service teachers as well as a collective portrait to represent the whole. Calling her portraits "songs," Moore used portraiture to create insightful glimpses into the ways in which pre-service teachers learned to embrace music as a tool for literacy.

Finally, Giraldo and Colyar (2012) combined case study and portraiture in their study, *Dealing with Gender in the Classroom: A Portrayed Case Study of Four Teachers*. In this study, the authors sought examine the role that teachers play in preschool children's construction of gender identity. Through in-depth interviews and observations, the authors were able to construct detailed portraits of each of the four preschool teacher participants, portraits which led to the development of several themes. Findings included that the teachers were aware of their influence on students' gender identity but that they needed more education and support in order to become more self-aware of their own gender performance and to create more inclusive learning spaces for all of their students.

Several large-scale studies on service-learning have used portraiture as their methodological approach in an attempt to capture the richness and complexity of a pedagogy that

was not accurately portrayed by more traditional quantitative and qualitative methods (Pickeral, Hill, & Duckenfield, 2003). In 1996, Lissa Soep, a colleague of Jessica Davis at Harvard University, was asked by Stanford University's *Service Learning 2000 Center* staff to help them to develop a research protocol based on portraiture. This led to the center conducting research from 1996 to 2001 on service-learning in three secondary schools, two middle schools, and six teacher education programs in California. *Service Learning 2000 Center* staff also worked with professors at Clemson University in July 2001 "to help to launch a major portraiture project for professors and K-12 teachers from the southern region of the U.S. who shared a common interest in creating powerful narratives about their service-learning work" (Pickeral, Hill, & Duckenfield, 2003, p. 207). As Soep and Hill (2001) say about their own portraiture-based service-learning research, "portraits of service-learning guided by real questions, framed by dimensions, and told through resonant themes (with dissonant strains) have the potential to uncover new insights for researchers, subjects, and readers" (p. 109).

Participants

I recruited volunteer participants for my study from the fall 2015 secondary service-learning seminar. My goal was to obtain four to six pre-service teacher volunteers from the class of nine, and initially six students (three men and three women) agreed to participate. Very quickly however, two of the participants dropped out due to overwhelming work and school commitments, and I ended up with a total of four subjects, three women and one man. Given that the goal of my study was an in-depth exploration of individual experiences rather than the ability to generalize findings to a larger population, a sample of four was not problematic (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Data Collection & Procedures

Data collection took place in the fall of 2015. Data collection methods included three interviews with each participant, observations of both university and middle school classes, and the collection and analysis of reflective journals and blog postings. Consistent with the objectives of portraiture, the over-arching goal of data gathering was to co-create authentic narratives *with* my study participants. Participation in the study was not required of the pre-service teachers; their participation or nonparticipation did not affect their grades in any way; participants were able to leave the study at any time; and, participant consent was obtained before data collection began. Prior to any data being gathered, study approval was received from the university Institution Review Board (IRB) as well as from the local two school districts in which I did middle school observations of the pre-service teachers.

Interviews

I conducted three semi-structured individual interviews with each of the four pre-service teachers who participated in my study. One interview took place at the beginning of the semester, one in the middle of the semester, and one at the end of the semester. All of the interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed.

In keeping with portraiture methodology and other modes of qualitative research, every effort was made to develop a relationship with my study participants, to treat them as experts, and to respect their ideas and observations. While I utilized my interview protocols as a general guidelines (Appendices A, B, and C), I did so with flexibility, and I used information from other data sources (i.e. journal entries; blog posts; observations) as well as my growing knowledge of the participants to personalize our conversations. My goal was to move beyond positioning the pre-service teachers as interview subjects who could provide answers to my questions, and in

this I believe I was successful. I attempted to make our conversations a dialogue between equals as much as I possibly could as the pre-service teachers shared their subjective experiences with me. Although I was "interviewing for information," I was also "interviewing for feeling," and gave my participants the space and encouragement to "develop each topic as she or he saw fit" (Witz, 2006, p. 247).

Observations

Observations of both the university seminar service-learning class and the middle school clubs/classes were conducted throughout the fall of 2015. I sat in on each meeting of the service-learning seminar which was held at the university once a week for an hour and a half. I also visited each of the two middle schools where the pre-service teacher were working so that I could observe the pre-service teachers as they led the service-learning projects and interacted with the middle school students and teachers. Field notes which included detailed accounts of the settings, the individuals present, the conversation(s), and the events were recorded, as were my personal reflections in my impressionistic record. My definition of democratic education (see pp. 7 – 8 and p. 24) was used to structure my observations.

Document Collection

All of the pre-service teachers who were participating in the service-learning practicum were required to submit journal reflections and to post on the project blog site. The pre-service teachers responded to a total of eight reflective prompts and they were required to make three blog posts. All of these documents were collected and analyzed.

Data Analysis

Impressionistic Records and Iterative Inquiry

Throughout my research I kept an "impressionistic record" (Lawrence-Lightfoot &

Davis, 1997). This record is comprised of my reflections and is a "ruminative, thoughtful piece

that identifies emerging hypotheses, suggests interpretations, describes shifts in perspective,

points to puzzles and dilemmas (methodological, conceptual, ethical) that need attention, and

develops a plan of action for the next visit" (p. 188). Along with collected data, these reflections

helped me to discern emerging themes and helped to shape and direct subsequent research.

Similar to the constant comparative method described by Glaser and Straus (1967), this ongoing

data analysis "is used typically in studies that seek to document social processes and

relationships – the iterative adaptation of methodology and insight paralleling the dynamic

quality of human interaction and experience" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 189).

Identifying Emerging Themes

As mentioned above, the search for emerging themes in the data was an ongoing and

flexible process during which the data was repeatedly reviewed and knowledge created

inductively in a circular manner (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). While Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis

(1997) refer to this practice as "identifying emerging themes," other researchers refer to this

process as "coding." As Miles and Huberman (1994) state,

> Coding is not just something you do to 'get the data ready' for analysis,
>
> but…something that drives ongoing data collection. It's a form of early (and
>
> continuing) analysis. It typically leads to a reshaping of your perspective and of
>
> your instrumentation for the next pass. At the same time, ongoing coding

uncovers real or potential sources of bias, and surfaces incomplete or equivocal

data that can be clarified next time out" (p. 65).

In order to best identify emerging themes in my research, I used both in vivo coding and axial coding. In vivo coding helped to ensure that concepts stayed as close as possible to participants' original words as it requires codes to be developed based upon actual language found in the data (Saldaña, 2009). Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) stress the importance of "listening for repetitive refrains" and "resonant metaphors," both of which are consistent with in vivo coding. Axial coding was a way for me to reconstruct data which had been broken into themes in order to better understand the relationship between the themes and the phenomenon being studied (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Axial coding aligns with portraiture in that it encourages triangulation to "weave together the thread of data converging from a variety of sources" and also allows for the construction of themes and the revealing of patterns among perspectives "that are often experienced as contrasting and dissonant by the actors" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 193).The use of both of these types of coding is consistent with portraiture as they allow for the construction of emergent themes in the data through synthesis, convergence, and contrast.

Triangulation

Yin (2011) defines triangulation in qualitative research as "the goal of seeking at least three ways of verifying or corroborating a particular event, description, or fact being reported in a study" (p. 81), while Denzin (1978) defines four different types of triangulation: methods triangulation; triangulation of sources; analyst triangulation; and, theory/perspective triangulation. In my study, I used methodological triangulation to ensure that I constructed

honest portraits of the participants by looking at interview transcripts, by reviewing documents (course assignments and blog posts), and by doing multiple observations of each participant.

Summary

Using a hybrid portraiture interpretivist case study methodology, this project explored the intersection between service-learning and democratic education for pre-service teachers' participating in a service-learning practicum. The ultimate goal of this study was not to provide generalizable results, but rather to "paint" narrative portraits which helped to deepen understanding of a complex, rich, and multidimensional experience. In creating these portraits, I was the artist, imperfect and fallible; the case study was my subject; portraiture was the technique which allowed me to create in-depth textual images; and, dialogue was my medium. I worked closely with the pre-service teachers in the creation of their portraits and I shared the final product with each of them to ensure that I had gained their endorsement. Importantly however, the final portraits are imbued with my perceptions and are far from a perfect representation or exact likeness. As Picasso once said, "We all know that art is not truth. Art is a lie that makes us realize the truth, at least the truth that is given to us to understand" (de Zayas, p. 315). It is my hope that the portraits of the pre-service teachers which I share, although imperfect and restricted in their focus, will help to further an understanding of how a service-learning experience helped these four pre-service teachers in their development of democratic educational values.

CHAPTER 4: PORTRAIT CREATION

The Process

The creation of the portraits that I share in this chapter was a complex and engrossing process. It began with getting to know the participants, talking with and observing each of them multiple times in varied settings. Over time and together we built relationships based on a foundation of shared interests, honesty, and trust. I recorded our conversations and transcribed them, took notes both when I visited the participants in their service-learning placements and when I attended their service-learning seminar classes, and collected their assigned reflections. Throughout the process I kept Impressionistic Records in which I detailed my thoughts. The participants in my study were actively involved in the creative process, and their final portraits are the result of a cooperative collaboration between us.

It is worth repeating that I chose to use portraiture, first developed by Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983), as my methodology because of its unique bridging of science and art and because of its inductive, rather than deductive, approach to research. The ultimate goal of portraiture is not to "capture and present the total reality…but rather the selection of some aspect of – or angle on – reality that would transform our vision of the whole" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 5). My goal in this study was to use portraiture to explore the service-learning experiences of my participants and the dynamic, subtle, and complex ways in which these service-learning experiences influenced their understanding of democratic educational values.

Using portraiture as my methodology also allowed me to be true to my own democratic educational values by providing me with the space to incorporate into my work critical principles such as dialogue, active involvement, "goodness," and relationship building. Ultimately my hope is that, in the tradition of portraiture, I have bridged the gap both between the "real world" and the academy and between social science and fiction, bringing to the reader a compelling, accessible, and educative look into a world with which they are not familiar.

Commissioning Subjects

I first met the individuals who would agree to become the participants in my study when I attended the initial meeting of their secondary teaching service-learning seminar. The class was being held in a small, windowless but comfortable and well-lit conference room, a setting much more intimate than a more traditional classroom and one well-suited to the class size of nine. I was the first to arrive, and I chose to sit on the periphery of the room, outside of the inner circle of well-padded chairs which surrounded the large wooden table. My choice of a seating position was deliberate; for the past several days I had been thinking about attending this seminar for the first time as an observer and not as the instructor, and I was very cognizant of my new role and how difficult the transition might be for me. I was proud of the success of this fledgling service-learning program and of the small role I had played in that success, and I knew that relinquishing control might prove to be difficult.

As I was getting out my notebook and turning off the ringer on my cell phone, the new instructor of the course, a fellow doctoral student, arrived. We hugged and exchanged brief synopses of our summer adventures before reviewing Amy's[1] plans for class that day. I had shared all of my seminar materials with her, but I had also encouraged her to make the course her

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[1] All of the names used in this dissertation are pseudonyms.

own and I was confident that she would do so. Although it was hard to admit even to myself, with her middle school teaching background and strong service-learning experience, Amy was much better suited to teach this seminar than I had ever been.

As the clocked ticked towards 11:00, the pre-service teachers began to trickle into the room carrying overloaded backpacks and cups of take-out coffee. I watched with interest as they choose where to sit (near the instructor at the head of the table or as far away from her as possible?) and got themselves settled. A few of them said hello to both Amy and to me, others sat down without a word and became engrossed in their cell phones. One or two of them acknowledged other students as they came in, but for the most part they didn't seem to know one another. As I waited for Amy to begin the class, I amused myself by trying to guess which of the students might agree to be in my study. Would the serious young man with the beard and thick glasses who had seated himself at the far end of the table choose to participate? What about the smiling girl who was nervously looking around the room and fidgeting with her necklace? What would I do if none of them volunteered?

When Amy began class at 11:05, allowing two lost stragglers to rush in late, apologetic and out of breath, she began by introducing herself. She talked about her years of teaching and service-learning practice, and I was again reminded of how perfectly her experiences aligned with the content of this seminar. Amy then asked the students, 4 women and 5 men, to introduce themselves and to share both why they had decided to become teachers, and the best and worst experiences they had had as middle or high school students themselves.

As with most first class meetings, the students seemed shy and hesitant to talk, and for the most part their answers were brief and without significant depth. Even so, I was struck by the fact that none of them said that they were entering the teaching profession because they loved or

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wanted to share content, but rather because they loved working with kids or because they wanted "to be a good role model." Worst experiences they shared included such things as "being humiliated" and teachers who were on "power trips;" best experiences ranged from having teachers who treated them with respect to being given "the freedom in class to move and also the freedom to choose projects." As I took notes and listened to the students' responses, I was surprised by their unanimous focus on the intangible and untested. Rather than discussing learning specific subject matter, grades, or academic accomplishments, all of the memories that the pre-service teachers chose to share revolved around feelings, relationships, and *how* (not what) their teachers taught them.

Toward the end of class, Amy gave me a few minutes to explain my relationship to the service-learning practicum, to briefly outline my proposed study, and to ask for volunteers to participate. About half of the students seemed interested in what I was saying; the other half seemed to stop paying attention when they heard that participation was voluntary. At the end of my brief spiel, I gave the students my email address and told them that they could contact me via email, speak with me after class, or let Amy know if they were interested in participating in my study. Immediately after class two students, Olivia and Claire, came up to let me know that they were interested and we exchanged contact information. Over the course of the next two days, four additional students contacted me, and I began the study with all six of these students. Very quickly however, two of the participants dropped out due to overwhelming work and school commitments, and I ended up with a total of four subjects: Olivia, Claire, Andy, and Gabby.

The Sittings

My first meeting (or "interview") with one of my study participants took place in a university classroom. Although this meeting, with Olivia, went incredibly well and she was very

honest and forthcoming during our time together, it was apparent to me that the academic setting with its ordered desks and atmosphere of inequitable authority wasn't conducive to the type of open dialogue and relationship building that I hoped to engender. I therefore conducted the remainder of my meetings with all of the participants in much more informal settings. Usually we sat on the couch in the family room of my home with a plate of cookies, a cup of tea or coffee, and my dog curled up at our feet. Occasionally when the weather cooperated we met outside in a sunny spot and sprawled on a blanket in the grass; once I met with Andy at his home and we talked on the balcony of his apartment which overlooked a bubbling fountain. I always gave the participants the option of where and when they wanted to meet, and I attempted to make our time together as comfortable and relaxed as I was able. During my observations of the pre-service teachers, both in the university seminar and at the middle schools where they did their service-learning practicum placements, I generally sat to the side or the back of the room and did not directly engage with them. My objective during these observations was to watch, listen, and take thorough notes, and I found that these observations helped me to better understand the pre-service teachers' experiences and to have more informed conversations with them when we next met one-on-one.

Sketching the Outlines

Once my data collection was complete, I spent several weeks fortified by steaming mugs of tea and equipped with multi-colored highlighters and well-sharpened pencils curled up on my couch reading and rereading transcripts, journals, blog postings, and my Impressionistic Records. Sometimes, tired of sitting, I grabbed my IPod, put my dog on his leash, and walked the neighborhood listening to our conversations, wincing at the sound of my recorded voice, but enjoying the movement and the fresh air and being transported back in time. Hours on the couch

seemed to pass by in seconds, and often I would arrive home from a long walk completely unable to remember which streets I had strolled along. This portion of my work was consuming, immersive, and difficult. It was also a highly rewarding process that reconnected me with the importance of embracing authenticity, mindfulness, and compassion when it comes to using the methodology of portraiture.

After each episode of reading transcripts or listening to recorded conversations, I added to my copious notes, amusing my children by writing longhand in pencil rather than by typing on my laptop. Although I knew that I would eventually have to dress up my scribbles and type them into neat, legible rows ready to face the big wide world, I found that I preferred the more intimate connection of initially capturing my thoughts on paper. Somehow the resulting detailed, if messy, picture of my thoughts adorned with strike-outs, arrows, question marks, missteps, course changes, and fresh insights seemed more authentic to me; a woman first thing in the morning before she puts on her makeup. This genuineness is critical to portraiture, and it is a quality that I have attempted to capture throughout my study.

This immersive process also served to remind me of the importance of mindfulness when it came to creating these portraits. Each time I reread a transcript or once again listened to a recording, I saw or heard something new, something that I had overlooked before: a word, or a pause, or an emphasis that had me rethinking and reordering my thoughts, adding new colors and shapes to the emerging portraits. I was amazed by how much I learned each time I revisited our conversations, and I was reminded how easy it is to misconstrue and misrepresent the spoken word and of my obligation to be both fully present and mindful as I did this work.

Finally, creating the portraits underscored for me the essential nature of compassion when it comes to this process. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) talk about the importance

of searching for goodness and of developing relationships which are accentuated by empathetic understanding when using portraiture, and in creating the portraits in this chapter I was constantly reminded of how honest my subjects were with me, how fortunate I was to be given a window into their souls, and how I had an obligation to share their unique voices with empathy and thoughtful understanding.

Laying the Paint

And so, as I finally sit at my desk and begin to transfer my hand-written notes to computerized text, I see my reminders of the importance of authenticity, mindfulness, and compassion pinned to my bulletin board. Illuminated by a sunbeam, these notes to myself flutter in the gentle breeze which is slipping through the open window behind me. It is an uncommonly warm winter's morning in mid-January, a day all the more intoxicating because of the snow and frigid temperatures of only a day ago. The sun is shining, the birds are singing, and I have opened the windows of my home, allowing the sweet air to chase out the winter-time stuffiness. As the breeze ruffles the reminders on my bulletin board, it also tousles the pages of hand-written notes which are spread across my desk. I have attempted to organize my notes into meaningful categories and themes, cutting and pasting and color-coding, but I often change my mind about where best a particular snippet or idea fits and I find myself hoping that a particularly forceful gust will magically reorder my piles into the perfect arrangement. Writing this dissertation is not unlike trying to assemble a complicated jigsaw puzzle without the benefit of a picture on the lid of the box to guide my efforts. I have attempted to put a dazzling array of colorful puzzle pieces together into some sort of a comprehensive whole, but I am painfully aware that there are undoubtedly gaps in the final pictures and other ways in which these pieces could have been arranged.

The Portraits

In this chapter, I introduce my study participants, Olivia, Gabby, Andy, and Claire. My portraits of these pre-service teachers were created as they participated in a service-learning experience and began their journeys to become teachers. While I have attempted to represent each participant as honestly as I possibly can, it is important to recognize that the final portraits are dependent both upon my perceptions and on the parameters of the relationships which the participants and I forged. I do not claim to speak for these individuals, but I have endeavored to be true to the spirit of their statements and in their portraits I draw heavily from their own words.

