Conceptions of Self, Other and Society: Exploring the Impact of a Service-Learning for Social Justice Course on Student Positionality

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Conceptions of Self, Other and Society: 
Exploring the Impact of a Service-Learning for Social Justice Course on 
Student Positionality

A Dissertation in Education 
with a Concentration in Curriculum Studies 

by 

@ 2017 Deborah Rintels Weiner 

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment 
Of the Requirements 
For the Degree of 

Doctor of Education 

June 2017
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Abstract

Change models of service-learning, or service-learning for social justice courses, are educational models that deeply integrate course content and a service requirement with a social justice agenda, where students are asked to consider the positionality or relative power and privilege of all participants in the service-learning dynamic as well as institutionalized inequity along lines of race, gender, sexuality, religion and other axes of exclusion in American society. Grounded in the teachings of Freire, and his “problem posing” educational model, that casts a critical eye on the role of traditional education as a “dehumanizing” relationship that works to oppress both teachers and students alike, the literature around social justice pedagogy and service-learning models are often divided along lines of relative privilege. As not all students in higher education classrooms necessarily identify with Freire’s oppressor or oppressed groups, respectively, and the lines of privilege are often unclear when intersecting identities of oppression converge, my study sought to explore how students experience a service-learning for social justice course across boundaries of privilege.

Using an ethnographic method of research, my study examined the experiences of differently-privileged students enrolled in a social justice course with a 25-hour service component and revealed the following. First, much of what university students came to understand about social inequality, social justice and social activism in the context of a service-learning for social justice course are established before enrolling in the course and deeply tied to students’ own personal backgrounds, experiences, and positionalities. Second, when students engage in their service site with community partners, whether they experienced problems or professional direction, ultimately, they want to be able to find a way to contribute to the common good, or enact the social justice pedagogy as presented in class.
I believe my study can offer new insights into the way educators approach service-
learning for social justice courses in terms of how they structure their courses to consider the
positionality, or backgrounds and experiences of the students in their class with relation to each
other, as well as the community at large. Second, my study offers insights into why a service-
learning for social justice curriculum that transcends boundaries of privilege is critical. And
third, my study shows that service experiences in the university have critical application for
university students well beyond their service-learning courses, as a way to obtain solid insights,
experiences and connections to the professional realm.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Overview

Throughout my twenty-three-year teaching career, I have had the opportunity to work with a variety of students, schools, communities and cultures both domestically and internationally. Following college, I went on to teach twelve years in public urban middle and high schools and five years in affluent private schools. These experiences have given me tremendous insights into not only the learning and development of young people, but also how pedagogy seems to change according to an individual’s given privilege. And that privilege is not just divided along lines of socioeconomic class, race and culture but is constantly changing and shifting.

Eight years ago, I left the field of 6-12 education to teach in higher education at Midwest College (MC) as an adjunct faculty instructor in the departments of Writing and Education, respectively. Seeking a more theoretical practice that comes from working with older students, I didn’t expect to find that the boundaries of privilege that came to define my 6-12 educational experience were distorted and blurred in the classes I teach at MC. Set in the heart of a major metropolitan city that has been nationally recognized as plagued by guns, gangs and violence, MC is unique in its ability to provide a lively, progressive space for students across boundaries of privilege to engage and learn. It is on this foundation that I came to the study of social justice pedagogy, enacted through service-learning practice.

In today’s political, economic and social climate, there is a real need for social justice education more than ever before. Defined as a pedagogy aimed at addressing social inequality across boundaries of power and privilege, the objective of social justice
education is to encourage students to think about their own positionality with relation to how discrimination operates on a structural level. Social justice education helps students understand the nature of why some people have access to advantages while others do not, and where they personally stand on the continuum of power and privilege.

As it applies to the American education system, the employment of a social justice pedagogy is critical for teaching our nation’s next generation of citizens why some groups have been traditionally marginalized while others have been privileged. With the 2016 presidential election only a few months behind us, and the inauguration of real-estate mogul Donald J. Trump earlier this year, it seems that America is on the precipice of a new era. Guided by a president who ran on a campaign that places corporate interests over the social concerns of global warming, gender and sexual inequality, among others, now more than ever, educators are tasked with bringing an understanding to the structural nature of inequality against the backdrop of a political climate antithetical toward that effort. Trump however, is not the first president to threaten funding for service programs.