<div align="center">

Olivia

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If I had to choose one word to describe Olivia, it would be "eager." Olivia was full of life and unfailingly enthusiastic about her journey to become the best teacher she could be, and this exuberance is reflected in her self-portrait (Figure 4.1).[2] The first time we met, she sprang into the room like a sunbeam popping out from behind a cloud and breathlessly announced, "I am so excited to talk with you!" This enthusiasm never waned during our time together, and although as I got to know Olivia better I became more

Figure 4.1. **Olivia's Self-Portrait**

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[2]During the course of my study, I asked each participant to construct a self-portrait for me if they thought that doing so would be fun or interesting or therapeutic. I told them that their "portrait" could take any format that was meaningful to them and gave no further instructions. Two of my four participants, Olivia and Gabby, chose to share a self-portrait with me. Figure 4.1 is Olivia's self-portrait collage.

attuned to the more subtle nuances of her personality, her passionate enthusiasm was always, for me, her most defining quality.

On Choosing to Become a Teacher

When I asked Olivia why she had decided to become a teacher, she laughed and told me, "A sure fire test for me wanting to do something eventually is that I don't want to do it at all in the beginning." The only girl of six siblings in a blended middle class family, Olivia took a somewhat circuitous route to her pursuit of a career in teaching. Upon graduating from high school she went immediately into college as her parents expected her to do but, a self-described "late bloomer," she dropped out after a semester because she "just wasn't ready." She tried taking classes at community colleges for a time, but wasn't very successful there either because she found that she just "wasn't that interested." She spent the next several years working, first in her home state and later in Colorado. About this time in her life Olivia said:

> I was broke all the time, and I was working all the time and that was what made me want to go back, to come home and go to school. They were the most valuable years though. I fell in love with reading again after I stopped school and I got really excited about it. And I came back (from Colorado) and started going to community college. I just came back with a vengeance and got all A's. It was such a turnaround and my parents were like, 'Who are you?'"

Olivia went on to complete her undergraduate degree, and now, at 26, she is enrolled in a Masters of Teaching program at a large urban university. When we talked about why she had decided to become a secondary English teacher, Olivia told me that she was driven by both her negative experiences as a middle school and high school student and by a few "amazing" professors when she was back in college getting her undergraduate degree:

When I was in (secondary) school, I was sort of apathetic and unmotivated. I had that tendency to kind of be an observer and just kind of sit back and watch. I don't know why. It's not difficult to get me excited, it never has been. I just never connected or was interested until I got to college that last time. I had this one (English) professor… everything I said and everything others said was respected and listened to. Even if it was a misfire, it was OK, and that pushed me into this realm of just confidence that what I have to say is important and it means something and it's relevant.

Olivia describes this experience of feeling respected and listened to as an "aha moment" for her. She realized that it wasn't just the content that mattered, but *how* content was shared with students:

There's so much you can do and so many different ways to make things relevant and to make things matter and it's just not that hard. You have to listen and give the kids a platform to throw things out instead of having to absorb constantly. When I was in (secondary) school I think I needed someone to just, you know, *see* me. To listen to me and care about what I thought. I wanted to give that to kids. That's why I decided to teach. That's the kind of teacher I want to be.

Initial Thoughts on Public Education

I was curious about Olivia's thoughts about the purpose of public education, and her sharing of her own experiences as a student led us naturally into this topic. When I asked her what she considered the purpose of public education to be, she looked at me blankly for a moment and then responded, "Wow. This is terrible, but I've never really thought about that question specifically." I assured her that, in my experience at least, many people had never contemplated this question, and I encouraged her to share her opinions. She stared into space and

drummed her fingers on the table, and then asked me if I was asking what the purpose of public education actually *is* or what it *should be*. An interesting distinction, and I asked her if she could share with me her thoughts on both. She began with talking about how she sees the purpose of public education as currently defined by our society:

> Well, I think school and education are a way to get a job and make money. It's like this conveyor belt, and to have an educated society is to have one that's productive, and that's the ultimate goal. To make money. To move the country. There is like an emptiness though, because so many people, so many of my friends, didn't like and weren't concerned with school.

I was intrigued by Olivia's use of the image "conveyor belt" and by her use of the word "emptiness," and we talked for a while about her characterizations. Initially she seemed hesitant to go into more detail with me, but when she realized that I was truly curious and not being critical, off she went. Practically vibrating with the intensity of her emotions, Olivia explained that it seemed like public education had become all about memorizing facts and moving through the grades so that you could go to college and get a good ("and by this I mean you make a lot of money") job. She was critical of this orientation however and said that it felt "empty" to her and was keeping students from being truly engaged and interested in school. About what education *should* be, she said:

> What should it be? What does it mean to be educated? I think when you're educated, you're more in tune with compassion and kindness. You should be I mean. You should be involved and engaged in our world and able to make decisions and form opinions. That's not what we do, but maybe it should be our goal. What do you think?

I agreed with her, and we spent a good while exploring these ideas together. Olivia's passionate intensity was infectious, and I was both touched and flattered by her sincere curiosity about my experiences and ideas, experiences and ideas that I was happy to share. Our first meeting, despite the imperfect setting of an impersonal university classroom, lasted for over two hours, and I know our conversation would have continued if Olivia hadn't had to leave for a class.

On Facilitating a Middle School Service-Learning Project

Olivia and I first discussed her middle school practicum placement during our second meeting as we sat on the couch in my family room nibbling homemade molasses cookies and drinking tea. It was a chilly day, but I was warmed by both the fire in the fireplace and by Olivia's trademark enthusiasm. She had been excited to come to my home, and we had spent quite a bit of time when she first arrived talking about our families and different places we had lived before we eventually circled around to a more targeted discussion.

Olivia's practicum placement was at a large, campus style middle school which consisted of eighteen separate buildings connected by open walkways and grassy areas. The school included sixth through eighth grades; had an enrollment of 1,016 students; 87% of the students were Black, 6% were White, 3% were Hispanic; and, 66% of the students were classified as economically disadvantaged.[3] Although Olivia was required to complete ten hours of traditional classroom observation, the remaining twenty hours of her practicum were spent conducting an after school service-learning project with another pre-service teacher. At the request of the school, the two university students (the other of whom was not a participant in my study) conducted an after school environmental club in which the middle school students decided to

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[3] 2015-2016 school year data was obtained from the Virginia Department of Education's (VDOE) fall membership reports at: http://bi.vita.virginia.gov/doe_bi/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=Main&subRptName=Fallmembership. The VDOE defines "economically disadvantaged" as students who are eligible for Free/Reduced Meals, receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), or are eligible for Medicaid.

initiate a school-wide recycling initiative. Olivia had told me earlier that she had had no previous experience with service-learning, and I was curious to hear her thoughts now that she had begun her practicum.

As it turned out, the environmental club had a very small turnout of only five students. The club consisted of four eighth grade girls and one sixth grade boy, and initially Olivia was incredibly disappointed by this small number. As time went on however, she found this intimate group to be an advantage as it allowed her to begin to build relationships with the students, and getting to know the students helped her to overcome some previously held stereotypes:

The most interesting thing for me personally is to see how the kids act towards each other and how they kind of come out of their shells. This (service-learning) gives you the space to make the connections and have practice with being around these kids, this age group, that you haven't been around like this before. I am getting to know them as individual people and that will help me to teach them better I think. This whole experience has changed the way I see middle schoolers. My perception has changed for the better. I realize that middle schoolers are very intelligent. I didn't think they were stupid or anything like that, but I thought they didn't care about school and they were just in school to socialize. But there's more to them than the stereotype that I was identifying them by. I am definitely more interested in the idea of working in middle school now than I was coming into it. I thought it would be more exciting to work with older kids, but middle schoolers have a lot to say when they are interested in what they're doing and excited about it.

I was curious if Olivia thought that she would have gotten to know middle schoolers and overcome her stereotypes of them in a more traditional placement or in a service-learning project with a larger number of students. To this she replied,

> During my observations I don't get to know any of those kids. It's like I'm watching them, like it's a very one-sided thing. They notice me but we don't interact. I feel like a guest and not like a part of it. Doing service-learning with the kids I had the ability and opportunity to work with them and talk to them personally like on a one-on-one basis. I think this would happen in any service-learning 'cause the kids have purpose and are involved. The kids feel, well, not just feel, but actually *are* contributing and applying what they're learning to things they're doing to benefit their community.

Although Olivia certainly enjoyed getting to know the middle school students and seeing firsthand the benefits of them being invested in a project with a purpose, initially she also seemed to be almost embarrassed by the service-learning project that her middle school group was doing. The project consisted of making fliers and posters to put around the school explaining why it was important to recycle; decorating and distributing recycling boxes to the classrooms; and, collecting the recycling from classrooms and taking it to a designated, on-site recycling dumpster. When I first went to observe at the middle school and when we talked at the beginning of the semester, Olivia apologized for the project being so "small." She admitted that she was struggling with this when I questioned her, telling me that she had hoped that she would be involved in something with a "bigger reach." Olivia's feelings about this changed however, as she saw how excited the middle school students were about doing a "meaningful project" and how they were able to make real world connections between what they were doing and things that they had learned. When we talked about this change in her perception, she smiled:

I learned that students don't have to be involved in some massive project to get the most out of it. These kids don't need to be 'saving the world' in order to feel like they are a part of something that matters. They only need to feel like what they have to offer is important, and that the people they work with value their skills and thoughts. Students simply need to feel like they are free to put their skills to use in a welcoming environment. While the projects and content are important, service learning is worthless if the kids don't feel that connection.

The students with whom Olivia worked seemed to agree. When she and her partner had the middle schoolers evaluate their service-learning experience at the end of the semester, the evaluations were uniformly positive. Proudly Oliva told me, "Across the board the students' favorite part of the club was the personal interaction. They also liked walking around outside as a group, taking on different roles, making posters, and working together to achieve a goal." Olivia showed me one of the evaluations that she had saved. In answer to the question "What did you like the most about the environmental service club?" the girl had written, "the communication and the people." High praise indeed from a fourteen year old girl!

On Participating in a Service-Learning Practicum

In this nested model of service-learning, while the middle school students were participating in service-learning as they worked together on a recycling program, the pre-service teachers were concurrently participating in service-learning as they actively led the recycling program and applied and reflected upon the teaching practices they were learning in their university courses. This cohort of secondary pre-service teachers was the first that was required to participate in service-learning, and Olivia told me that initially she and several of her

classmates were skeptical. "I had never even heard of service-learning and we were going to have to jump in and start leading projects? I just wanted to observe."

Her skepticism didn't last though. During our third and final "official" meeting when we were once again curled up on the couch in my family room, Olivia and I talked about her experiences as a service-learning participant. When I read back to her what she had told me at the beginning of the semester about just wanting to observe, she shook her head at her naïve former self:

> I got so much out of this practicum from doing rather than just hearing and reading about it. It has driven home how valuable and effective service-learning is. Yes, I was skeptical at the beginning. But, in the end, it's so much more valuable and I feel lucky to have done it.

She also talked about how much she enjoyed being paired with another preservice teacher. She saw her partner as a source of support and someone with whom she could share responsibilities. She also found him to be a source of reflection. During one of our conversations when we were talking about the importance of reflection to service-learning and discussing some of her journal entries and blog posts, Olivia told me that she found that talking with her partner led to the best and most productive reflection she did. "My partner added another layer, another opportunity to reflect." She also commented on how important she felt the open discussions in her service-learning seminar were, and her one-on-one conversations with me. "It's good to write about it, but I like to talk. Thinking out loud and getting feedback has helped me so much!"

Final Thoughts

For our last meeting, Olivia once again came to my home. I was looking forward to talking with her again, and when I heard her driving up our long gravel driveway I went to meet

her on the porch. We hugged and my dog Buddy, also happy to see her, jumped up to give her a wet doggy kiss which, in typical Olivia fashion, she accepted laughingly. Olivia and I then walked arm in arm into the house, and I made us some tea before we moved to sit on the couch. As she always seemed to be, Olivia was bubbling over with enthusiasm. At my banal inquiry about how things were going with her, she launched into a discussion of the service-learning project, her words tripping over one another in her hurry to share her thoughts and ideas.

Olivia began by talking about the importance of connection and about the relationships she had forged with the middle school students. Some of the students had been very open and forthcoming with her, while others had been more reticent to share. While initially she was frustrated by the students who didn't open up to her as fully, she was coming to realize that every student connected in his or her own way:

> I'm learning that you're not necessarily going to have these really deep sit down discussions with each kid, but you can still connect with them and gain their respect. Some kids, like K, tell you their whole life story but other kids just don't talk to you in that same way. But either way you can still value them and be someone that they're comfortable with and happy to be around. And that's what comes with service-learning. It's not something I ever felt with my teachers until college. That relationship. Those are the teachers that I loved the most. They valued my opinions and I worked really hard in their classes.

When I asked her what she thought the foundation of these relationships should be, she responded:

> Respect. If you have respect for one another as people, your academic relationship will thrive and it will instill positive ideas and perceptions of education into both you and

your students … that respect isn't just assumed because I am technically in a position of authority. It has to be earned by exerting a lot of energy into the relationships I cultivate with my students, and that is something I am excited about. I love the subject I'm going to be teaching, but I love connecting with young people even more, and I think everyone in our class would say the same about themselves.

I then asked Olivia what she now thought the purpose of public education should be and if her ideas about this had changed over the course of the semester. When we had first discussed this topic, Olivia's thoughts had centered around a somewhat amorphous idea of what public education should be. She had spoken without much confidence, and had talked about compassion and kindness, and about being engaged and able to make decisions and form opinions. Now her answer was much more confident and concrete:

I think (the goal of public education is) to prepare students for the real world and it's not necessarily about your content or getting them to know all the specifics. It's about showing kids how to be lifelong learners. It's about making connections with them, making them feel valuable, and giving them the confidence to know they can pursue what they want to pursue. Individual subjects and content areas…I feel like they're just the vehicle for this.

As our last meeting began to wind down, Olivia seemed much calmer than she had been when she first arrived. I had noticed this dynamic every time we spoke; initially Olivia was bursting with things she wanted to share with me, overflowing with ideas and thoughts that needed be discussed. Over the course of our conversations she became more tranquil; a too full balloon that had been allowed to release excess air. As we finished up the last sips of our now cold tea, I asked Olivia if she knew what "democratic education" was. She had never heard the

term before, but when I asked her to tell me what she thought it might be she responded, "I guess democratic education would be a classroom where everyone has a voice in whatever way they need to have it. It's a classroom where the teacher facilitates that." I then asked her if she thought that service-learning facilitated democratic education as she had just defined it.

> Absolutely! Teachers should look at their job not as forcing things into children's minds, but as giving them an environment where they feel like they want to learn, like they want to produce things. Service-learning taught me to make room for the voices. You have to get in there and get to know the students and talk to them and figure out what they are and aren't responding to. It gives a new dimension of understanding other than just sitting there and talking about how to do things. School should teach kids to be able to work with other people and value diverse contributions all working toward the same goal. Service-learning does that.

When Olivia finished this last statement, a peaceful quiet descended between us; a space in which both the world and the ever-ebullient Olivia seemed to pause and just breathe. The moment floated like a bubble through the air until it was popped by the sound of a train whistle in the distance, a sound which signaled to me that despite the distance we had covered together, Olivia's journey as a teacher was just beginning.

Andy

> *I think that's probably gotten stronger, my desire to know the kids,*
> *to teach them and learn with them. If you listen, they'll teach you a lot.*
> *~Interview Transcript, December 2015*

The first time I met with Andy, he came to my home at about 8:30 in the morning after dropping his two boys off at school. It was a beautiful, warm day and we decided to sit out on the screened porch and take advantage of the sunshine and fresh air. Initially, Andy seemed quite

serious and rather uncomfortable. He accepted my offer of a cup of coffee, and sat stiffly on the wicker sofa seemingly hesitant to make eye contact. This awkwardness didn't last long however, and five minutes into our time together he relaxed, his quick wit and dry sense of humor rising to the surface as his body settled into the colorful cushions. Initially as we got to know each other, our conversation veered into a wide variety of diverse topics, from politics to work to parenting.

Andy was a mature 26 years old, and the only participant in my study who had children. He lived with his girlfriend and her two boys, aged five and seven, and said about the boys, "They're not biologically mine, but I claim them." [4] (I once met with Andy at his apartment and was able to meet his girlfriend and the boys. The two boys were in the middle of building an intricate Lego creation, and they seemed a tight knit, happy, and loving group.) Andy also worked quite a bit, and the reality of balancing his family, work, and school commitments made him more practical and grounded about the realities of teaching than were my other study participants. This is not to say that he was cynical. Andy seemed to maintain a sense of optimism combined with a practical grasp of real world constraints, and ultimately it was his overall sense of balance which became for me one of his most defining qualities.

On Choosing to Become a Teacher

Andy described himself as a "bad freshman" and thus took a few extra semesters to graduate from college in 2011 with his undergraduate degree in History. His initial plan had been to continue with school and pursue his teaching credential, but he felt burnt out on school and thus spent the next several years working as a line cook in a restaurant. Ultimately he came to the realization that he didn't want to do this job forever and decided to return to school. He enrolled

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[4] Andy and his girlfriend have since married and are expecting a baby. Congratulations!

in a master's of teaching program with the goal of becoming a secondary History teacher although he has continued to work part-time at the restaurant out of financial necessity.

When I asked Andy why he had decided to go into teaching, he answered my question by first explaining why he had pursued a degree in History:

I became a History major because I had a professor that made the classes interesting. Her classes were real, they weren't fluff. You actually learned and you could tell she actually enjoyed the material. She made history interesting. I sometimes wonder if I would have had a different major if I'd had such a good experience in a different class.

When I pushed him on *how* this professor made her classes interesting, he responded,

It was a passion thing. She actually enjoyed history and it wasn't like she was there to just drone on and on about the information. She made us understand that these just weren't great heroes and figures in history like you're taught in public schools. They were *real* people with faults and problems. Did you know that George Washington wrote letters to his clothing suppliers in England complaining that they were sending him last year's fashions? I love learning about that kind of thing!"

These university history classes were Andy's first encounter with a passionate teacher who was able to make her subject matter relevant and accessible to her students. As we talked further, it became clear that it was Andy's experience in these classes that led him both to major in History and to pursue a career in teaching. "I think I saw how powerful good teaching can be, and I wanted to do that. To turn kids on to history like Prof. S. had turned me on to history." I asked him if he was still excited about teaching. "Yeah. My answer risks falling into that really idealistic first year teacher thing, but I'm looking forward to helping the kids and being a good influence and actually, you know, maybe actually getting them into their school work."

Initial Thoughts on Public Education

When I asked Andy what he thought the purpose of public education is, he responded, "Is it too blunt to say I want people not to be stupid?" While I agreed that this might be a laudable goal, I asked him to define more clearly for me what he meant by this statement. Thus prodded, he went on,

> To me it (not being stupid) is critical thinking. Public schools are focusing on the teaching of content and curriculum and on high stakes testing. I think high stakes testing is necessary if you want a system which is accountable, but I think this focus has become too heavy and we have gotten away from critical thinking.

I asked him to explain further to me what he thought critical thinking was and he did so by sharing an example from his own school experience. He told me about an AP English class that he'd taken in high school and how for one assignment the class was asked to write about a theme which they were to discover on their own while reading *Hamlet*:

> That was one of the only times that I can remember in high school being just set off on a path and, you know, given a machete, and told to get through the woods on my own. There wasn't already a path cleared for me.

He went on to explain that this assignment was difficult for him and the other students because they weren't used to being given so much latitude or being asked to think for themselves, although ultimately Andy saw the power of this experience. "I had to think for myself and what I thought, the theme I found and my essay about it, were valued by my teacher. That was pretty amazing." Sadly, Andy said that he wasn't again required to use critical thinking skills until his junior year of college, when he began taking the history courses he'd already mentioned to me:

Even in college, I didn't have to use critical thinking until after the gen ed (general education) classes were done. It seems like critical thinking has been forgotten until a much higher level of education. In my history classes though, we had to use critical thinking. We had to problem solve and think about the *why* of things, ya know what I mean? My professor told us that we didn't need to memorize a bunch of dates in history because you can look those up. But being able to make connections and figure out why things happened…that should be more important. I think if nothing else, you have to be willing to accept other points of view. If you can think critically, maybe you can think about why someone sees something a different way and accept that, understand what they think, even if you don't agree with them. That is critical to understanding history. And to life.

To make sure I understood what Andy was getting at, I attempted to summarize by asking him if he would say that the goal of public education should be to teach critical thinking skills which encourage both creative problem solving and alternative perspective taking. He agreed. "Exactly! That is what we *should* be teaching our kids in school. But instead we're making them memorize information so they can pass a test. That's not the kind of teacher I wanna be. I think you can do both."

On Facilitating a Middle School Service-Learning Project

For his service-learning practicum, Andy was placed at a local middle school which had been hosting service-learning practicum students from the university for two semesters. An urban school surrounded by row homes and businesses with a small park immediately across the street, the three-story school building had been built in 1926 and was quite beautiful with a Spanish style exterior covered with ornate stone carvings. The school had 491 students, 54% of

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whom were considered to be economically disadvantaged, and 76% of whom were minority (majority Black at 63%).[5]

As the graduate student instructor who had helped to pilot the service-learning practicum, I had worked at this school in previous semesters. Andy and his practicum partner (who was not a participant in my study), were continuing an after school service-learning project we had begun earlier that entailed the development of a student government association (SGA). When I first began working with this school, there was no SGA and the principal at the time had felt that this was a need, but one that the school's teachers didn't have time to get off the ground themselves. Previous practicum students from the university had worked with middle school students and one of the middle school civics teachers laying the groundwork for the SGA, and a school constitution had been written and ratified by the middle school students. Andy and his partner were going to help the middle school to move forward with this work by holding officer elections and then by meeting with the new SGA officers to determine their goals. They also hoped to have a representative elected from each home room so that there would be an equitable representation of the student body and a straightforward method of two-way communication between students and their SGA officers. Andy and his partner were excited to facilitate this process and to help to connect the required civics curriculum into real world action. When they began their work at the school, 11 students had come forward as being interested in running for five SGA positions (President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, and Historian) and the first order of business was to help the students write their campaign speeches and hold an election.

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[5] 2015-2016 school year data was obtained from the Virginia Department of Education's (VDOE) fall membership reports at: http://bi.vita.virginia.gov/doe_bi/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=Main&subRptName=Fallmembership. The VDOE defines "economically disadvantaged" as students who are eligible for Free/Reduced Meals, receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), or are eligible for Medicaid.

Over the course of the semester and through no fault of his own, this practicum placement was fraught with frustrations for Andy. There seemed to be a pervasive lack of communication between the district's central office, building administrators, and teachers, and this breakdown in communication led to frequent last minute scheduling changes. These eleventh hour adjustments were particularly difficult for Andy since he was attempting to balance work and family commitments with his practicum responsibilities and he couldn't always alter his schedule to accommodate these last minute changes. There also seemed to be a disconnect between what the preservice teachers and the middle school teacher with whom they were working hoped to accomplish, and the agendas of the building administrators. While administrators said that they supported the development of the SGA, their actions often did not confirm this, and ultimately the preservice teachers didn't accomplish all that they had hoped. [6] Homeroom representatives were never elected, and although elections of the SGA officers were finally held these occurred late in the semester and left no time for the preservice teachers to actually begin working with the SGA. Ultimately the primary work of Andy and his partner was to help the middle school students write their SGA election speeches and to work with the students to make a video of these speeches to broadcast to the school during the morning news.

Despite the numerous roadblocks and frustrations he experienced over the course of his service-learning practicum, Andy still thought it was a worthwhile experience for the middle school students. While he didn't feel he was able to connect the Civics course content to the service-learning project as explicitly as he would have liked saying, "Linking it (the content) is absolutely doable, but I think we got a little lost on it because of scheduling," he went on to say:

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[6] It should be noted that both administrators, the principal and the assistant principal, were new to the school and thus had not been a part of the planning which had occurred during the previous year. Given this, it is not surprising that a variety of issues took precedence over the establishment of an SGA.

They (the middle school students) are going to remember running for office. It ties to the process they are talking about in Civics, and they're going to remember the civics better because they've done it. It's interactive, and the kids were involved and engaged. When you make those connections it all sticks in your brain better. You remember things that matter to you. If students don't care they're not going to want to do it and they're not going to learn anything. I don't think that you get anything out of doing stuff that you don't care about as a general rule in life.

Andy also made the point of sharing how he felt that he was better able to get to know the middle school students through the service-learning project:

If I were standing in front of them lecturing I wouldn't know anything about these kids. I want to actually know them. I want them to know that I am interested in them. I always thought I wanted to get to know my students, but I think that's probably gotten stronger, my desire to know the kids, to teach them and learn with them. If you listen, they'll teach you a lot. Now I guess I understand better how important that is.

When I asked him if there were any surprises in getting to know these middle school students, he laughed and told me, "They're probably more mature than I expected them to be. I have to say, they surprised me in a good way!" Previously leaning toward teaching high school, he added, "I'm really considering teaching middle school now."

On Participating in a Service-Learning Practicum

Andy was in a unique position during his middle school service-learning practicum in that he was completing his high school practicum placement at the same time. These concurrent placements led to significant stress for Andy ("If you ever advise students, don't let them do high school and middle school at the same time. It's too much!"), but also put him in a unique

position to compare a service-learning placement to a more traditional, observation-oriented placement. Overall, Andy found the service-learning practicum to be the more valuable of the two experiences, saying:

> I think that service-learning is much better. I'm getting more out of it than I am my high school practicum. I'm still getting plenty out of the high school practicum, but this is more real world involved and doing rather than watching.

In comparing his service-learning class to his other university classes he said,

> Even with the hurricane of road blocks and schedule changes and frustrations, even with all of that, this class was still more meaningful than all of my other ones. I learned how to write a good lesson plan (in other classes), but in this class I actually learned how to be with students.

He also really liked having a partner to work with saying, "It was great to have a team. It was nice to have Matt to bounce ideas off of and to collaborate with. Working together helped us to be better teachers I think."

> Andy did voice some concerns about the reality of being able to implement service-learning at least in the first few years of teaching:

> It's a really cool thing, this whole (service-learning) way of teaching that I'd never heard of before. And even if I'm not able to implement it in my own teaching for a while, I see the potential that it stands to help kids learn and get involved.

I asked him why he might not be able to implement service-learning when he first began teaching and he talked about the need to learn the "nuts and bolts of the school I am in and the curriculum I am teaching" before he might be able to implement service-learning, at least during the school day:

Maybe I could do an after school club using service-learning right away. I don't know. Do all teachers have to do after school stuff? I don't know if I could do service-learning my first year or two in class. But I will teach differently anyway because I will remember how important it is to get to know the students and to get them engaged in what you are teaching. That whole 'guide on the side' versus 'sage on the stage' thing. Service-learning really brought that home for me.

Final Thoughts

For our third and final "official" meeting, Andy and I met at my home once again. In contrast to our first meeting when we had sat on the screened porch enjoying the sun, the day was cloudy and cool and we sat inside drinking our coffee and eating homemade molasses cookies. (These cookies became a ubiquitous component of my meetings with all of my participants, and Andy in particular was a real fan. A year after our final meeting, he wrote to me in an email that he had spent his whole Christmas "thinking about those cookies!") As we usually did, Andy and I talked for a long while about "off topic" subjects (he shared with me some recent anecdotes about his boys and we talked about his concern for his girlfriend and her struggles with health issues) before we got around to his preservice teacher experiences. When we finally wound our way back to the "real" reason for getting together, I asked Andy if his service-learning experience had had an effect on his perceptions of education. He thought for a moment and then replied,

Ya know, I think it really drove home the engagement thing and how students should be learning. It illustrated for me that you can't just kind of throw information and hope the students are catching it. You have to find a way to bring in *their* ideas, which service-learning does, and have them engaged, which service-learning does. It's almost like

you're teaching them on the sly, like they don't realize they're learning. But they're

learning a lot and they're getting real world experience too.

I went on to ask him how, given this, he now viewed the purpose of public education. "I think the purpose of public education should be to educate children to think critically; to better prepare them for the world. To teach them to have an open thought process before spouting off an opinion." I pointed out to him that this response was very similar to what he had told me the first time we met and he responded, "I guess it is. The difference, I think, is that now I have a better idea of how to do this. That's the big take away for me."

I next asked Andy how he felt about reflection as a critical piece of service-learning. In previous talks together we had discussed how valuable it was to have a partner to talk things over with, and how Andy felt that the journal entries and blog postings he was required to keep as part of the service-learning seminar were valuable as they forced him to "actively process" his experiences. When I asked him about reflection this time, Andy told me about an article he had chosen to read and write about for the service-learning seminar, an article which discussed reflective teaching as contrasted to critical reflective teaching. Sitting forward on the couch he intently explained to me that "in technical reflective thinking your teaching skills and practices are called into question, and in critical reflective teaching your motivations, students' motivations, and the emotions of teaching are also called into question." He added, "I think that service-learning encourages critical reflection. Don't you?" Truly, I had never thought before about the distinction between technical reflection and critical reflection, and I was intrigued by this differentiation. We went on to discuss this for quite a while and ultimately I agreed with Andy's assessment that service-learning ideally encourages a more critical type of teacher reflection. Andy summed this up well when he stated,

In service-learning you have to consider what your students think and feel and the purpose of what you are teaching. And you have to provide space for all of their voices, right? This requires, if you ask me, some serious critical reflection!

Our discussion of critical reflection and Andy's comment about providing space for a variety of student voices segued beautifully into my final questions about democratic educational values. When I asked Andy if he knew what was meant by democratic education, he replied, "I guess it would be an education where all students have a voice and sort of a deciding factor in what they're learning. And also to think critically like we've talked about and to be open to new ideas and opinions." I asked Andy if his experiences with service-learning, both as a teacher of a service-learning project and as a participant in a service-learning project, had underscored the importance of democratic educational values for him. "Yeah," he said,

It goes back to the engagement thing. I think service-learning really illustrated for me that if the kids are interested you're not going to have to fight to get them to learn. And I was more engaged and that was really cool. For true learning to occur the students have to care and to feel like they are heard.

As I wrapped up some cookies for Andy to take home with him and sent him on his way, I found myself full of new thoughts and ideas and anxious to sit down and get to work on my impressionistic record. Every time I met with the participants of my study I was re-energized and excited. Every time we talked, I learned something new. As Andy had so wisely said, "If you listen, they'll teach you a lot."

Gabby

The youngest of my study participants at 22, Gabby strongly reminded me of my oldest son who was the same age at the time. Both of them had the enthusiastic desire to stretch their

wings while still taking comfort in the familiarity of home and the support of a loving family. My conversations with Gabby were peppered with references to her parents, siblings, extended family, and pets. Although Gabby had her own apartment, she frequently spent time with her family who lived close by, and she made a point of attending her brother's high school football games.

Gabby's self-portrait (Figure 4.2) highlights her strong family ties. It also draws attention to some of the seemingly contradictory realities she was recognizing within herself (feeling nervous and content; giving her all and giving a crap; wanting to see the world and yet strongly identifying with her small home town). Gabby's dissonance as she worked to integrate new ideas and concepts into familiar and more comfortable schemas was a defining component of our conversations, and she often reminded me of a developing photograph, fuzzy and not yet quite in focus. This emergent quality made capturing Gabby's essence in a portrait particularly difficult for me, and I have struggled with the knowledge that her portrait remains incomplete. Gabby was actively in the process of becoming (a teacher, an independent adult, an informed citizen of the world),

> Gabby
> Is
> Reflective
> Sincere
> Practical
> Empathetic
> Sibling of
> A sister
> A brother
> Lover of
> Family
> Pets
> Novels
> Who Feels
> Excited
> Nervous
> Content
> Who Gives
> Her all
> A crap
> Back
> Who Fears
> Failure
> Loneliness
> Heights
> Who Would Like to See
> Paris
> Scotland
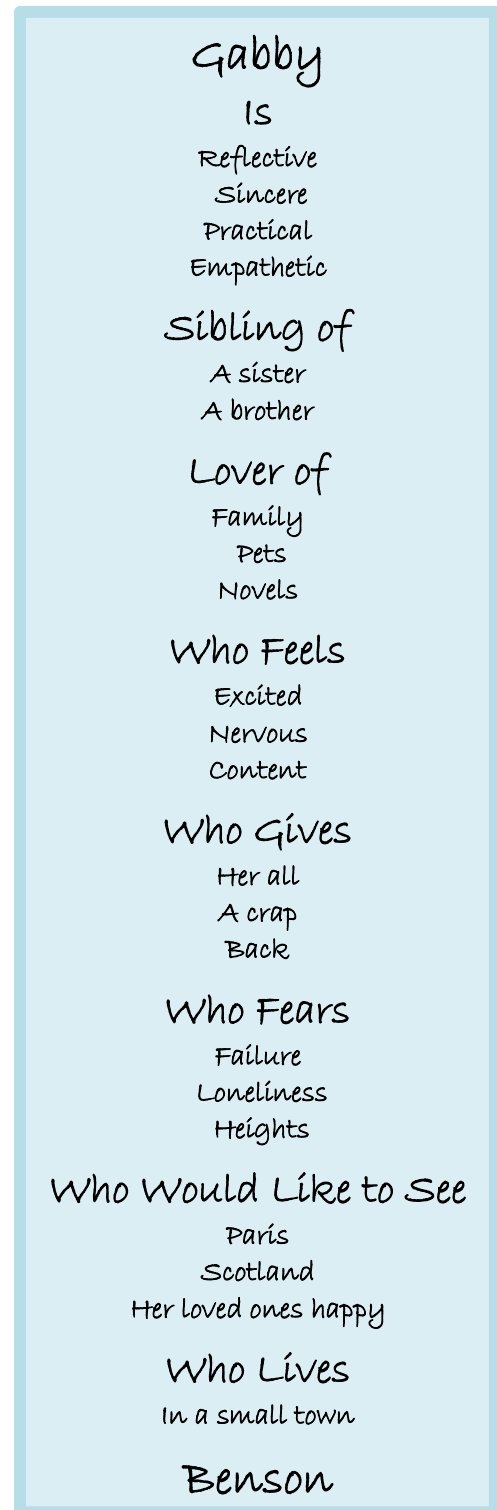> Her loved ones happy
> Who Lives
> In a small town
> Benson

Figure 4.2. **Gabby's Self-Portrait.**

and ultimately my hope is that my portrait of her accurately conveys her ongoing and very human metamorphosis.

On Choosing to Become a Teacher

A self-described "dog nut," Gabby always seemed happy to see me but equally happy to see Buddy, my dog. Our very first conversations at my home were about her dog and those of her family, and she shared pictures of all of them with me as well as numerous anecdotes of their adventures and mishaps. Buddy quickly identified Gabby's weakness for all things canine and took shameless advantage. During most of the time we talked Gabby was stroking Buddy's head as he comfortably snuggled between us on the couch, and by the time she left Gabby's clothes were inevitably covered in dog hair, a development which didn't seem to bother her at all.

During our first meeting and after we had bonded over our mutual love of dogs, I asked Gabby why she wasn't in school to become a vet. Gabby laughed and told me that being a veterinarian had never made her short list. Rather, she had begun college as a psychology major and for a while considered becoming a Forensic Psychologist. After taking a few classes in this discipline however, Gabby decided that it wasn't for her, and she turned her sights to teaching. She had always loved English and theater, and thought that teaching was a career that might let her integrate both of these passions. Gabby graduated from college with a degree in English and went immediately into the masters of teaching program with the goal of becoming a secondary English teacher. I asked her why she had chosen teaching as her career path and she told me, "I've always loved learning and so to be able to teach people is to continue the learning process because you learn from your students as much as they learn from you." I agreed with her that (good!) teaching certainly required ongoing learning, but suggested to her that many other careers would also do so. She agreed, but said that she felt that since teaching combined her love

of learning with her love of English it was a "perfect fit." I then asked Gabby what is was that she loved about English, and she told me that she could answer that question in one word: "discussion." She went on,

> I've always loved Socratic seminars when you talk about the books and get a good discussion going. This is why I want to teach high school. I feel like that's what I like (about English). It's easier to discuss both sides when you have people who read a book and who read it one way versus people who read it another way, or poems or any forms of literature. I hope that's what I can do in my classroom. To have those kinds of discussions because I think that that's not something that's happening a whole lot in the world.

I urged Gabby to elaborate on this, to explain to me what she meant when she talked about discussing "both sides," and she answered my query with an example:

> I didn't experience this myself much, but I did have one teacher (in high school) who did show us. We were talking about the Middle East and we got into the Israel-Palestine argument and he showed us a documentary talking about the Palestinian point-of-view which was crazy since it seems like we only hear about the Israeli point-of-view. I don't think I could pick a side, but it's good to know both.

And did she think teachers should encourage these types of discussions, ones that looked at things from different perspectives?

> Yes. There's always shades of gray and I like delving into that gray area because it's like you get to learn so much more when you go there instead of just focusing on black/while, right/wrong, and all that stuff. But mostly this doesn't happen at school.

Initial Thoughts on Public Education

As with other participants in this study, the purpose of public education was not something to which Gabby had given much conscious thought. (Note to self: If I ever teach a teacher preparation course again, this is the first discussion we are going to have on the very first day of class!) When I asked Gabby about her beliefs about public education she looked out the window for a moment as she gathered her thoughts.

> I don't know. I guess … I think … I think the purpose of public education is to prepare people to live in the real world, not so much to go to college, like I think it is directed right now. Now, elementary school prepares you for middle school, and middle school prepares you for high school, and high school for college, and then college tries to teach you how to prepare to live in the real world. But I know if I didn't have my dad teaching me how to do things like finances and stuff like that, then I wouldn't have been prepared.

I attempted to summarize her thoughts by asking if it was accurate to say that she felt that public education should be providing real world skills, but instead is focused on more "academic" pursuits. She agreed with this and added, "We've gotten to the point where we're just testing everything and that is all that matters." When I asked her if she could tell me what skills she thought public education should provide, she referred again to her father teaching her about financial literacy and said, "I think students should learn that in school. I was just lucky to have a dad who knew and who showed me." I continued to push Gabby a bit on this question but, at our first meeting, she had difficulty articulating further what she thought the purpose of public education should be. Although she was of the opinion that too much testing was going on and that "real world skills" needed to be addressed, she also recognized the need for testing and had a hard time explaining what she meant by real life skills beyond her example of financial literacy.