Arguably, the promotion of a spirit of volunteerism was begun with President Kennedy with programs such as VISTA, RSVP and the Peace Corps in the 1960s, continued through to the Clinton administration’s New Market Tax Credit (NMTC) of 1989, and perpetuated with the Obama administration and its website boasting a minute-by-minute national volunteerism accounting. Under the newly-elected Trump administration, the trend to privatize social concerns and defund educational programs, like service-learning, shows no real signs of stopping. This is perhaps most evident with Trump’s recent appointment of Betsy DeVos to the position of secretary of education, a well-known charter school advocate who has a history of promoting “free choice” and the
voucher system, educational alternatives that often work against the fundamental ideals of public education.

Despite the national trend to decrease funding for service programs, the implementation of service-learning pedagogy has been steadily rising in American schools, grades K-16. Service-learning pedagogy in elementary schools, high schools and universities is implemented in one of four institutions nationwide (Campus Compact, 2015; www.nationalservice.gov, 2015) and continues to expand. This growth is evident in the continued increase in membership of Campus Compact, a national coalition of colleges and institutions dedicated to the promotion of service-learning and civic engagement. Recently reporting a growth of seventy partners a year over the past five years, Campus Compact’s current membership stands at a total of over one thousand one hundred college and university presidents, or nearly one-fourth of all colleges and universities in the nation (Campus Compact, 2015).

The literature credits the growing implementation of service-learning pedagogy toward the growth to a “scholarship of engagement” (Boyer, 1990; Shulman, 2004 as cited in Butin, 2006), or a new way to bridge the link between theory and practice. Butin (2006) best describes the “scholarship of engagement” as a pedagogy that links “cognitive and affective learning” and “colleges with communities” by “breach[ing] the bifurcation of lofty academics with the lived reality of everyday life to promote critical inquiry and reflective practice across complex and contested local, national and international issues” (pp. 473-474). As a result, service-learning programs and practices continue to gain in popularity as a cumulative effect of this theoretical shift.
Due to the trend toward incorporating service-learning, civic engagement and community outreach into institutions of higher education, there is much in the literature that speaks to best practices that maximize student learning, bridge theory to practice and foster community collaborations. To help unpack varying service-learning programs and practices, scholars frequently contextualize programs according to traditional versus critical models (Mitchell, 2007; Eyler & Giles, 1999) or their objectives for charity or social change (Catlett & Proweller, 2011). For the purposes of this paper, service-learning practices will be categorized according to traditional versus critical models (Mitchell, 2007; Eyler & Giles, 1999), or more simply, for their objectives in promoting charity versus social change (Catlett & Proweller, 2011).

Change models of service-learning are perhaps the most critical of service-learning models. Grounded in social justice theory, change models of service-learning are grounded in the principles of social justice, where students are asked to consider the positionality or relative power and privilege of all participants in the service-learning dynamic as well as institutionalized inequity along lines of race, gender, sexuality, religion and other axes of exclusion in American society. Frequently linked to the teachings of Freire (2000), social justice pedagogy tends to be focused on experiential learning, granting the “ontological and historical rights” of all humans, and the employment of “problem-posing education” that encourages students to engage in critical thought and dialogue, and provides them with the opportunity to enact social change. As a result of this objective, change models of service-learning have the potential to be transformative educational experiences that can lead to a deeper understanding of self and other, as socially situated relative to the scale of power and privilege.
In practice, change models of service-learning are increasingly prevalent at the university level. Despite the many variances and nuances, change models of service-learning tend to address social inequality (Camacho, 2004; Green 2001; Himley, 2004; Vogelgesang et al, 2000) and environmental sustainability (Martusiwicz, Edmundson and Lupinacci, 2011; Sobel, 1996) by attempting to locate and deconstruct power relations through course material, class discussions and exposure to a service experience. Where these courses tend to deviate is often in their objectives. For example, while some courses tend to concentrate on the deconstruction of white privilege by attempting to break down the benefits the dominant group receives by fostering an awareness of white privilege (Cipolle, 2010; McIntosh, 2008; Swalwell, 2013), other courses look toward offering students an opportunity to participate in social action (Calderon, 2015; Gutstein, 2003).