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As was so often the case with Gabby, I had the sense that she was thinking deeply about these things, but that her opinions were very much still "in process."

On Facilitating a Middle School Service-Learning Project

For her service-learning practicum, Gabby and her partner Claire (also a participant in my study) were placed at the same middle school as Olivia and met with a self-identified group of middle school students after school (See p. 12 for a description of the school). Theirs was an English oriented "club," and for their service-learning project the middle school students decided that they wanted to hold an "open mike night" with the goal of, as stated by a middle school participant during one of my observations, "getting people more interested in reading and writing." Although the number of students varied somewhat from week to week, there were generally 10 to 15 middle school students in attendance at the club, and Gabby and Claire worked with them over the course of the semester to prepare for the open mike night. At the actual event, participants would read either an original work or a favorite literary piece, and participation was opened to the entire school including the staff.

Gabby had no previous experience with service-learning, and when I first asked her to define for me what she thought service-learning was she replied "I would say it's a step up from community service but it's related to the school because the kids are helping out the community but they're also learning from it." She recognized the potential benefits of service-learning as increasing student engagement and encouraging creativity and autonomy, but at our last meeting she told me,

> I definitely think service learning is a great component of teaching. What it's made me
> think of is that even if you can't do it specifically in your classroom it's not that hard to
> try to form a club to do it after school. Which might be beneficial 'cause you can open it

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up to a wider range of students. I definitely think that service learning has made me think about a way to find balance. In the classroom it's just mostly notes and lectures because of the fact that you have to cover the SOL's and you have to get good scores. And that can be what you focus on more in your classroom. But the service learning component can come, if you can't work it into your in class timeframe, you can still do that after school.

As this statement indicates, although I believe Gabby came to recognize the value of service-learning as a teaching tool ("It's a great feeling to see the kids get excited and feel empowered about a project!"), she never quite embraced it as a viable *in-class* pedagogy due to curriculum requirements and testing restraints. We talked about this on several occasions, and wondered together if her feelings might have been different if she'd used, or had seen someone use, service-learning during class time. About this she said,

It would have been good to see it during school. I *guess* that could work, but I don't think Ms. W. (her mentor teacher) thought so because of the testing pressures. Something I've learned from this experience is that sometimes as much as you want to do the fun creative stuff, sometimes you have to sit there and go, okay, well, this is the best way to take this test, like these are the best answer choices, and this is why, and so it's hard sometimes to be able to do everything that you want to do because of the needs that need to be met and because of the school and testing requirements … I guess I wish I could see service-learning during school.

Gabby had a good point. Most of the teachers with whom the preservice teachers were working had never used service-learning themselves, and now as they were exposed to it in an after school setting, even the veteran teachers weren't sure if it could translate into a feasible in-school

pedagogy. I shared with Gabby some examples from my own experience teaching the service-learning seminar when I'd seen in-class service-learning work and work well, but I understood both her doubt and the skepticism of the mentor teachers. If they only saw service-learning implemented in after school settings, it would be difficult to imagine it successfully applied during the more rigid parameters of the curriculum-driven school day.

Despite her reservations about adopting service-learning as an in-class teaching methodology, Gabby shared with me several things that she had found valuable about service-learning, things that she believed would inform and improve her own teaching practice. For one, she saw that the real world connection to learning which was facilitated by service-learning was empowering to the students. "The students are learning something that relates to real life. It's not just learning about some distant person in the past or from a different part of the world, and this makes it so much easier for them to remember. They are going to learn better if you relate what you are teaching to their lives because when they see this (connection) then they care more and learn better. This is important whether you use service learning or not." Working with the students on the open mike night project also helped Gabby to overcome some stereotypes she had previously held about middle school students:

> I had these unconscious biases that they were going to be extremely childish, but after working with them for a while I was surprised at their maturity. They talked about topics like police brutality and racism and feminism, things that are going on that I didn't even learn about until I got to college, and they're identifying them already. It really surprised me, but in a good way, to see what these kids were doing and thinking about. These kids were amazing. I really think they were even more mature than people that I have class with now. In *college*. And they had better ideas and were more creative than I was.

In addition to overcoming her middle school student bias, Gabby also talked with me about issues of race, and how her experience changed her thoughts about her willingness to work in a majority minority school.

> After this (teaching at the middle school), I would not mind teaching here at all or in another school like it. My Nana has weird perceptions, and she worried that they have a lot of black students. And I was like, yes, but why does that matter? What's important is that if I do teach there, I would try to work against the stigmas that my Nana kind of has. I would give them (the students) more black authors or even just multi-cultural authors to show them that it's not just white people that are important for people to learn about. I don't think I have a preference, I wouldn't mind … I wouldn't be against teaching anywhere really. And this is sort of new for me.

While it is certainly true that Gabby may have had a similar experience through a more traditional, observation-oriented practicum placement, I believe that getting to know the students and beginning to build relationships with them played a large role in Gabby's growth in this area. When I asked her about this she said,

> I think so. I think getting to talk with the students taught me about their lives and about what was important to them. Like I said, they were amazing and thinking about things that I didn't think about until I was in college. If I hadn't had the chance to talk with them I wouldn't have learned this. They've had less sheltered upbringings that I did and they taught me *a lot*. Society constantly says to those kinds of poor inner city students that we know you're going to fail so why even try. But if you give them that chance they can succeed.

On Participating in a Service-Learning Practicum

Given a choice in the matter, Gabby did not think that she would have chosen to participate in a service-learning practicum. When we first discussed this she said,

Knowing myself, I would probably have stayed (in the traditional practicum). But in the past five years I've been a big proponent of like stepping out of your comfort zone, so I guess this was good for me. After I got over being nervous, I was excited to be a part of it because it meant that I was going to be doing something more than observation. I'll think I'll like being more involved.

In one of our last conversation when we revisited this topic Gabby told me,

I honestly don't think that observing would have been as great because this way we got a better connection with the students and we got a better feel for what it's like to be a teacher to these students. We were actually planning and leading the meetings, so the students saw us teachers and we felt like teachers. And we had the opportunity to interact with the students a lot, so we built real relationships.

When I asked Gabby what she thought the most meaningful parts of the service-learning practicum were she first focused on the emphasis on reflection saying,

I like being able to reflect on things that I'm learning. Most of my reflection is that I talk to my parents all the time. That's where most of my reflection comes out. But service-learning has made me think about how important it is to reflect in different ways like writing. Because if I don't reflect I don't think I would make the connections, ya know? When I reflect I think back on *why* something happened and not just *that* it happened.

I asked if having a partner facilitated this reflection process. "I hadn't thought of it that way, but it really is true. You experienced the same thing at the same time but maybe you each had

different interpretations. It was a great experience to be able to work and talk with someone like that." She paused for a moment and then continued, "Having a partner made it easier on both of us because we could bounce ideas off each other. It made everything a little more manageable and not so overwhelming."

Final Thoughts

Gabby came to the service-learning experience from a very different starting point than did the other participants in my study. Younger and less worldly but amazingly open to new ideas, the service-learning practicum seemed to help her reframe many of her previously held thoughts about education by challenging her to think more deeply about her chosen profession. As my time with Gabby grew to a close, our discussions were often an interactive process in which we worked together to build some scaffolding for her experiences. In these conversations, Gabby would share her impressions and thoughts with me, and together we would discuss and process them. Gabby had taken to heart many important and complex concepts which she still had some difficulty expressing, and together we searched for the words to provide these new ideas with a solid foundation on which she could build.

When we revisited together the question of the purpose of public education, Gabby still seemed to be grappling with what she thought that purpose should be. She reiterated her concern that public education was too focused on testing and preparing students for the next grade level, and she again mentioned that she thought public education should provide students with "the skills to live in the real world." Once again I pushed her to define for me what these skills might be, and she replied, "Well, I think the real true purpose of education should be to prepare people to have communication and management skills, to prepare them to live in the real world." I had the sense that there was a depth behind Gabby's answer that she wasn't verbalizing, or that I

wasn't quite understanding, so I asked her to think about her practicum experiences and to share with me the most valuable lessons she had learned. Our resulting conversation went like this:

M: Over the past semester you've talked about lots of different things you have learned during your practicum. What are some of the things you've learned, and do you think they've effected the kind of teacher you want to be?

G: Well, I've learned that the students have great ideas and are smart and have a lot to contribute.

M: And how will knowing that effect your teaching do you think?

G: One of my main goals for teaching would be to make sure that my students know that they have a voice, and that they will get listened to.

M: Great! So you want to give your students a voice in your classroom. Why do you think this is important?

G: Because if they have a voice, if they know I care what they think, then they will feel empowered.

M: What do you mean by 'empowered?'

G: It's good for the students to understand that they're not just students, that they can have a voice and speak up and be heard, and not feel like they're talking to nothing. So I guess if they have a voice that you listen to and they know that, then they feel it (empowered).

M: OK. So how do you establish a classroom environment that allows for students to have a voice and to feel empowered?

G: I think it would be good to start out saying that this is a safe environment. If you want to talk about something, you can bring it up, and if someone disagrees with you, they can.

And we can talk about it, but no one is going to get in your face, no one is, like I don't want any like big arguments, but we can have debates.

M: I think there's a pretty big difference between saying that the classroom is a safe environment and actually making the classroom a safe environment. Do you think that in order to establish a truly safe environment where differing opinions can be openly shared and discussed you have to have a trusting relationship with your students?

G: Yes, for sure! I remember like in school the teachers that everyone loved had that kind of open environment where everyone was more open to sharing in class. And they got listened to and everything. I didn't get it often, but those teachers that I remember the most are the ones that had (open) environments like that in the classroom and they got to really know their students. And that's where you can have good discussion that shows different sides (of an issue). I think it's important for younger generations to be exposed to the fact that not everything they hear is true and they need to learn how to find out the truth for themselves. Just exposure to the other side can help lessen maybe the hate you feel or how strongly you feel about it.

In addition to student voice, empowerment, discussion and relationship, Gabby also identified student engagement as being a critical component to a successful classroom. When I asked her why she thought engagement was important she said:

I think it's important because it does make the students want to come (to class). They don't need to want to come to class every day and they don't have to love English, but I do want to make it so at least they feel like 'Well, if I came here, at least I did something meaningful and fun; I didn't just sit.' I always knew I wanted to do the cool engaging

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stuff and I think what service-learning has done is it's added the tools for me to actually

be able to do that.

Curious, I asked if she thought "being engaged" necessitated physical activity, to which she

replied,

No. I know you can't engage students 100%, I mean actively engage them like getting up

and moving around and doing stuff, but they can at least be engaged in what they're

reading. Ms. W. likes to try to pick things to read in her class that aren't just (written by)

old white men…she likes to pick authors that represent her students so that they can be

more into it, and relate to it in that sense and so that's definitely something that I'm going

to keep in mind.

Gabby and I spent quite a while examining her thoughts about education and putting

them to words. Once we had done this I then asked her if, given our discussion, she could try to

articulate once again what she thought public education was. This time she said,

I think it is to prepare people to be able to be members of society. To teach basic skills,

like math, but also life skills like how to communicate well with others and how to

interpret things and how to think, because everything can't be taken at face value.

When I asked her if she thought that our public education system is doing this, she replied, "Not

really. Traditional school is mostly lectures and tests and it would be good to counterbalance

this. It's good to be able to pass a test, but I don't think that's all school should be."

Finally, I asked Gabby what she thought "democratic education" was. She responded, "I

don't know because when I think of 'democratic' I always think of elections. That's my first

thought." I acknowledged that this was an important concept, and then asked her why she

thought that voting is key to a democracy. "Well, because everybody gets to vote. So I guess in

democratic education everyone has a say? But then I don't know exactly *who* everyone is."
Acknowledging her confusion, I encouraged her to think of a single classroom and what
"everyone having a say" might mean on that smaller scale. She thought for a moment and then
said, "So your kids have a voice? Like we were talking about before?" I agreed, and asked her
what this might look like in a classroom setting. "Well," she answered,

> I guess giving the students a say in what they learn. Of course the (state tests) are
> important, but you can tie the English tests into anything. So if the students get to pick
> what they're reading or what they're working on, you can just take what you *have* to do
> and add it. Then they're engaged but you're also covering what you're required to cover.
> I think it's harder to teach like this though. There's a disconnect between what we teach
> teachers to do, the things they *should* do, and what teachers are required to do. We need
> to be able to connect the two. We can't tell teachers to do this creative stuff all the time
> and then focus on specific testing requirements. I know that like service-learning is great.
> But I watch teachers in the classroom and they are focused on testing. I guess 'cause they
> have to be.

I was quiet after this statement, and after a moment or two Gabby asked me if everything was
OK. Shaken out of my reverie, I apologized and told her that I had been thinking about what she
just had said. While it didn't seem that Gabby had completely assimilated the concept of
democratic education, I was pretty sure that she had just succinctly summed up *the* problem in
today's educational system. Begging Gabby's patience, I took a minute to fiddle with the
recorder and to figure out how to rewind it so that we could listen to her statement again. I finally
found the spot I wanted, turned up the volume, and hit "play." Gabby's recorded voice boomed
into the silence: "There's a disconnect between what we teach teachers to do, the things they

should do, and what teachers are required to do. We need to be able to connect the two." I looked at Gabby, "You hit the nail on the head there didn't you?" She smiled, patted Buddy on the head, and began gathering her things to leave. "I guess," she said. Then continued,

> It's something I've been thinking about a lot. I'm learning how to be a really good
>
> teacher, but I'm not sure I can be that kind of teacher when I have my own classroom.
>
> I'm just not sure that kind of teaching works with all of the testing and stuff.

Throughout my conversations with Gabby, the tension between disparate ideas had been an on-going theme. As I gave her a final good-bye hug, I thought how fitting it was that at the very end of our time together Gabby had concisely articulated such a profound and tension-infused truth.

Claire

I am silver and exact. I have no preconceptions.
Whatever I see I swallow immediately
Just as it is, unmisted by love or dislike.
I am not cruel, only truthful,
The eye of a little god, four-cornered.
Most of the time I meditate on the opposite wall.
It is pink, with speckles. I have looked at it so long
I think it is part of my heart. But it flickers.
Faces and darkness separate us over and over.

Now I am a lake. A woman bends over me,
Searching my reaches for what she really is.
Then she turns to those liars, the candles or the moon.
I see her back, and reflect it faithfully.
She rewards me with tears and an agitation of hands.
I am important to her. She comes and goes.
Each morning it is her face that replaces the darkness.
In me she has drowned a young girl, and in me an old woman
Rises toward her day after day, like a terrible fish.
(Mirror, by Sylvia Plath)

From the very first moment I met Claire, I was struck by her passion. More than any other of my participants Claire saw teaching as a calling, as a way in which she could help to address the issues of social justice about which she felt so strongly. Inequality (of race, gender, and socio-

economic status) figured prominently in many of our conversations, and Claire was always very clear about her desire to effect change. For the open mike night which was the culmination of the service-learning project she completed with Gabby, Claire chose to read Sylvia Plath's poem *Mirror*. When I asked Claire why she chose to share this poem she initially told me that it was "kind of a spur of the moment choice," but went on to add, "I wanted to read something that was written by a woman, something that was descriptive, and something that was kind of artsy that maybe the kids weren't reading in school, something with depth."

As I have worked on Claire's portrait over the past months, I have come see her choice to read *Mirror* as a thought-provoking reflection of her own personality, a selection that illuminates her intense desire to examine both herself and the world around her in a manner which transcends surface appearances and easy answers. Although an initial reading of *Mirror* seems to indicate that it is a poem about a woman's struggle with aging and loss of beauty, a more in-depth analysis of the poem suggests that, at its heart, this poem is about the tensions between our inner and outer selves and the importance of recognizing the differences between shallow physical appearance and true essence (Gill, 2008; Richardson, 1991). As Claire put it, "We all need to see and acknowledge the superficial as opposed to the real. That dichotomy in us and in other people. And in our society."

The only participant in my study who was not white, Claire was Middle Eastern and grew up in a self-described "family of privilege in an upper-middle class American suburb." Claire was very devoted to both her mother ("We're really close. She's a cool lady!") and to her older brother whom she described as her "best friend." Claire attended community college for a while before she initially enrolled at the university, but she "basically flunked out (of college) and took some time off and then went back to community college online and just kind of hung around and

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volunteered." Once she had gotten her "feet back on the ground and found direction," she returned to college and graduated with a degree in English and a minor in Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies, a minor which she felt she needed in order to be exposed to the "diversity of literature" that she craved. A "feminist and not afraid to admit it," Claire enrolled in the masters of teaching program at 26, with plans to become a secondary English teacher.

On Choosing to Become a Teacher

The first time I talked with Claire, we met on a bench beside a sunny lawn on the university campus. It was a beautiful, warm day, and while some students rushed to class, their less time-constrained peers sprawled across the grass reading, listening to music, and chatting with friends. A man of indeterminate age did Tai Chi under the shade of a large oak tree, and his slow, graceful, and unselfconscious movements were mesmerizing; I felt myself relaxing into the day as I admired the fluidity of his practice. From the get go, Claire and I seemed to feel comfortable together, and even at this very first meeting we sat in a peaceful silence and watched the world around us before we began to talk. Finally, as the student traffic dwindled, Claire turned to me and said, "I love the diversity here." She paused and then added, "But the school of ed is really white." I found this to be a compelling opening statement, one which said a lot about who Claire was and about what was important to her. It was also a statement that I agreed with based on the classes that I had taken as a doctoral student and on the classes that I had taught in the teacher education program. I asked Claire what else she'd noticed about the students in her classes. "Well," she said, "I'm excited to see so many men in the secondary teaching program. That's cool. And I think everyone is really nice. But sometimes I get weirded out by what people say." I encouraged her to elaborate and she went on:

Well, I'm really into social justice, into like working within the community and doing all that kind of stuff. I think I was surprised because I went into grad school thinking I was going to be with like-minded people. But that's not usually the case. Maybe they just want to teach out in the suburbs, like in their own neighborhoods, maybe that's their intention, but this surprised me. We have had some conversations about people who're different from them and I've heard things…judgmental things. Not that I thought it was intentional…but it's like they just didn't know. And I was like, well, you should want to know, you should really try. I guess not a lot of people are into the social issues that I'm into, or at least not noticeably, which is fine because I don't expect everyone to have the same heavy feelings that I have. But it did surprise me.

I asked Claire if her orientation towards social justice was what had led her to want to become a teacher, and she told me that at first her interest was more general. She decided that she wanted to become an English teacher when she was a sophomore in high school because "it was in my English classes that I felt comfortable. With the creative writing I could kind of get my feelings out." Later, when she was an undergraduate with the goal of becoming an English teacher, Claire volunteered with several inner-city middle and high school literacy projects. It was through these experiences that her desire to work in the inner city and her realization that teaching could be a "social justice profession" solidified:

These kids were amazing. I grew up and went to school in a privileged area, and working with these kids made me realize that I didn't want to go back to that. I guess I really saw not just how great these kids were, I think I knew that, but I saw how the system is unfair and that I want to bring social justice into my teaching.

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I asked Claire what she thought "bringing social justice" into her teaching would look like and she was off and running, leaning toward me and speaking intently:

I want my kids to know that they matter and that I care what they think. Depending on the people I have in my classroom, I really want to show them that it's not just old dead white men who write literature. It's so easy to get caught up in that. But even with stuff like Shakespeare that you have to teach, you can address important issues. Something like Othello has a lot of racism in it. And you can talk about that and get at the meat of it. I want to make learning *real* to them, like meaningful, ya know? The cool thing about English is that if you want to teach about social justice, say, you could do it through slam poetry, you could do it through writing or making a book, there are so many ways to pull it in! Also, I want my students to read something or write something and then get in a circle and talk about it, and like see where it goes, that kind of stuff, kind of building relationships. Everybody has stuff that they're dealing with and I want to validate and acknowledge their feelings. I always feel like you don't really care about an issue until you know someone who has been through it.

When she slowed to a stop and leaned back against the bench to catch her breath, I attempted to summarize her thoughts. "So, is it fair to say that, to you, bringing social justice into your teaching requires building relationships and trying to make what you are teaching relevant to your students' lives?" She agreed and added, "Yes, and for me it also means working in the inner city." I acknowledged and applauded her desire to work in an inner city school, but I was also curious about her thoughts about the need for social justice education in more privileged settings and asked her about this. "Yeah," she answered, "probably kids of privilege need exposure to these ideas too. Maybe even more." She gazed into the distance and then added, "And even those

kids (of privilege) can have a hard time. I was one of those kids, because even though I was privileged by whatever our standards are, I still had a lot of stuff that I was dealing with emotionally."

Initial Thoughts on Public Education

Claire and I spent the next half an hour or so sharing our life stories and getting to know one another on a more personal level. I truly enjoyed Claire's company, and I found myself thinking about how glad I was that she had chosen to join the teaching profession. She seemed to be entering teacher training with more awareness of social justice issues than were the majority of her peers, and I was curious how this awareness informed her ideas about the purposes of public education. When I asked her what she thought the purpose of public education was however, she surprised me by replying,

> That's a good question. I never really thought about it. It just seems like it's a constant that we have and the expectation is that you're better on the other end of it. I guess the intention of public education is probably, since we think that kids are moldable, to make them better people so that they can be productive in life.

I asked her what she meant by "better," and she responded,

> Well, where I grew up, better means to be successful. You go to college and have a plan. I guess it's kind of superficial, the focus on what you have, on accumulating things. Public education gives you the skills to go out into the world and make money. To be successful. You find value in yourself with the stuff that you have.

I asked Claire to think about what she thought the purpose of public education *should* be as opposed to what she thinks it *is*.

The way it is now, we're absolutely doing a huge group of people a disservice. I think

there are a lot of people falling through the cracks and for all different types of reasons. I

feel like the way that the system works is that the better you are, the more help you get,

which doesn't seem fair to me. And I understand the standards and the testing and the

need for providing an outline. But I wish it (the public school system) was a little bit

more geared toward humanity, toward being more inclusive and open and less into

grouping … (Long pause) … I need some more time to think about this, OK?

The apparent disconnect between Claire's passionate social justice orientation and her ability to

articulate what she thought the purpose of public education should be was fascinating to me. I

had been somewhat surprised by other participants' uncertainty when it came to answering this

question, but I had been sure that Claire would have an immediate, intense, and egalitarian

response. That she did not was, for me, very telling, and I looked forward to hearing her thoughts

after she had considered this topic for a time.

On Facilitating a Middle School Service-Learning Project

Claire began her service-learning practicum with more teaching experience and a more

overt awareness of social justice issues than did any of the other participants in my study.

Despite the fact that she had previously worked with inner city middle school students in a

summer literacy program and had loved the experience, Claire did come into this service-

learning practicum with some stereotypes. She told me,

I thought maybe my other experience (in the summer literacy program) wasn't like 'real'

school. So I was expecting a lot more disruption and disciplinary stuff. That's just what

people say happens in urban schools. And I had a hard time when I was their age, and so

I was ready for that. But it wasn't like that. They were the sweetest, most well-behaved

kids. There was no issue! I was not like them when I was in middle school. I was not aware, I was distracted. But they were talking about things that I wasn't paying attention to when I was in seventh grade, you know what I mean? I was really impressed by them. Yeah, things got rowdy sometimes but that just comes with the territory, the middle school territory. And I think that happens everywhere in all middle schools. But they were great. Really, I feel even more in love with them than I was before.

And although Claire hadn't previously heard of service-learning, and she was excited to be exposed to a way to connect students' interests with their academic work. About this she said,

I always imagined myself talking to my kids about their neighborhoods and relating their lives to what we were learning. It was always something that I imagined myself doing, but I wasn't sure how. I'm excited that service-learning can give me the tools to do this.

Together with Gabby, Claire's service-learning project consisted of working with a group of students after school to brainstorm, organize, and produce an open mike night at the middle school that would celebrate the importance of literacy. When we talked about her experiences co-leading this project, Claire was very enthusiastic and saw many benefits to service-learning.

I love how it (service-learning) teaches the kids that the school and the community are connected and a part of each other. They are an ecosystem basically … like a loop instead of an arrow. It's connecting academics to the community and realizing that learning isn't a one directional thing with a test at the end. It's also cool how it lets you address different learning styles. Everyone doesn't learn best from traditional methods of being lectured at and I don't think we talk enough about different learning styles. I want to give my kids options. And I think it's good to have a diverse group of students working on a project together. Seeing someone who's not like you, someone with different friends

from you, but caring about the same thing you care about. Empathy is a big part of service-learning and I think that is important. We don't do this enough, expose kids to different ideas and ways of doing things. I think that the more you see and the more you're exposed to, the better. In our culture we resist anything that is different. What we're not used to is scary.

Her glowing endorsement notwithstanding, Claire did echo some of the other participants' reservations about service-learning. In particular she was concerned about being able to implement service-learning during the school day as opposed to during more flexible after school hours, although she indicated that she was willing to give it a try.

I like the service-learning experience because I like to get to know the kids. But I think it might be hard to do during the school day. You have to have respect for that space and understand the constraints. I like to interact and talk, I want to teach that way, but it's hard to do that. It's hard for Ms. W. (her mentor teacher) to do everything. She agrees with me on a lot of the social issues and says that she wishes she had twice the time and didn't have to do so many remedial things and didn't have so many days of testing. She sees the value in doing more socially conscious stuff but she just doesn't have the time. I appreciate that and understand what she's saying, but I always think that there's room for more, more real life stuff. I just think that as much as I can do it, I want to do it.

Claire went on to explain that, in this instance, she wasn't sure that a firm foundation had been laid which allowed the service-learning project to flourish:

I don't think you can just jump in. If I'm going to be 100% honest, then while I do think this is valuable and fresher and I wouldn't change it, I think it's a little bit difficult to do a good job without the foundation being in place. Service-learning isn't different from

community service if the students don't make the connections, if they don't know why we are even talking about other people. I think we needed more time to help them make this connections. Or Ms. W. should have done it before we got there since I feel like we haven't had time. Does that make sense?

As she so often did, by recognizing the need to lay a solid foundation of understanding with the middle school students, a foundation which she felt was lacking, Claire looked beyond the surface realities of the situation to try and understand both the deeper problems and the underlying potential.

Perhaps the most interesting conversation Claire and I had about her experiences facilitating a middle school service-learning project was one we had about what it means for students to be engaged, and how this can differ from student to student and doesn't always necessitate "big picture" empowerment. During one of my observations of the open mike night service-learning meeting, I sat at the back of the middle school classroom and watched as Claire and Gabby talked with the students and then had them move into their groups to work. Some students were working on outreach, some were researching facts on literacy, and two girls sat down near me and began cutting out large paper snowflakes which they would use to decorate the cafeteria where the event was going to be held. The girls were involved in and excited about their work, and they talked with each other about how great the open mike night was going to be and how they were excited to be a part of it. I overheard pieces of their conversation and wrote down a few snippets, including one of the girls saying, "I love doing this. I'm not gonna read no way, but we are gonna make it look good. And I think we should have food, don't you?" To which her friend replied, "Yeah food would be good. Look at this! (Shows her friend a completed snowflake.) It's gonna look so great! Hey, did you hear what A. is gonna read?" After

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the students left that day, Claire and I met to talk, and the first thing she did was apologize to me. "I feel bad that you didn't see a better meeting. And you were near those girls cutting out snowflakes. That wasn't very deep." I shared with Claire what I had overheard the girls talking about and how they seemed to be very engaged and excited to be a part of the project, even if their contribution wasn't very "deep." Claire seemed surprised; not by the fact that the girls were engaged ("They both love art and asked to work on decorations") but by my positive response to what they were doing and by the possibility that maybe, in fact, cutting out snowflakes was "deeper" than she had thought. Claire and I had a long conversation about these two students, both of whom Claire said were very shy and often on the periphery of activities. The girls were excited to be a part of this event and felt that they were contributing in a meaningful way, and we agreed that the value of their engagement shouldn't be underestimated. Echoing a sentiment similar to one that Olivia had expressed, Claire summed up our conversation by saying,

> It's good for me to remember that it doesn't have to be a big project. Or even if it is, it's important to value all of the pieces. Even the little ones, like snowflakes. I think I have a tendency to always look at the big picture, but I need to remember to see the trees and not just the forest. Sometimes the little things are the big things.

As I walked to my car that afternoon after saying good-bye to Claire, I thought about what she had said. In teaching it is important to see both the forest *and* the trees, but in today's era of standardization and accountability we all too often focus only on the forest. We would do well to remember that the forest is made up of individual trees and that sometimes, as Claire pointed out, the little things really *are* the big things.

On Participating in a Service-Learning Practicum

Claire completely grasped the idea that her practicum was a nested model in which both the middle school students and the pre-service teachers participated in service-learning. And while Claire saw the potential benefits of using service-learning with middle school students, she also felt that, in this instance, the service-learning experience was more beneficial to the pre-service teachers. In particular she felt that the service-learning was valuable to her classmates, saying,

> I think the service-learning is just as valuable for my classmates, maybe more valuable, than for the middle school students who are doing it. I understand that for people coming into a teaching program who haven't been exposed to social justice issues and haven't thought about these things, how going into an inner city school like this and using service-learning and working with students in this way would change them.

I asked her if she thought that a more traditional, observation-based practicum in an inner city middle school would work just as well and she answered,

> No. I think that because service-learning gives you the space to get to know the kids and to hear their stories it's different. You have to work with them and let them have a say. When you do this you are exposed to new ideas and overcome stereotypes. And lots of my classmates had stereotypes that were flat out wrong, mostly about inner city kids. And about black kids. Also it's different because you get to be the teacher and not just watch. I had done that already, but everyone hadn't. And I learned stuff too.

I asked her what she had learned and she replied,

> I think that what I'm taking home from this experience is that I've *done* it (service-learning), I've seen it in action. I think it's beneficial for us to see what's going on and to

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kind of be more real about it. It was beyond just talking about it in the privileged space of

college where it's easy to say, "This is important," which I've done forever. It's easy to

get caught up in the theory and just having those conversations in that space of academia,

ya know? That's important, but when you're there and actually teaching and trying stuff

out you see their immediate reactions. I knew the kind of teacher I wanted to be but I

didn't know how. Now I'm kind of putting all of that together.

Final Thoughts

Although I continued to meet with Claire after our "official" interviews were over, our

last formal meeting took place at my home. As I had done with the other participants, Claire and

I sat on the couch in the family room, drinking coffee, eating cookies, and talking about many

wide-ranging topics. Buddy, my dog, lay at our feet in his usual spot and kept a vigilant lookout

for wayward cookie crumbs, and Claire occasionally reached down to pat his head as we talked.

Before this final meeting I had read over my notes and listened to recordings of my previous

meetings with Claire, and I was looking forward to our conversation and to seeing how her

thoughts about teaching and education had grown and solidified over the past semester.

Several months ago when I had initially asked Claire what she thought the purpose of

public education was, her response had focused on the skills that public education provided to

students, skills which allowed them to get a job, make money, and acquire "stuff." Now when I

asked her to answer this question, she responded:

I think before, I was more focused on school providing academics and skills. I still think

these things are important, but I think it's even more important for school to be a safe

space, safe emotionally and socially, that teaches kids how to navigate the world. Before

I was thinking that the academic stuff led to these other areas, but now I think that is

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flipped. You have to start with the safe space and relationships and connections. If you

don't have these in place, the academic piece doesn't work. It's just hollow to a certain

extent.

I asked her if she could talk a little bit about what public schools *are* doing and what she thinks

they *should* be doing to which she replied:

So I think there's room for improvement. I think that a lot of important stuff just gets lost

in the every day-to-day business aspect of things, the focus on making sure that

everybody is capable academically. We're becoming so competitive and we forget the

person-to-person aspect that should be our focus. I know that learning skills and

academics is important, but I don' think test scores should equal success. Do we as a

society want to define ourselves by how much money we make and our test scores or do

we want to define ourselves by our ability to build relationships and to understand

different points of view? I think before this (the service-learning practicum) I put a little

bit too much emphasis on the academic stuff, but now I get that it's just as important

being in a group and working together.

I asked Claire what brought about this change in her thinking, this "flip" (to use her word) from

putting tested, scholastic skills first to putting nonacademic, more social skills first. She told me

that it had to do with "being with the (middle school) kids and watching them and talking to

them and getting to know them" and realizing that "the academic stuff, while necessary and

important, doesn't go anywhere without the relationship piece, the safe space, the giving kids a

voice. That group dynamic is so important and now I've seen it actually work." She also

mentioned the importance of the reflection that she had done as a part of her practicum:

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I did so much reflection and this was so important! We did blogs and written reflections and we talked in class. I talked to Gabby a lot and this was really cool 'cause sometimes we saw things in such a different way. And I did so much reflection with you! I always leave with so many things to think about. It's so great to take the time, to make the time, to process what's going on. I have to keep doing that when I'm a teacher. It's not just about thinking about what you did or how something went, but you have to think about how you reacted to stuff. Like be aware of your own stereotypes and biases.

I asked Claire if she thought that the middle school students benefitted from reflection as much as she had, and she told me that they hadn't done as much reflection with the students as they "really should have." She went on to say that she thought that reflection was a critical piece of service-learning and that she would use it in the future with her students "for service-learning but at other times too. It's just good practice."

My final question to Claire was, as it had been to all of my study participants, what she thought democratic educational values were. Like the others, Claire had never heard the term before and told me,

I don't know what that means. I mean, is that just treating everybody the same, like that kind of thing? When people put 'democratic' in front of something, I feel like usually they want to be, almost like being politically correct, to make sure that everything is fair.

I agreed with Claire that the term "democratic" could have that connotation, but I asked her if she could think about the term more broadly and in the context of public schools. After pondering for a moment she said,

Maybe it's really almost the opposite of what I was saying. I kind of thought of it as negative…but I guess in a classroom with democratic values it would be all about

connections and getting to know your students and caring about them so that you can do a better job of teaching them. I guess this experience has taught me the importance of democratic educational values if that's what they are.

I agreed with her that that was one way to define democratic values, and asked her what she meant when she said that this experience had taught her about their importance. She gave a lengthy reply:

I think now I will worry less about am I going to hit every SOL, and realize that my kids are going to be better leaving me than when they came to me. I guess I understand better that it all has to start with them, not with me. I mean I need to share, to be authentic with them, but I need to let them have space and I need to leave them alone a little bit. I thought that I would need to be with them at every step to make sure that everything was perfect, you know, being a control freak that way, and this experience has helped me to kind of like take a step back. To see what's really important. And what's important is that it has to start with them. It's all about *them*. It's always been important for me to be an engaged, empathetic, and warm teacher, and really knowing my students has to come first. If I can listen, if we all listen to each other, and share and talk and learn to really think, that's what's real. Not just the academic facts, ya know? When students see that – the realness – the walls come down, and real change can happen.

I asked Claire what she meant by real change, and she explained that, to her, "real change" meant that her students would be empowered:

I think that if my students know that what they think matters, and if they learn to listen to other people, and if I can relate what I am teaching to their lives, then they begin to see why education matters. They don't just learn because they have to. They learn because

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they want to, because they start to see that they matter and that maybe they can change

things. And that's pretty huge.

As Claire and I wound up our conversation, made plans to meet for lunch in the near future, and hugged good-bye, I thought about change and the ripple effect it could have. Changes in Claire and in her approach to teaching would in turn change untold numbers of her future students who would, in ways big and small, go on to effect change in the world around them. There are many days when I am overwhelmed and saddened by the state of education in our country. But that afternoon, as I thought back on my conversation with Claire, I felt hopeful. Her words about change had reminded me of a quote by Robert Kennedy which I looked up that afternoon to include in my notes:

> Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current that can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance" (as cited in Gottheimer, 2003, p. 283).

I smiled to myself as I copied this quote into my Impressionistic Record, optimistic that throughout her years as a teacher Claire would send forth many a ripple of hope.

Are We There Yet?

When I finally put my figurative paint brush down and stepped back to look at the portraits of Olivia, Andy, Gabby and Claire, I was immediately consumed by doubt. Were the portraits "complete?" Was that even possible? I no longer had the objectivity needed to see the portraits clearly. Finally, in desperation, I asked a brilliant and creative friend of mine if she would read the portraits and give me her feedback. She agreed, and about two hours after I had

emailed the portraits to her she called me. She suggested several edits, gave me a couple of suggestions on areas which needed beefing up or further explanation, and then said, "Too bad you can't draw worth beans. It would be so cool if each of these written portraits had a visual counterpart. When I read your words, I imagined each 'model' was in the same setting and in a similar pose, but that each portrait was rendered in a medium which emphasized the individual's personality." Olivia, she elaborated, would have best been captured with pastels because they are soft and vibrant and "glow with luminosity." She saw Andy's portrait as being drawn in pen and ink, with a focus on character and without the distraction of color, a work "more grounded and to the point." Gabby she imagined would have been painted with oils because they are slow drying, blendable, and "quite impressive and deep once finished." Claire's portrait, she concluded, might have been portrayed in watercolors, because although "watercolors are deceptively tricky to work with, they have an inner brilliance and clarity that is quite powerful."

As my friend said at the outset, I "can't draw worth beans," so creating visual portraits was *not* an option, not even with simplistic and cartoon-like stick figures. And given my absolute lack of artistic training I wasn't completely sure if her suggestions about the different medium to be used for each portrait were accurate or even made sense. I did, however, love my friend's enthusiastic suggestion, as it implied that in reading the portraits she had recognized the depth and uniqueness of each of my participants and that I had, on some level, successfully done what I had set out to do, capturing some facets of my subjects' complex personalities and varied experiences. Throughout this process I have tried to keep in mind the saying which is still pinned to the bulletin board above my desk: "Less Perfection. More Authenticity." The portraits which I have created together with my participant friends are certainly not perfect. I do, however, have faith in their authenticity and that fact brings me a measure of peace.