Despite the positive effects change models of service-learning can have on student learning, there is a real concern that even the most mindful, well-intended models can default to charity outcomes, leaving students and teachers feeling guilty, uncomfortable, and apprehensive. Failure of service-learning programming is said to occur for several reasons. Oftentimes poor outcomes of service-learning for social justice programs are attributed to short-term service experiences with community partners that fail to provide rich and meaningful experiences for both students and community partners (Nenga, 2011; Stoecker, Tryon & Hilgendorf, 2009). Another reason change models of service-learning do not succeed is due to a misalignment between course objectives and the service experience, and/or the service needs of the respective community partners (Eby, 1998; Eyler & Giles, 1999). A third perception of why change models of service-learning fail is credited to a lack of reflection time on the service experience (Duffy,
Finally, a fourth reason why service-learning programs disappoint is when they are not structured in a way that honors all participants (Butin, 2010; Pompa, 2002). Furthermore, even when these programming goals are met, scholars (Burin, 2006; Fish, 2006) argue that service-learning pedagogy does not always align with university teaching, politics and curriculum.

But perhaps the most pressing concern of current service-learning practice, as it appears on the higher education level, is that much of current practice and pedagogy is geared towards the student who is “white, sheltered, middle-class, single without children, unindebted, and between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four” (Butin, 2007; p. 31). Furthermore, a wide body of research reports that students who fit this description frequently depart change service-learning experiences with feelings of guilt, apprehension and avoidance (Butin, 2006, 2007; Camacho, 2004; Green, 2001; Nenga, 2011; Swalwell, 2013).

Reflecting on my work with students across boundaries of privilege, separately as well as together, I have come to question a literature base that tends to separate students across boundaries of privilege and seek to answer the question of what happens when students across boundaries of privilege are taught together in the same setting? How do students come to understand the same curriculum despite having significantly different experiences in the practice of technology, writing and critical discourse? Moreover, how do students perceive what they are learning with relation to their own background and experiences?

Social justice models of service-learning are the closest pedagogy we have to helping students discover who they are as a basis to understanding what they know about
the world. With this in mind, too little has been said about the role that positionality plays in helping students of varying positions of power and privilege make this connection. As it currently stands, there is quite a bit of literature on service-learning practices for privileged students, and the benefits of practicing a service-learning for social justice model. What appears to be missing from the literature is how students are experiencing service-learning practices and how their experiences deviate, contingent on background, experiences and positionality.

First, towards a literature base that is deeply saturated with what service-learning pedagogy looks like with students of privilege, it is helpful to see what service-learning pedagogy looks like for students who do not fit those parameters. Second, the implications of my research are critical for understanding how differently privileged students conceptualize privilege and engage in a service-learning for social justice course together. In so doing, it is critical that educators complicate Freire’s binary framing of the oppressor and oppressed dynamic, and rethink White guilt as a feeling reserved for students of White privilege, in order to contextualize student identities as constantly shifting depending on context. Third, perhaps equal to a service-learning for social justice course syllabus, course objectives and service site is the consideration of the positionalities of the students’ enrolled, providing space for students to consider their shifting in a way that helps move them towards a more transformative, activist mindset. And fourth, for educators to continue to practice service-learning methods, it is critical to see how students conceptualize their relationship with their community partners in their service site as social activist educators, mentors and role models.
Research Problem

While many institutions of higher education implement change models of service-learning, much of current practice and pedagogy is geared towards those students who are “white, sheltered, middle-class, single without children, unindebted, and between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four” (Butin, 2007, p. 31). Furthermore, while many institutions of higher education implement change models of service-learning, a wide body of research suggests that students frequently depart change service-learning experiences with feelings of guilt, apprehension and avoidance (Butin, 2006, 2007; Camacho, 2004; Green, 2001; Nenga, 2011; Swalwell, 2013). As described in the preceding section, there are several issues that account for why change models of service-learning might not be as successful as anticipated. Despite these concerns, change models of service-learning continue to present an opportunity to be a transformative pedagogy (Butin, 2010; Duffy, 2010; Green, 2001; Pompa, 2002), repositioning classroom learning to the outside world, and giving students the opportunity to obtain a clearer understanding of self, other and the broader social context. For these reasons, it is critical that more research be done for the purposes of identifying best practices.

Research Question

This qualitative study sought to explore how student perceptions of social inequality, social justice and social activism are shaped in the context of a service-learning for social justice course. Embedded in a university social justice program and instructed by a self-described social justice activist, Service-Learning for Social Justice (SLSJ) is an eleven-week course designed to offer students, as outlined in the syllabus, an introduction to the practices of “peacemaking, conflict resolution and social justice” in
the face of “personal, interpersonal, institutional, social ecological and systemic inequality” through course readings, written assignments, and class activities and discussions.