CHAPTER 5: REFLECTION

In the "nested model" of service-learning that was examined in this study, both the pre-service teachers and the middle school students with whom they worked participated in service-learning. By connecting their pedagogical coursework at the university with the creation and facilitation of service-learning projects at the middle school, the pre-service teachers learned about service-learning as a teaching and learning method as they actively constructed a service-learning course with middle school teachers and students. The middle school students were also learning by doing as they worked with the pre-service teachers to identify and research issues of concern to them and their school community. Both groups of students, the pre-service teachers and the middle school students were, ideally, directly involved in experiential, purposeful, and collaborative learning that was grounded in democratic educational values, although this research focused exclusively on the learning experiences of the pre-service teachers. It is worth noting that although the mentor teachers were not participating in service-learning themselves, they were a critical component of the experience as they helped to direct and support both the pre-service teachers and the middle school students in their service-learning endeavors.

At the outset of this study I melded descriptions of democratic education from Darling-Hammond (1996) and Parker (2003, 2006) and defined democratic education as the teaching and learning pedagogies put to practice in a classroom which help to produce engaged citizens who are capable of free and independent thought, are able to build common ground across diverse

experiences and ideas, and are prepared to act as agents of change in society. In other words, by this definition, embracing democratic educational values in a classroom would encourage the development of open-minded, critical thinkers who recognize that their action (or inaction) matters. The goal of this study was to use a hybrid portraiture-interpretive case study methodology to examine if their experiences in a nested service-learning model facilitated an understanding of democratic educational values for the four pre-service teachers who were participants.

In the spirit of portraiture, when I began to write this chapter I wanted to continue with my use of artistic metaphors to describe what I hoped this reflective phase of my study would accomplish. Undoubtedly such a metaphor exists, but even my artistic friend who helped me previously was at a loss. I did however, come up with a fitting descriptive image when I recently watched out my family room window as my backyard was transformed by a spring snowfall. Just as snow can cover a familiar landscape, disguising well-known features, blurring distinctive traits, and presenting a newly cohesive panorama, the goal of this chapter is to unify. Although the individual portraits provide the reflections in this chapter with their overall contours, differences are softened and edges are obscured. In this chapter I reflect on my dialogues with the participants, exploring common themes and areas of intersection that help to determine whether, and if so, how, a nested service-learning experience influenced the pre-service teachers' understanding of democratic values in education. I then discuss the limitations of this study, implications for practice, recommendations for future research, and finally share a few thoughts on the use of portraiture as a methodology.

Summary of Findings

When I first began a detailed analysis of the interview transcripts for this study, I admit to being disappointed. Upon initial inspection, my research does not seem to support service-learning as a pedagogy for producing engaged citizens who are prepared to act as agents of change in our society, at least as I had envisioned them. In my mind I had defined "change agents" as outspoken agitators who were actively questioning the status quo; teachers who incited others to fight for social justice in the schools, and the pre-service teachers in my study did not seem to fit this definition. However, as I looked back at my guiding research question ("In what ways do pre-service teachers come to understand democratic values in education as the result of their participation in a "nested" service-learning experience?") and reread my definition of democratic education ("the teaching and learning pedagogies put to practice in a classroom which help to produce engaged citizens who are capable of free and independent thought, are able to build common ground across diverse experiences and ideas, and are prepared to act as agents of change in society") and compared them to what I had learned from my participants, I was encouraged. The deeper I dug into my conversations with the participants, the more I began to see that this nested service-learning experience had, in fact, helped the pre-service teachers to begin to lay a solid foundation in their understanding of basic democratic educational values, in their plans to embrace democratic educational values in their future classrooms, and in their view of themselves as democratic educators.

The pre-service teachers' increased awareness of democratic educational values was evident in their recognition of the importance of talking with their students and building relationships with them, both of which helped them to overcome some previously held stereotypes. Their plans for embracing democratic values in their future classrooms were seen in

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their recognition on the importance of student engagement and experiential learning. Finally, the pre-service teachers' definitions of democratic education, a term none of them had heard before, and their evolving views on the purpose of public education provided some indication that these pre-service teachers were at least beginning to see themselves as democratic educators. The importance of reflection (with their peers, mentor teachers, instructors, and with themselves) underlay each of these areas, and all four of the pre-service teachers in this study spoke with me about the importance of reflection and how reflection allowed them to think more deeply about a wide-variety of issues, focusing beyond *what* occurred to the more critical *why* it occurred (Appendix D, Table D1, *The Importance of Reflection*). Had the pre-service teachers actually become "change agents?" My research does not support that conclusion if I use my original definition of that term ("as outspoken agitators who were actively questioning the status quo"). If, however, I think more broadly about what it means to be a change agent, this research does provide evidence that participation in a nested service-learning experience laid a solid foundation which prepared the participants to act as agents of change in society if they chose to do so, a foundation which provided the pre-service teachers with an opportunity to "reflect on their social identity, the identity of their students, and the content and pedagogy they adopt in their teaching practice" (Medina, Morrone, & Anderson, 2005, p. 207).

An Enhanced Understanding of Democratic Values in Education: Laying the Foundation

This study has led me to think deeply about the foundation that needs to be laid in order for students (and teachers) to truly embrace democratic educational values. If we want our students to think freely and independently, what kind of teaching and what type of classroom environment facilitate these attributes? If we want students to learn to listen to and think about diverse opinions with the goal of building common ground, how is this accomplished? What

actually prepares students to be able and willing to act as agents of change? I would argue that the foundation which needs to be laid in order to accomplish these goals begins with the cornerstone of relationship, and that service-learning is one pedagogy which, when undertaken thoughtfully and comprehensively, encourages this personal connection.

Traditionally, schools have been defined by hierarchical teacher-student relationships in which teachers talk at students, telling them what they need to know and then testing them to see if they've successfully mastered the content (Cole, 1996; Galton, Simon, & Croll, 1980; Goodlad, 1984; Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991). While many educators may desire to get to know their students and recognize the value in doing so, our current educational system with its focus on standardization and accountability doesn't leave much room for relationship building (Crick & Joldersma, 2007; Crockett, 2004; Ruff, 2011). This despite a significant research base that supports the idea that teacher-student relationships are related to both classroom climate and to student outcomes (Becker & Luthar, 2002; Merritt, Wanless, Rimm-Kaufman, Cameron, & Peugh, 2012; Pianta, Hamre, & Stuhlman, 2003; Wang, Brinkworth, & Eccles, 2012). Wentzel (2016) even connects these teacher-student relationships to democratic educational values stating:

> There is growing evidence that the nature and quality of children's relationships with their teachers play a critical and central role in motivating and engaging students to learn. Effective teachers are typically described as those who develop relationships with students that are emotionally close, safe, and trusting, that provide access to instrumental help, and that foster a more general ethos of community and caring in classrooms. These relationships qualities are believed to support the developments of students' emotional well-being and positive sense of self, motivational orientations for social and academic

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outcomes, and actual social and academic skills. They also provide a context for

communicating positive expectations for performance and teaching students what they

need to know to become knowledgeable and productive citizens (p. 211).

In other words, a classroom environment which has the potential to support the development of

students into participatory citizens begins with teacher-student conversations and relationship

building.

Did the participants in this study begin to understand the importance of dialogue and

relationship? There is much in the data generated by this project to indicate that they did. Each of

the pre-service teachers with whom I spoke recognized how the service-learning practicum had

provided them with the opportunity to talk with the students with whom they worked (Appendix

D, Table D2, *Talking with Students*), and how these conversations were critical to building the

relationships which would ultimately allow them to reach and teach their students (Appendix D,

Table D3, *Developing Relationships*). Claire clearly summarized this realization when she talked

about her "flip" in perception from academics coming first to relationships coming first:

> I think before (the service-learning experience), I was more focused on school providing
>
> academics and skills. I still think these things are important, but I think it's even more
>
> important for school to be a safe space, safe emotionally and socially, that teaches kids
>
> how to navigate the world. Before I was thinking that the academic stuff led to these
>
> other areas, but now I think that is flipped. You have to start with the safe space and
>
> relationships and connections. If you don't have these in place, the academic piece
>
> doesn't work. It's just hollow to a certain extent.

In this statement, Claire recognizes that in order to effectively engage students a teacher must

have an understanding of and compassion for *both* the affective and cognitive domains of

learning, knowledge that will enable teachers to create a safe learning environment in which students are heard and understood and in which they feel free to take intellectual risks.

Relationship building was also critical at the university level of the nested service-learning experience. Each of the study participants shared with me how they valued and learned from the trust-based relationships they built with their peers, mentor teachers, and instructor. As Olivia put it, "One of my favorite things was the people… I learned so much from everyone even when we didn't agree. Maybe mostly when we didn't agree, and it was cool that that was OK. I guess we had that dynamic because we trusted each other."

The opportunity to talk with and get to know the students also helped the pre-service teachers to question their previously held stereotypes about middle schoolers, inner city students, and students of color (Appendix D, Table D4, *Overcoming Stereotypes*), and one could certainly argue that seeing beyond stereotypes is a critical step in laying a foundation of true democratic educational values. Many prospective teachers have had little experience with students who have backgrounds that are different from their own, and "enter teacher education believing that cultural diversity is a problem to overcome and that students of color are deficient in some fundamental way" (Villegas, 2007, p. 374). There is, however, a growing body of literature that supports the notion that service-learning may help teacher candidates to overcome stereotypes of both race and culture (Baldwin, Buchanan, & Rudisill, 2007; Carrington & Saggers, 2008; Conner, 2010; Cooper, 2007; Root, Callahan, & Sepanski, 2002), and this study provides some support for these findings. This nested service-learning model created the space for the pre-service teachers to talk with and build relationships with their students, and getting to know the students allowed the pre-service teachers to move away from at least some of their previously held negative stereotypes.

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Utilizing Democratic Educational Values in the Classroom

Building meaningful relationships with students, facilitated by reflection and conversation, is the cornerstone of a democratic value-oriented classroom and leads to a teacher's ability to actively engage her students. If a teacher comes to know her students well, through attentive listening, thoughtful questioning and dialogue, then she will be able to facilitate meaningful learning opportunities for each student in a safe, nonthreatening classroom environment, learning opportunities which interest and motivate the students (Pianta, Hamre, & Allen, 2012). Dewey believed that children should be invested in their own learning, that they best learned via meaningful, experiential, and inquiry-based activities, and he advocated for teachers who encouraged their students to explore ideas and ask questions, classrooms which connected the use of relevant hands-on activities to the real world, and schools in which the memorization of facts was not mistaken for knowledge (Dewey, 1916, 1938). Connecting this type of student-centered learning directly to service-learning and civic-oriented growth, developmental theorist Anne Colby and her colleagues (2003) state that:

> Experiential learning, including service-learning, centrally acknowledges the context specificity of learning, providing educational settings that are less artificial than the classroom and much closer to the contexts in which students will later perform. When these settings are explicitly civic, as they are in service-learning . . . they provide stronger support for moral and civic development than most lectures or seminars can. (p. 139)

The four pre-service teachers who participated in this study each came to recognize the value of student engagement, both for the middle school students whom they were teaching and for themselves (Appendix D, Table D5, *Engagement and Experiential Learning*). When discussing the middle school students and their projects, the pre-service teachers used words

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such as "purpose," "involvement," "empowering," "real," "interactive," engaged," and "connection," all of which highlight their perceptions that the middle school students were actively involved in their work and found this work to be meaningful. Olivia succinctly connected the two when she said about the middle school students' service-learning project, "It's empowering because they're doing something real. They're doing something with the knowledge and not just learning it for a test. This is empowering."

The pre-service teachers had similar feelings about their own experiences. Each of them felt that the service-learning practicum, an experience which allowed them to actually get to know the students and to be teachers as opposed to simply observing in a classroom, was very beneficial to their growth as teachers. When talking about their experiences they used words and phrases such as "doing rather than hearing or watching," "valuable and effective," "real world involved," and "meaningful." Their participation in this untraditional practicum both exposed them to the potential power of service-learning as a pedagogy and began to provide them with the tools to utilize this pedagogy themselves in their future classrooms.

The pre-service teachers' views on public education also give some insight into their feelings about the importance of embracing democratic educational values in the classroom and their development of critical thinking in this area. Particularly interesting are their thoughts on what public education *is* as opposed to what public education *should be* (Appendix D, Table D6, *Thoughts on Public Education*). Each of the participants talks about how public education in the United States is about providing, and testing, academic skills which allow students to get a job, make money, and become economically productive members of society. In stark contrast, their thoughts about what public education should be revolved around providing students with a firm belief in their own worth and better preparing students to communicate, to be open to new ideas,

and to think critically. As Andy said,

> Public schools are focusing on the teaching of content and curriculum and on high stakes
>
> testing. I think high stakes testing is necessary if you want a system which is accountable,
>
> but I think this focus has become too heavy and we have gotten away from critical
>
> thinking … That is what we *should* be teaching our kids in school. But instead we're
>
> making them memorize information so they can pass a test. That's not the kind of teacher
>
> I wanna be. I think you can do both."

It is interesting to note that although the pre-service teachers felt strongly that our public
educational system needs to do a better of job of focusing on the affective domains of learning
and that service-learning is one way to successfully combine affective and cognitive objectives,
they also struggled with the reality of this goal. Given our current public education system's
myopic focus on standardization and accountability, all four of the participants voiced concerns
about being able to adopt in-class pedagogies such as service-learning which are not exclusively
test-focused. Gabby summarized these feelings when she commented:

> There's a disconnect between what we teach teachers to do, the things they *should* do,
>
> and what teachers are required to do. We need to be able to connect the two. We can't tell
>
> teachers to do this creative stuff all the time and then focus on specific testing
>
> requirements. I know that service-learning is great. But I watch teachers in the classroom
>
> and they are focused on testing. I guess 'cause they have to be.

Becoming Democratic Educators

Over the course of the semester in which they participated in the nested service-learning
project, all four of the pre-service teacher study participants seemed to move toward becoming
more democratically-oriented educators. When I talked with them about their development as

teachers and what had facilitated their growth in this area, they commented on the critical importance of interacting with students and building relationships with them. As Claire said, "In a classroom with democratic values it would be all about connections and getting to know your students and caring about them so that you can do a better job of teaching them." They also spoke about both seeing and experiencing the power of engaged, experiential learning, and student voice. About this Andy said, "(Democratic education) would be an education where all students have a voice and sort of a deciding factor in what they're learning. And also to think critically like we've talked about and to be open to new ideas and opinions." Although none of the pre-service teachers in this study had ever heard the term "democratic education" before, by our last meetings each of them was able to provide a definition which made sense to them and which spoke to the principles they hoped to uphold in their future classrooms (Appendix D, Table D7, *Defining Democratic Education*).

Final Thoughts

Returning to the conceptual model of service-learning which was discussed in Chapter 2 (p. 34), the results of this study support Cone and Harris' practical framework while highlighting the critical importance of recognizing and getting to know individual students (Figure 5.1). Additionally, the findings of this project expand upon the Cone and Harris model by showing that for the four pre-service teachers who participated in this study, a nested service-learning experience helped them to grow in their understanding of democratic educational values. While closely related to the Cone and Harris model, I created Figure 5.2 to provide a slightly different way of conceptualizing a model of service-learning. This pyramid metaphor better takes into account the experiences of my participants and the overall focus of this project on democratic

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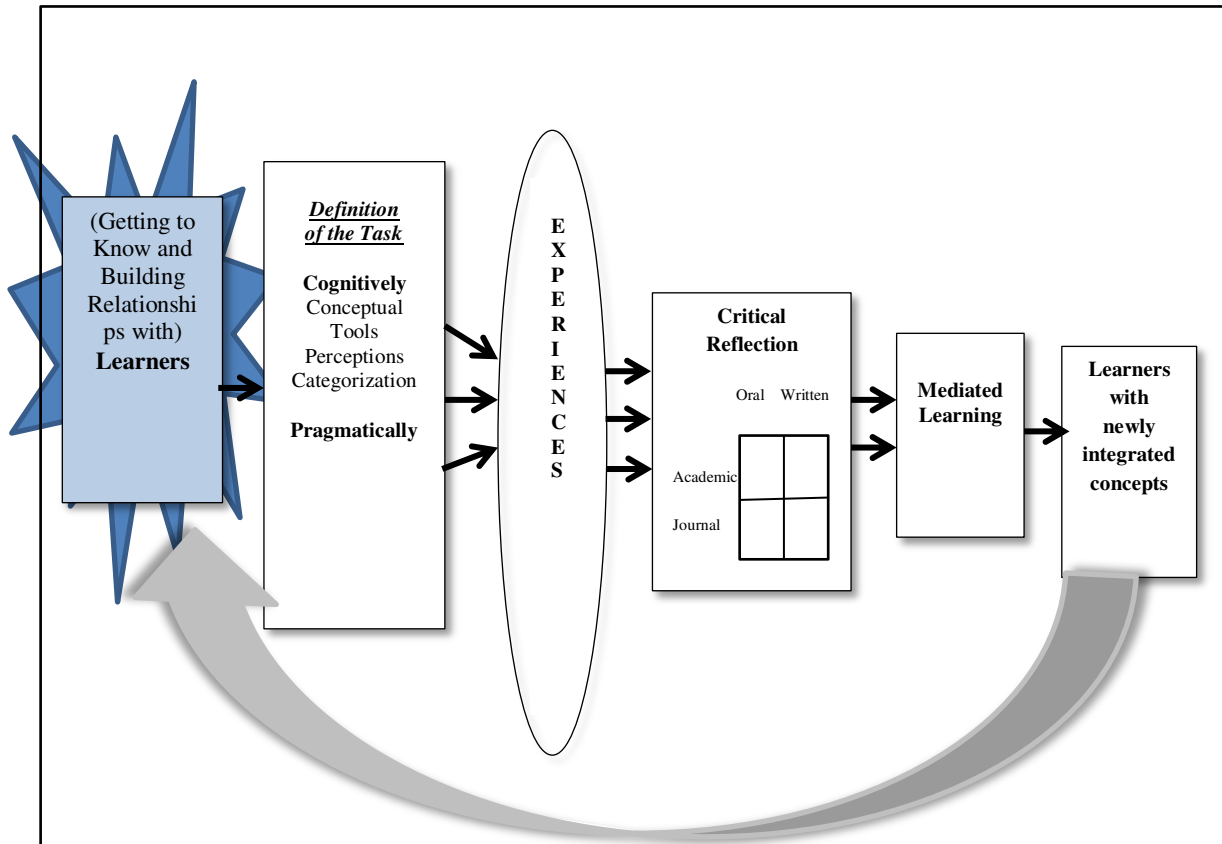
Figure 5.1. A Lens Model for Service-Learning Educators

Figure 5.1 Adapted from "Service-Learning Practice: Developing a Theoretical Framework" by Dick Cone and Susan Harris, 1996, Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, 3, p. 45. Copyright 1996 by the Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning.

education, and it emphasizes that relationships are foundational and necessary to the development of democratic educational values in a service-learning experience. By providing the space for the pre-service teachers to actually cultivate meaningful relationships with their students, the service-learning paradigm which was employed at both the university (practicum) and middle school teaching levels allowed for substantive growth in the pre-service teachers' understanding that relationships lay the foundation for engagement and experiential learning

which, in turn, lead to reflection, critical thinking and meaningful learning. While the results of this project do not show that any of the participants in this study became "change agents" as a result of their service-learning practicum, it does seem likely that their experiences provided them with a solid foundation that enables them capable of becoming change agents if they choose to do so. The pyramid model does not depict the dynamic and active nature of service-learning as well as the Cone and Harris' (adapted) example does, but it does better emphasize the critical component of relationship. Perhaps, in the end, it is thinking about how these two figures relate to each other, both in agreement and in tension, that best illuminates the findings of this study.

Figure 5.2. **Promoting Democratic Educational Values in a Classroom Setting**
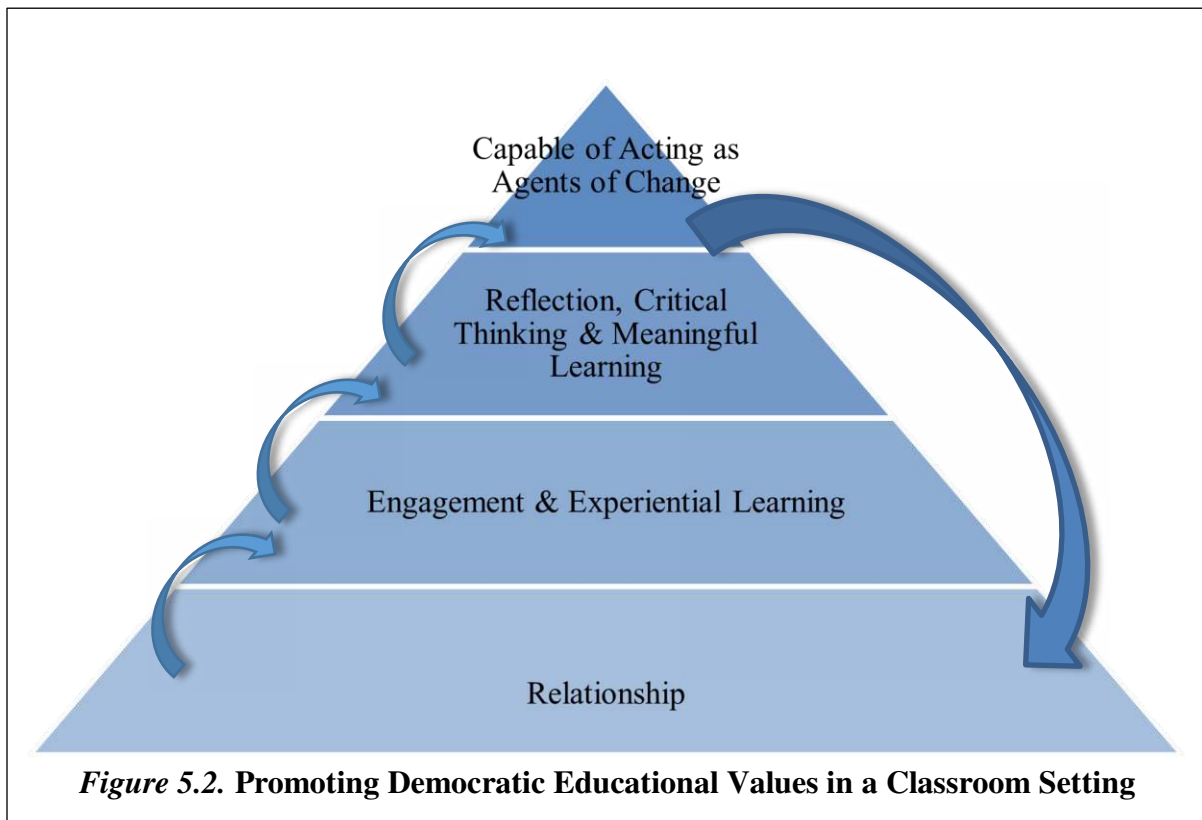
Limitations

The boundaries of this study were significant (including my position as an "insider" in the service-learning project and the fact that the practicum took place over the course of one semester), and the results were never intended to be generalized to other situations. It is also important to acknowledge that the "nested" service-learning model employed in this study is a messy one, and it is impossible to untangle the university service-learning components from the middle school service-learning components in order to determine which had the greatest impact on the participants. The pre-service teachers seemed to benefit from both levels of service-learning (for example, the practicum service-learning model gave them the latitude to actually do lesson planning and teaching while the service-learning they were implementing at the middle school allowed them to get to know and to build relationships with the middle school students), and it was most likely the synergy of both levels of service-learning which provided the greatest effect. It is also likely that different components of each level of service-learning had varying impacts on individual participants. Some of the pre-service teachers may have benefited the most from the high quality of the seminar instructor and the deep reflection that she encouraged, while others may have gotten the most from talking with the middle school students. Again, it is likely that it was synergy of a variety of components that had the greatest impact (i.e. reflecting with the instructor about the conversations with the middle school student and why these conversations were important).

It is not my intent to claim that service-learning is the only teaching and learning pedagogy which could have provided these pre-service teachers with an increased understanding of democratic values; undoubtedly there are many others which could have done so. I also recognize that my four participants chose to take part in this study and that their self-selection

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necessarily impacted my findings, as most likely did their relative maturity (three of the participants were 26 at the time of the study). It is also the case that this was the first practicum placement for each of these participants, and I expect that something of a "honeymoon" effect colored their feelings about teaching in general. Finally, the middle school service-learning took place after school with relatively small groups of middle school students who came to the after school service-learning clubs because they wanted to. The results of this study might have been quite different if the pre-service teachers had been doing the service-learning projects with a full classroom of students during regular school hours.

Implications for Practice

The factory-model, one size fits all education system no longer works (if it ever did), and teaching and assessing only basic academic skills do not provide a well-rounded, well-educated population capable of meeting the demands of a complex world. What is the ultimate goal of our public education system? To answer this question, we need to think deeply about what the purpose of public education should be, perhaps adopting an updated definition of education which embraces the multiple facets of what it means to be a truly educated citizen. Students of all ages learn at different paces, have different aptitudes, and enter the classroom with different experiences, cultures, and background knowledge. It is the job of our educational system to meet each student where they are and to help them to maximize their potential as both students and as citizens. In order to attain this goal, teachers must be educated to both listen to and respect the varied voices of their students, and they must be provided with teaching and learning pedagogies which allow for differentiation and student agency, which call for critical thinking and collaboration and dialogue.

While there is certainly no educational panacea, the results of this study show that a nested service-learning model implemented with pre-service teachers might provide one step in addressing the problems which plague our schools. Although only four in number, through their participation in the nested service-learning practicum each of the participants came to see the value in relationships, in reflection, in engaged and experiential learning, and in critical thinking. Each of them seemed to come to a better understanding of democratic educational values, to want to embrace democratic educational values in their future classrooms, and to have at least begun to view themselves as democratic educators.

I am very aware that participation in this nested service-learning model has not necessarily led to pre-service teachers who will act as agents of change in our society. However, I do believe that by participating in an experience which has helped them to better understand the importance and power of democratic educational values, particularly the importance of building relationships and getting to know their students, this service-learning practicum has provided these soon-to-be teachers with a foundation of understanding which will enable them to become agents of change if they so choose. In their 2007 study, Cook-Sather and Youens seem to support this assessment stating:

> We therefore suggest that if the responsibility of teacher education programs that teach for social justice is to "work systematically and consciously to help prospective teachers develop empathy and vision that will help them truly 'see' their students, the skills to address their learning needs, and the commitment to keep working for students when obstacles are encountered" (Darling-Hammond, 2002, p. 4), a focus on social commitments, institutional structures, course content, and pedagogical processes alone is not enough. (p. 2)

Some of the pre-service teacher in this study may go on to use the insights they gained through this experience to transform their classrooms (and their school? Their district? The teaching profession?), while others will not. And this is, I think, as it should be. Whether we are teaching in a middle school or at a university, I believe our goal should be to provide our students with the foundation, resources, and knowledge which enable them to think critically and make their own decisions about where, when, or even if they should act as agents of change. Butin has said about service-learning that if it is to survive as a teaching and learning strategy, it must be "antifoundational" and become "balanced" by recognizing that "the transformational potential of service-learning" is found in its capacity for "justice in doubt" which "frees us from the false notion of controllable teaching of controlled subject matter, from knowledge as static, and from truth as fixed" (2010, p. 46). I couldn't agree more. The nested service-learning model in this study laid a foundation of democratic educational values and provided the pre-service teachers with some tools to bring these values into their teaching. Whether-or-not they ultimately act as agents of change by sharing these values and beginning the work of transforming our educational system is up to them, as it should be.

Future Research

As was noted previously in the literature review, very little research exists which focuses on the intersection of service-learning, democratic education, and teacher education, and further study is needed to better understand the convergence of these areas. Given the small participant base of this project, replication of this research would be meaningful, as would a larger, more quantitative study which examines the central question of the development of democratic educational values of pre-service teachers through a service-learning practicum. Another possibility would be a longitudinal study of pre-service teachers who participate in a service-

learning practicum. If pre-service teachers, such as those in this study, experience development in their thoughts about democratic educational values during their practicum, does this development carry forward into the future? Do these pre-service teachers continue to embrace democratic values in their classrooms? Do they use service-learning with their students? Do they become agents of change?

Another area of future study which would examine the intersection of service-learning, democratic education, and teacher education and for which there is a lack of extant research would be a comparison of the development of democratic educational values between pre-service teachers who participate in a service-learning practicum with those who participate in a more traditional, observation-based practicum. While there is a small body of literature which touches on different types of practicum experiences both generally and in specific areas such a physical education and music education (Hodge, Davis, Woodard, & Sherrill, 2002; Jones, Brooks, & Mak, 2008; Lewis, Hatcher, & Pate, 2005; Russell, 2005; Schmidt, 2010), I was unable to find any work which examined the development of democratic educational values between pre-service teachers in a service-learning practicum as compared to pre-service teachers participating in an observation-based practicum.

Finally, future research might also look at mentor teachers, and how working with the pre-service teachers participating in service-learning effects their perceptions of democratic educational values. Although there are studies which look at the relationship between pre-service teachers and their cooperating teachers (Butler & Cuenca, 2012; Russell & Russell, 2011; Siebert, Clark, Kilbridge, & Peterson, 2006), these studies do not focus on an examination of democratic educational values. Similarly, studying middle school students who are participating in a service-learning project and their development of democratic educational values would be

interesting and is an area where little, if any, such targeted research exists. Finally, and thinking more broadly, diving into the thorny and controversial topic of the perceived purposes of public education from a variety of viewpoints (students versus parents versus teachers versus politicians etc.) would be fascinating, as would an exploration of the these definitions of public education and how they relate to envisioned as compared to actual practice.

On the Use of Portraiture

My choice of portraiture as a methodology for my study was a bit of a leap in the dark. Not only did I have no experience with portraiture, but neither did any of the professors in the school of education where I worked toward my doctorate, although the willingness of my committee to humor me in this endeavor has been gratifying. I do admit to almost changing directions several times, but ultimately I stuck with portraiture both because it seemed very well-suited to an interpretive case study and because it allowed me to infuse my work with the democratic values which are so important to me, values which include dialogue, relationship building, active student-centered learning, and a focus on all that is healthy and resilient.

As I stated at the outset, my goal in using portraiture as my methodology was to move beyond positioning the pre-service teachers as interview subjects who could provide answers to my questions, and in this I believe I was successful. I attempted to make our conversations true dialogues which were nurtured in an atmosphere of acceptance and trust, and I both encouraged and allowed the pre-service teachers to share their subjective experiences with me. Because each of the participants was unique, so too were our relationships, but I believe this only added to the depth and authenticity of the portraits which I created. Portraiture allowed me to understand the development of democratic educational values from the unique perspectives of the pre-service teachers as they participated in a service-learning experience; it forced me to move beyond

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abstract concepts and to embrace the idiosyncratic and thought-provoking understandings which were adopted by each individual participant. It is important to note that I did share drafts of the portraits with each of the participants, asking for their thoughts and insights. All four of them found the portraits to be accurate, although their comments ranged from "I'd never seen myself in quite that way; I learned a lot!" to "I think you make me sound better than I really am" to "Wow, I've grown a lot since then." Different relationships and personal idiosyncrasies aside, ultimately my hope is that I have provided individual portraits which provide insight into the pre-service teacher participants' experiences with service-learning, specifically as these experiences influenced their growth as democratic educators. I also hope that, in the tradition of portraiture, I have bridged the gap between the "real world" and the academy and between social science and fiction, bringing to the reader a compelling, accessible, and educative look into a world with which they were not previously familiar.

Conclusion

For the past week I have watched in awe as a pair of red-tailed hawks have built a nest high in the crown of a tall, spindly pine tree which grows at the edge of the woods beside my driveway. The hawks have worked as a team, both of them flying back and forth carrying the large sticks, small twigs, and clumps of vegetation that they have used to construct a cradle for their offspring. Watching the hawks I have been amazed by their teamwork and surprised at their perseverance, even in the face of what seem to me to be great odds. Just the other day the region was pounded by a spring storm, the world coated in a layer of ice and battered by ferocious, howling winds. Tree branches gave way in the storm, cracking and crashing to the ground in alarming numbers as they were overcome by the combination of heavy ice and high winds. Worried about "my" hawks, I went to an upstairs window to check on them. I didn't see either of the hawks, but I could see the tree which held their nest as it wildly careened back and forth, the

needles of the tree shimmering in a thick coating of ice. It didn't seem possible to me that the seemingly fragile nest would survive such a vicious storm, but when I went out the next day to have a look, there it was high in the crown of the tree, slightly worse for wear perhaps, but valiantly holding on. As I stood in the driveway and smiled up at the nest, one of the hawks emerged and launched itself into the air. It gave a thrilling, raspy scream and then soared gracefully high into the sky and out of sight.

As I came to the very end of this work late last night, I realized that my ongoing observations of the hawks as they have persistently and conscientiously labored at building a nest for their young have provided me with both the final point I want to make in this saga of mine and a fitting metaphor for sharing it. I began this project because of my deep concern that democratic educational values have been pushed aside by the pressures of the standardization and accountability movement, hurting not only our students and teachers but also undermining the democratic values of our society as a whole. Over the course of this study as I have gotten to know the pre-service teachers, observed in classrooms, laughed with middle school students, and talked with mentor teachers, I have been reminded of just how precious and unique our public education system is. I have also been reminded of just how fragile that system seems to be, and my concerns about the pressures of accountability and standardization have been reinforced as I watched mentor teachers and pre-service teachers struggle with how to incorporate pedagogies which move beyond a myopic focus on test taking. Like the hawks' nest, our public education system was constructed collaboratively and carefully over time to provide a safe space in which to nurture and educate *all* of our young. Also like the hawks' nest, I fear that our public education system may be somewhat precariously balanced in today's climate and may not survive if it continues to be subjected to the strong political winds which currently hammer away

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at it. If our public education system is to be saved, we need to think deeply about just what the goal of public education is, what it should be, and, like the hawks, we need to work together to make it strong and resilient and able to withstand the increasing threats to its survival.

In the spirit of dialogue and relationship which have guided this work, let me close with the words from two of the participants in my study. Claire posed a vital question when she asked, "Do we as a society want to define ourselves by how much money we make and our test scores or do we want to define ourselves by our ability to build relationships and to understand different points of view?" And Andy unknowingly provided an answer to this question when he said about his students, "If you listen, they'll teach you a lot." If nothing else comes from this study, I hope that readers leave thinking about what the purpose of public education should be and how (or if) democratic educational values should be integrated into the system. I hope that they look for the answers through dialogue, by talking with and listening to students and teachers at all levels, as those who are deeply immersed in our public education system know both what the system *is* and what it *should*, and could, be. If you take the time and really listen to what they have to say, they will teach you a lot.

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Service-Learning Pre-Service Teacher Participant
First Interview Protocol

Interview date: _____   Location: _____

Participant Name: _____   Pseudonym: _____

Demographics

1. **Gender**
   - ☐ Male
   - ☐ Female

2. **Age _____**

3. **Grade level you wish to teach**
   - ☐ Middle
   - ☐ High School

4. **Subject you plan to teach:**
   - ☐ Math
   - ☐ Science
   - ☐ Language Arts
   - ☐ Social Studies
   - ☐ Other: _____

5. **Race/Ethnicity**
   - ☐ African American
   - ☐ Asian American
   - ☐ Caucasian/White
   - ☐ Hispanic/Latino
   - ☐ Other: _____

6. **Year of college and degree program in which currently enrolled:**

   _____

Opening Script:

Thank you for agreeing to talk with me and for taking the time to share your experiences, thoughts, and perceptions about the service-learning partnership of which you are an integral part. Please know that your honesty is important to the ultimate success of our service-learning project, and sharing with me your thoughts and ideas will help us to move in a positive direction and will not result in you being penalized in any way. Your comments will remain confidential and a pseudonym will be used in my research. This initial interview should last from 45 minutes to 1 hour, and we will meet twice more over the course of the semester. Is it OK with you if I record our discussion?

Warm-up

Before we begin, I wonder if you would tell me a little bit about yourself.

Introduction

1. Why did you decide to become a teacher?
    a. Why do you want to teach (*insert subject area*)?

2. As you prepare to become a teacher, what are you most excited about? What do you see as your strengths?

3. What do you think will prove to be most challenging as you prepare to become a teacher?
    a. What, if anything, are you are worried about? Can you give me some examples?

4. What do you see as the purpose of public education?
    Listen and probe for thoughts about both democratic educational goals.

5. In general, how do you think our society is doing at meeting the goals of public education?
    Listen and probe for thoughts about which goals are being met and how they are being met. Also listen and probe for which goals are not being met and why this might be so.

Middle School Students

6. As you prepare to teach at a middle school, what are your feelings about and expectations of middle school students?
    Listen and probe for thoughts on student abilities, attitudes, behaviors, etc. Has the pre-service teacher previously worked with middle school students? In what capacity?

Service-learning: General

7. Why did you volunteer to be a part of the service-learning partnership?
    Listen and probe for expectations and preconceived ideas about SL.

8. Did you have any previous experience with service-learning? (If so) Can you tell me about it?

9. How would you define service-learning?
    Listen and probe for understanding of the fundamental elements and goals of SL (i.e. experiential learning, collaboration, reflection, meeting a community need, ties to curriculum, etc.)

10. What do you see as the benefits of service-learning? Why are these things important?

Listen and probe for ideas about making real-world connections, active vs. passive involvement of students, community engagement, reflective practice, student agency and voice, etc. Flush out benefits for teachers vs. benefits for students.