SLSJ and the social justice program is offered at Midwest College (MC),¹ a mid-sized private, college, that boasts significant diversity in race, age and experience from both urban, suburban and rural backgrounds (MC website, 2015). In addition to attracting a diverse student body, MC supports many progressive education initiatives including an engaged learning requirement that all students need to complete at some point in their undergraduate experience. The experiential learning component can be fulfilled either through taking a class with a service-learning or engaged learning component, study abroad, a research project, or by studying a nearby community.

SLSJ, as a course that integrates social justice pedagogy with service-learning practice, is often taken by MC students in fulfillment of their engaged learning requirement. Other students who enroll in SLSJ tend to be majors or minors in the department of social justice and community service, respectively. Because SLSJ engages a diverse body of students from across the university and integrates social justice pedagogy with service-learning practice, it was an ideal place to locate my study and direct my main research question: How do university students perceive themselves, each other and the greater social context as a result of engaging in a service-learning for social justice course.

In support of the main research question, this study examined the following sub-questions: What do students come to understand about social inequality, social justice

¹ All names, institutional and personal, are pseudonyms in order to protect the privacy of the participants.
and social activism in the context of this course? What do students come to understand about their own positionality through this experience? What do students come to understand about themselves in relation to others and the broader social context through this experience?

**Rationale and Significance of the Proposed Study**

The study emphasizes how social justice models of service-learning help students discover who they are as a basis for understanding what they know about the world. It highlights the need for more research on how positionality plays a role in helping students with varying positions of power and privilege make sense of this connection. While much of the service-learning literature continues to focus on the benefits of community-based learning for privileged students, there is limited understanding of how students experience service-learning practices and social justice concepts from shifting and divergent backgrounds, experiences and positionalities. Butin (2007) writes that service-learning on the university level is best suited for students who are “white, sheltered, middle-class, single without children, unindebted, and between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four” (p. 31), which tends to be more diverse in nature. Data from the study describes how privilege and privileging processes within service-learning courses are likely much more complicated and contextual.

The implications of this study are critical for understanding how diverse students conceptualize privilege under varying social contexts. In so doing, it complicates Freire’s framing of the oppressor and oppressed dynamic within the service-learning context. It suggests that we might rethink the notion of guilt, for example, as a feeling only reserved for students who begin to recognize their White privilege. Furthermore, the results offer
insights for social justice-oriented service-learning course syllabi, learning objectives and service site identification, given the consideration of the positionalities of students enrolled. Such considerations for positionality in course construction could provide the impetus for students to consider shifting toward a more transformative, activist mindset that pushes them to become leaders in social change movements with which they previously had not identified.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

In light of a dearth of literature that attempts to define the practice of service-learning as a potentially liberatory practice, this literature review aims to explore the scholarship on how service-learning has been conceptualized and implemented. To that end, it will first historically situate service, or rather the social, economic and political conditions necessitating service in the first place. Second, it will describe the roots of social justice theory as a pedagogy and a political movement intended to flatten hierarchies, create dialogue and question the social structure. Finally, it will seek to deconstruct change models of service-learning by laying out how these models are currently applied in institutions of higher education.

The History of Service and Perceptions around the Poor

In an effort to historically situate the service movement, it is critical to offer an overview of the history of inequality and the different perceptions around bridging social inequity. Katz (2013) and his scholarship on the divide in the American consciousness between who is and who is not deserving of being “served,” offers perhaps, one of the most complete renderings of social perceptions around poverty in his text, *The Deserving and Undeserving Poor*. Katz (2013) summarizes that there are six perceptions of what causes poverty: persons, places, resources, political economy, power and markets. Or in other words, 1.) persons: poverty is an outcome of poor moral character; 2.) places: poverty is a result of toxic environmental conditions; 3.) resources: poverty is the absence of money; 4.) political economy: poverty is the by-product of capitalist economies; 5.) power: poverty is a consequence of lack of political power; and 6.) markets: poverty reflects the absence of functioning markets. In historicizing these perceptions, Katz
(2013) argues that the first conception of poverty, as a result of personal moral failure, is not only the most dominant, but also one of the oldest perceptions, dating back to the Charity Organization Movement of the 1700s. This conception is perhaps best disproven when held to Marx and Engels’ (2011) understanding of intrinsic and extrinsic structures in relationship to the population growth of the 1700s.