11. What challenges might arise when implementing service-learning projects?
Listen and probe for ideas about the complexity of teaching well, the difficulty of project implementation, the challenges of working with a diverse group of students, the potential difficulties of teaching students to work together, lack of understanding/support from administration, lack of time due to accountability issues, etc. Look for challenges from teachers' perspective as well as from students' perspective.

12. How do you think service-learning differs from more traditional approaches to instruction?

13. Do you have any other thoughts or ideas that you would like to share that we haven't yet discussed?

Closing

Thank you so much for your time! I would like to interview you again about half way through the semester. Do you want to set-up a day and a time now or would you rather I email you as we get closer?

Appendix B

Second Interview Protocol

Interview date: _____   Location: _____

Participant Name: _____   Pseudonym: _____

Opening Script:

Thank you for meeting with me for our second interview. I'm looking forward to hearing how your service-learning experience is going! Like the first interview, this interview will take 45 minutes to an hour, your comments will remain confidential, and I will record our conversation if that's OK with you. Let's get started…

Warm-up
Before I begin asking questions, is there anything you'd like to talk about in regards to your service-learning experience?

Teaching

1. Now that you've been teaching for (*insert number*) weeks, how are you feeling about your decision to become a teacher?

2. In our previous interview, you were excited about (*fill in the blank*). Do you still feel that way?
   Listen and probe for why or why not…

3. You also mentioned previously that you were worried about (*fill in the blank*). Has that changed at all?
   Listen and probe for why or why not…

4. How are you finding teaching middle school?
   Listen and probe for changes in expectations in terms of middle school students' abilities, attitudes, behaviors, etc.

5. What are you enjoying most about your current practicum placement? What are you finding to be the most challenging in regards to your current practicum placement?

Service-Learning

6. Now that you've been involved with the service-learning partnership for (*insert number*) weeks, what are your thoughts about service-learning?
   Listen and probe for changes in perceptions, thoughts/feelings on authority, etc.

7. In our previous conversation, you said that you thought that (*insert previous responses*) were benefits to service-learning. Do you still agree with this? Is there anything you would add or change?

8. When talking about the challenges of implementing service-learning in our last interview, you identified (*insert challenges*) as potential difficulties. Do you still feel this way? Is there anything you would add or change?

9. How are you feeling about service-learning as a pedagogy as compared to other more traditional approaches to teaching?
   Listen and probe for thoughts on teacher-student and student-teacher interactions (Freire). If they experienced this, ask them "when" and "why" and how it made them feel. Listen and probe for thoughts on when service-learning is and isn't effective (Only after school? Not for test review? etc.)

10. How are you feeling about using service-learning to work with the middle school students?
   Listen and probe for reactions to student reflections, student autonomy, etc.

11. Do you have any other thoughts or ideas that you would like to share that we haven't yet discussed?

Closing

Thank you so much for your time! I would like to interview you one final time at the end of the semester. Do you want to set-up a day and a time now or would you rather I email you as we get closer

Appendix C

Third Interview Protocol

Interview date: _____   Location: _____

Participant Name: _____   Pseudonym: _____

Opening Script:

Thank you for meeting with me for our third and final interview. I'm looking forward to hearing your thoughts and feelings about service-learning now that your practicum has been completed! Like the first two interviews, this interview should take 45 minutes to an hour, your comments will remain confidential, and I will record our conversation if that's OK with you. Let's get started…

Warm-up

Before I begin asking questions, is there anything in particular you'd like to discuss in regards to your service-learning experience?

General & Service-Learning

1. In our first conversation, I asked you about the purpose of public education. I'd like hear your thoughts on that again. What do you see as the purpose of public education?
   Listen and probe for thoughts about both democratic educational goals.

2. In general, how do you think our society is doing at meeting the goals of public education?
   Listen and probe for thoughts about which goals are being met and how they are being met. Also listen and probe for which goals are not being met and why this might be so.

3. Have your perceptions of middle school students changed as a result of working in the service-learning project? If so, how and why?
   Listen and probe for thoughts on student diversity, student capabilities, student motivation, student agency…What brought about these changes in perception?

4. Have your perception of middle school teachers and/or administrators changed as a result of your experiences? If so, how and why?

5. Now that you have participated in a service-learning project for a semester, how would you define service-learning?

Listen and probe for understanding of the fundamental elements and goals of SL (i.e. experiential learning, collaboration, reflection, meeting a community need, ties to curriculum, etc.)

6. How did you find working with your pre-service teacher partner? What were the benefits and the challenges of this arrangement?

Transformation

1. Do you think having participated in the service-learning project has impacted your perceptions about education? If so, how?
   Listen and probe for thoughts about democratic educational values…

2. Have your perceptions of teaching changed? If so, how?
   Listen and probe for ideas about democratic education, making real-world connections, importance of community engagement, importance of reflective practice, active vs. passive involvement, student agency, working collaboratively with another teacher, etc.

3. Have your perceptions about yourself as a teacher changed due to your participation in the service-learning project? If so, how?
   Listen and probe for thoughts/growth pertaining to democratic educational values…

Closing

4. Has participation in the service-learning partnership impacted how you will teach once you are in your own classroom? If so, how and why? If not, why not?

5. Have you ever heard the term "democratic education?"
   a. (If yes) Can you tell me what it means to you?
   b. (If no) Can you tell me what you think it means?
      Listen and probe for thoughts and feelings about service-learning promoting, or not promoting, democratic educational values.

6. Do you have any other thoughts, ideas, or recommendations that you would like to share that we haven't yet discussed?

Closing Script:

Thank you so much for your time today! I truly appreciate your thoughtfulness and honesty. I will be sharing with you the narrative(s) I write based on your interview responses, and I look forward to hearing your thoughts on them. (Remember to give gift card as a thank you.)

Appendix D

Table D1

The Importance of Reflection

Pre-Service Teacher	Quotes
Olivia	My partner added another layer, another opportunity to reflect.
	It's good to write about it, but I like to talk. Thinking out loud and getting feedback has helped me so much! (Referring to discussion in the service-learning seminar and with me)
Andy	It was great to have a team. It was nice to have Matt to bounce ideas off of and to collaborate with. Working together helped us to be better teachers I think.
	I think that service-learning encourages critical reflection … In service-learning you have to consider what your students think and feel and the purpose of what you are teaching. And you have to provide space for all of their voices, right? This requires, if you ask me, some serious critical reflection!
Gabby	Service-learning has made me think about how important it is to reflect in different ways like writing. Because if I don't reflect I don't think I would make the connections, ya know? When I reflect I think back on *why* something happened and not just *that* it happened
	(About having a teaching partner)You experienced the same thing at the same time but maybe you each had different interpretations. It was a great experience to be able to work and talk with someone like that. Having a partner made it easier on both of us because we could bounce ideas off each other. It made everything a little more manageable and not so overwhelming.
Claire	I did so much reflection and this was so important! We did blogs and written reflections and we talked in class. I talked to Gabby a lot and this was really cool cause sometimes we saw things in such a different way. And I did so much reflection with you! I always leave with so many things to think about. It's so great to take the time, to make the time, to process what's going on. I have to keep doing that when I'm a teacher. It's not just about thinking about what you did or how something went, but you have to think about how you reacted to stuff. Like be aware of your own stereotypes and biases.

Table D2

Talking with Students

Pre-Service Teacher	Quotes
Olivia	Doing service-learning with the kids I had the ability and opportunity to work with them and talk to them personally like on a one-on-one basis. I'm learning that you're not necessarily going to have these really deep sit down discussions with each kid, but you can still connect with them and gain their respect. You have to get in there and get to know the students and talk to them and figure out what they are and aren't responding to.
Andy	Throughout the whole process, the most rewarding part has been talking with the students and getting to know them.
Gabby	I think getting to talk with the students taught me about their lives and about what was important to them … They were amazing and thinking about things that I didn't think about until I was in college. If I hadn't had the chance to talk with them I wouldn't have learned this.
Claire	I always imagined myself talking to my kids about their neighborhoods and relating their lives to what we were learning. It was always something that I imagined myself doing, but I wasn't sure how. I'm excited that service-learning can give me the tools to do this. If I can listen, if we all listen to each other, and share and talk and learn to really think, that's what's real. You want to make a safe space where kids can feel safe to share and you want to expose them to ideas maybe they haven't been exposed to before in a different way, and give them a forum to talk about that. I want my students to have a voice, to know that I hear them. I want to provide a safe space for them to speak. Kids need to be heard!

Table D3

Developing Relationships

Pre-Service Teacher	Quotes
Olivia	**Middle School Students:** Service-learning gives you the space to make the connections and have practice with being around these kids, this age group, that you haven't been around like this before. I am getting to know them as individual people and that will help me to teach them better I think. During my observations I don't get to know any of those kids. It's like I'm watching them, like it's a very one-sided thing. They notice me but we don't interact. I feel like a guest and not like a part of it. (Whether or not they have "deep" discussions) you can still value them and be someone that they're comfortable with and happy to be around. And that's what comes with service-learning. It's not something I ever felt with my teachers until college. That relationship. **Herself:** One of my favorite things was the people. I loved getting to know and to talk with you and with A (the course instructor) and with everyone in our class. Also Ms. W. (her mentor teacher). I learned so much from everyone even when we didn't agree. Maybe mostly when we didn't agree, and it was cool that that was OK. I guess we had that dynamic because we trusted each other
Andy	**Middle School Students:** If I were standing in front of them lecturing I wouldn't know anything about these kids. I want to actually know them. I want them to know that I am interested in them. I always thought I wanted to get to know my students, but I think that's probably gotten stronger, my desire to know the kids, to teach them and learn with them. If you listen, they'll teach you a lot. Now I guess I understand better how important that is. **Himself:** I think our class (the service-learning seminar) allows us a lot of room to get to know each other and to share ideas. People bring up all different thoughts and ideas and it's all OK.
Gabby	**Middle School Students:** We had the opportunity to interact with the students a lot, so we built real relationships. **Herself:** I learned a lot from having a partner and getting to know her and sharing stuff, especially after we were with the kids. I think talking with you has been really good too and with A (the course instructor). I feel like I can ask or tell you anything and you don't judge me.
Claire	**Middle School Students:** The academic stuff, while necessary and important, doesn't go anywhere without the relationship piece, the safe space, the giving kids a voice. That group dynamic is so important and now I've seen it actually work.

Herself: I've learned a lot for our class and getting to know the other pre-service teachers. Sometimes I don't like what I learn about them, but I think it's important to hear their views and learn how to deal with them. When you're a teacher, you don't just have relationships with people you like. Other teachers or students, ya know?

(In the middle school) I've been seeing relationships between adults, seeing how they interact with each other and with me, I think I learn from that too ... I've seen a lot more of like the inner, like the working parts of a school, and how important that is. Like relationships between teachers and faculty, you know, and the people that work in the office, just like all those small little things throughout the day that make it work, because there's so many things going on at once that I wasn't, I knew that those things existed but I never really paid them any mind, you know? And I think it's so important for teachers to have, not necessarily be friends, but just have someone that they can talk to, run ideas by.

Table D4

Overcoming Stereotypes

Pre-Service Teacher	Quotes
Olivia	This whole experience has changed the way I see middle schoolers. My perception has changed for the better … there's more to them than the stereotype that I was identifying them by.
Andy	(The middle schoolers) are probably more mature than I expected them to be. I have to say, they surprised me in a good way!
Gabby	I had these unconscious biases that they were going to be extremely childish, but after working with them for a while I was surprised at their maturity. They talked about topics like police brutality and racism and feminism, things that are going on that I didn't even learn about until I got to college. After this (teaching at the middle school), I would not mind teaching here at all or in another school like it. My Nana has weird perceptions, and she worried that they have a lot of black students. And I was like, yes, but why does that matter? What's important is that if I do teach there, I would try to work against the stigmas that my Nana kind of has … I don't think I have a preference, I wouldn't mind … I wouldn't be against teaching anywhere really. And this is sort of new for me.
Claire	So I was expecting a lot more disruption and disciplinary stuff. That's just what people say happens in urban schools … But it wasn't like that. They were the sweetest, most well-behaved kids.

Table D5

Engagement & Experiential Learning

Pre-Service Teacher	Quotes
Olivia	**About middle school students:** The kids have purpose and are involved. The kids feel, well, not just feel, but actually *are* contributing and applying what they're learning to things they're doing to benefit their community.
	I learned that students don't have to be involved in some massive project to get the most out of it. These kids don't need to be 'saving the world' in order to feel like they are a part of something that matters. They only need to feel like what they have to offer is important, and that the people they work with value their skills and thoughts.
	It's empowering because they're doing something real. They're doing something with the knowledge and not just learning it for a test. This is empowering.
	About herself: I got so much out of this practicum from doing rather than just hearing and reading about it. It has driven home how valuable and effective service-learning is. Yes, I was skeptical at the beginning. But, in the end, it's so much more valuable and I feel lucky to have done it.
Andy	**About middle school students:** It's interactive, and the kids were involved and engaged. When you make those connections it all sticks in your brain better. You remember things that matter to you. If students don't care they're not going to want to do it and they're not going to learn anything.
	I think service-learning really illustrated for me that if the kids are interested you're not going to have to fight to get them to learn … For true learning to occur the students have to care and to feel like they are heard.
	I'm not sure I would have known the word engagement before this semester. Not much at least. But engagement, student interest, meaningful learning, reflective learning, authentic learning…whatever you want to call it…is so important!
	About himself: I think that service-learning is much better (than observation). I'm getting more out of it than I am my high school practicum. I'm still getting plenty out of the high school practicum, but this is more real world involved and doing rather than watching … Even with the hurricane of road blocks and schedule changes and frustrations, even with all of that, this class was still more meaningful than all of my other ones.
	I was more engaged and that was really cool.
Gabby	**About middle school students:** I think it's (student engagement) important because it does make the students want to come (to class). They don't need to want to come to class every day and they don't have to love English, but I do want to make it so at least they feel like 'Well, if I came here, at least I did something meaningful and fun; I didn't just sit.' I always knew I wanted to do the cool

engaging stuff and I think what service-learning has done is it's added the tools for me to actually be able to do that.

The students are learning something that relates to real life. It's not just learning about some distant person in the past or from a different part of the world, and this makes it so much easier for them to remember. They are going to learn better if you relate what you are teaching to their lives because when they see this (connection) then they care more and learn better. This is important whether you use service-learning or not

About herself: I honestly don't think that observing would have been as great because this way we got a better connection with the students and we got a better feel for what it's like to be a teacher to these students. We were actually planning and leading the meetings, so the students saw us teachers and we felt like teachers.

Claire	**About middle school students:** I love how it (service-learning) teaches the kids that the school and the community are connected and a part of each other. They are an ecosystem basically … like a loop instead of an arrow. It's good for me to remember that it doesn't have to be a big project. Or even if it is, it's important to value all of the pieces … I need to remember to see the trees and not just the forest. Sometimes the little things are the big things. **About herself:** I always imagined myself talking to my kids about their neighborhoods and relating their lives to what we were learning. It was always something that I imagined myself doing, but I wasn't sure how. I'm excited that service-learning can give me the tools to do this. I think that what I'm taking home from this experience is that I've *done* it (service-learning), I've seen it in action … I knew the kind of teacher I wanted to be but I didn't know how. Now I'm kind of putting all of that together.

Table D6

Thoughts on Public Education

Pre-Service Teacher	Quotes
Olivia	**What it is:** Well, I think school and education are a way to get a job and make money. It's like this conveyor belt, and to have an educated society is to have one that's productive, and that's the ultimate goal. To make money. To move the country. **What it should be:** I think (the goal of public education should be) to prepare students for the real world and it's not necessarily about your content or getting them to know all the specifics. It's about showing kids how to be lifelong learners. It's about making connections with them, making them feel valuable, and giving them the confidence to know they can pursue what they want to pursue. Individual subjects and content areas…I feel like they're just the vehicle for this.
Andy	**What it is:** Public schools are focusing on the teaching of content and curriculum and on high stakes testing. I think high stakes testing is necessary if you want a system which is accountable, but I think this focus has become too heavy and we have gotten away from critical thinking. **What it should be:** I think the purpose of public education should be to educate children to think critically; to better prepare them for the world. To teach them to have an open thought process before spouting off an opinion.
Gabby	**What it is:** Now, elementary school prepares you for middle school, and middle school prepares you for high school, and high school for college, and then college tries to teach you how to prepare to live in the real world … We've gotten to the point where we're just testing everything and that is all that matters … Traditional school is mostly lectures and tests and it would be good to counterbalance this. It's good to be able to pass a test, but I don't think that's all school should be. **What it should be:** I think it is to prepare people to be able to be members of society. To teach basic skills, like math, but also life skills like how to communicate well with others and how to interpret things and how to think, because everything can't be taken at face value.
Claire	**What it is:** Public education gives you the skills to go out into the world and make money. To be successful. You find value in yourself with the stuff that you have. **What it should be:** I think before, I was more focused on school providing academics and skills. I still think these things are important, but I think it's even more important for school to be a safe space, safe emotionally and socially, that teaches kids how to navigate the world. Before I was thinking that the academic stuff led to these other areas, but now I think that is flipped. You have to start with the safe space and relationships and connections. If you don't have these in place, the academic piece doesn't work. It's just hollow to a certain extent.

Table D7

Defining Democratic Education

Pre-Service Teacher	Quotes
Olivia	I guess democratic education would be a classroom where everyone has a voice in whatever way they need to have it. It's a classroom where the teacher facilitates that … Teachers should look at their job not as forcing things into children's minds, but as giving them an environment where they feel like they want to learn, like they want to produce things.
Andy	(Democratic education) would be an education where all students have a voice and sort of a deciding factor in what they're learning. And also to think critically like we've talked about and to be open to new ideas and opinions.
Gabby	In democratic education everyone has a say … So your kids have a voice … a say in what they learn. Of course the (state tests) are important, but you can tie the English tests into anything. So if the students get to pick what they're reading or what they're working on, you can just take what you *have* to do and add it. Then they're engaged but you're also covering what you're required to cover.
Claire	In a classroom with democratic values it would be all about connections and getting to know your students and caring about them so that you can do a better job of teaching them.

Vita

Margaret Phillips Pienkowski was born in Denison, Texas on October 7, 1963. In 1986 she graduated with an undergraduate degree in Psychology from Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., and she worked for several years in D.C. before enrolling in the Developmental Teacher Education Program at U.C. Berkeley. Margaret graduated with a Master of Arts in Education from U.C. Berkeley in 1992, and worked as a teacher first in California and later in Hanover County, Virginia public schools before returning to school in 2012 to pursue her doctorate in education at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU). During her time at VCU, Margaret worked as the graduate student assistant who helped to pilot and launch the secondary teacher service-learning practicum. She also worked as an adjunct professor and taught a variety of classes to both elementary and secondary pre-service teachers. In 2016 she was a W.K. Kellogg Fellow with the Office of Community Wealth Building in the City of Richmond. During this year she worked closely with the early childhood community in Richmond and was responsible for writing a comprehensive report entitled *Building Strong Children: An Assessment of Early Childhood Care and Education in the City of Richmond and Strategic Recommendations for Moving Forward*.