Highlighted in “The German Ideology,” Marx and Engels (2011) account for the current divide between those with and without power and privilege to be a consequence of the 1700s, when the population in Europe grew, prompting some citizens to build enclosures or fences around public properties. In so doing, the ruling classes were able to maintain much of the power, leaving the working classes enclosed in a feudal structure. From this rendition, it is clear that those individuals with little property did not arrive to their situation due to poor moral character but rather, because of their inability to perceive common land as something to take for themselves, unlike their wealthy counterparts.

Despite Marx and Engels’ (2011) analysis of socioeconomic inequality, the perception that social disparity is caused by individual moral failure continued to prevail in the way of a large social movement that migrated across continents in the 1700s, known as the Charity Organization Movement, that is still evident today. Operating on the assumption that impoverished individuals can transcend their situation by affiliating with individuals of more affluent means, the Charity Organization Movement continues to serve as the foundation out of which other movements and counter-movements have been formed. One example of this is in the creation of the settlement house, and the work of Jane Addams in the late 1800s. Through her work with Hull House, Addams and her
partner, Ellen Starr, offered non-dominant groups, including immigrants, members of the lower classes, and women, the opportunity to learn technical, language, and literacy skills, as well as a voice to advocate for their concerns for the creation of a juvenile-court system, better working conditions, and the ability for women to vote (Jane Addams Online Museum, 2009). Addams’ work with Hull House sought to redefine common misperceptions of the poor perpetuated by the Charity Organization Movement of the 1880s and 1890s, and as such, was a direct reaction to the idea that society’s marginalized populations were responsible for their own lack of resources.

Although the Charity Organization Movement has long passed, the legacy of its ideology remains. Katz (2013) argues that as a consequence of this movement, there remains a divide in the American consciousness that those who are and who are not deserving of being poor is very much tied to personal moral failure.

**Socio-Political Context of Service in the United States**

The way service in the United States has been perceived and acted upon has also been greatly affected by the leadership and economic markets of the United States. As a result, the responsibility of the poor has vacillated between the public and private sector depending on leadership and economic markets of the time throughout American history. For example, in the midst of the Great Depression, the Roosevelt administration perceived social inequality as a political or government responsibility. As such, while Roosevelt was in office, the government enacted a system of programs, called the Second New Deal, to help Americans struggling with poverty, unemployment and unfair working conditions.
Conversely, not all presidential administrations have perceived the responsibility of supporting social service programs in the United States as a federal responsibility and have been able to avoid this obligation by passing pervasive social problems to the private sector by promoting a spirit of volunteerism. President Kennedy was one of the first presidents to promote a spirit of volunteerism with programs designed to reengage older Americans back with their communities (i.e., VISTA, RSVP, Foster Grandparent Program) and to educate “less privileged” communities overseas by sending young Americans to join the Peace Corps in the 1960s. Since the Kennedy administration, the promotion of volunteerism has grown. Petras (1997) notes how under the Clinton administration, “private, voluntary involvement and not public sector programmes” were touted as the answer to the country’s social problems where private individuals were encouraged to volunteer their time, labor and money (p. 1587). In more recent years, the Obama administration has also promoted volunteerism from the private sector as well. This trend was highlighted on the government website where the Obama administration reported that since 2013, 62.6 million Americans have volunteered and 7.7 billion hours have been volunteered, which equates to a total of $173 billion in estimated value of service (www.serve.gov accessed on 3/26/2015).

In addition to promoting a spirit of volunteerism, another way the federal government has avoided funding social service programs is by offering significant tax write-offs to the private sector to support the public sector for them. The New Market Tax Credit Program (NMTC) is an example of a federal incentive program used to encourage the private sector to take responsibility for the public sector. Implemented in 2000 under the Clinton administration, the NMTC offers individual and corporate
sponsors to donate money toward low-income areas to receive a 39% tax credit on their original investment over a seven-year period (CDFI.gov, 2014). Subsequently, as a result of NMTC, many individuals and corporations have invested in public schools which arguably changed the landscape of public education in low-income areas, replacing public neighborhood schools with privatized charter schools that tend to benefit corporate interests (Saltman, 2010).

The trend to privatize the public domain is also evident in the way service-learning programs in K-12 schools and institutions are funded. Private and corporate foundations like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, State Farm Insurance Foundation, and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation offer service-learning grants to students attending K-12 public schools, public charter schools or institutions of higher education.

The perception of the causes of poverty has greatly affected the way it has been addressed and by whom. Over the past fifteen years, the trend to shift the responsibility of funding social service programs to the private sector has arguably changed the landscape of the way service is conceptualized and practiced in the United States. The next section outlines how service is currently being conceptualized as a result of this shift, and what the implications of this are for the practice of change models of service-learning programming.

**Service-Learning in Practice**

In addition to historically situating service-learning according to the social, economic and political conditions necessitating service in the first place, a second way service-learning is conceived in this literature is through a description of its current landscape of practices. In 1990, Jane Kendall wrote that there were one hundred and
forty-seven different definitions of service-learning she reviewed for her comprehensive
text, *A Resource Book for Community and Public Service*. As evident from her analysis,
definitions of service-learning are by no means uniform and can vary significantly. For
example, Jacoby (1996) defines service-learning as a “form of experiential education in
which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together
with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and
development” (p. 5). In contrast, Eyler and Giles (1999) describe service-learning
programs as those that link service to academic learning. Although Jacoby (1999) and
Eyler and Giles (1999) provide a broad enough base on which to ground many different
types of service programs, what is missing is a more specific contextualization of service-
learning practices. The root of this confusion may be that educators have different
objectives for implementing service-learning programs with students. While some
service-learning programs aim to produce more democratic citizens (Stanton, 1990;
Westheimer & Kahne, 2004), others attempt to promote an understanding of a collective
action to address social injustice (Cipolle, 2010; Duncan-Andrade, 2011; Ginright &
Cammarota, 2002; Gutstein, 2003; Swalwell, 2013) while others seek to develop an
awareness of student privilege (Camacho, 2004; Cipolle, 2010; Dunlap, Scoggin, Green
& Davis, 2007; Nenga, 2011; Swalwell, 2013). To help unpack varying service-learning
programs and practices, scholars frequently contextualize programs according to
traditional versus critical models (Mitchell, 2007; Eyler & Giles, 1999) or their objectives
for charity or social change (Catlett & Proweller, 2011).

According to Catlett and Proweller (2011), charity and change models are
founded on vastly “different sets of moral, political and intellectual traditions” that affect
program goals and objectives (p. 34). Where charity models are grounded on the understanding that “communities have deficits that others can fill through service” (p. 34), change models view service as a way to critically engage students in the community for the purposes of simultaneously transforming themselves and the social landscape.

**Charity models.** Charity or traditional models of service-learning, often referred to as community service programs (Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda & Lee; 2000; Jones & Hill, 2003; Vogelgesang & Astin, 2000; Youniss & Yates, 1997), tend to require students to go out into the field to provide some sort of service, often in times of crisis (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004) without mandating any real tie to school curriculum or any sustained reflection on the service experience (Jones, Segar & Gasiorski, 2008; Vogelgesang & Astin, 2000). As a result of the disjointed nature of charity models of service, students tend to incur less contact hours with community organizations (Stoecker, Tryon & Hilgendorf, 2009). Due to this lack of connection, charity models of service-learning are often criticized for doing very little to transform student perception of self, other and society. A case in point can be found in Jones, Segar and Gasiorski (2008), whose research on service-learning in the Baltimore Public Schools, found that service-learning programs implemented outside of classroom curriculum run the risk of being void of both service as well as learning. Following up on the state of Maryland’s 1997 ordinance that all public school students complete seventy-five hours of service-learning in order to graduate high school, Jones, Segar and Gasiorski’s (2008) study revealed that activities that qualified as service-learning included a wide range of activities from building houses for a week in Mexico and donating blood, to babysitting at one’s own synagogue and participating in the school band. Jones, Segar and Gasiorski
conclude that the service-learning requirement itself does not produce civic responsibility, community commitment or continued service but rather, these transformative outcomes are produced when the service requirement is structured in a way that is meaningful.

Charity models of service-learning are not just criticized for their lack of transformational objectives, but also for the damaging messages they send to those performing and receiving service. Some of these messages include the belief that charitable donations can replace larger policy, part-time untrained volunteers can replace full-time trained professionals (Petras, 1997) and that social problems are due to poor moral character (Katz, 2013; Petras, 1997), poor or no housing, or a lack of resources (Katz, 2013). As a result of this perspective, service-learning programs that operate on charity foundations contribute to the replication of existing imbalances of power, privilege and economic injustice (Camacho, 2004; Catlett & Proweller, 2011; Davis, 2006; Illich, 1990) and the reinforcement of racial stereotypes that perpetuate an unjust social hierarchy (Eby, 1998; Green, 2001; Pollock, 2004; Tatum, 1997).

Westheimer and Kahne’s (2004) “Three Kinds of Citizens” service-learning programs shed more light on the charity model and how it deviates from change models of service-learning detailed in their description of the “personally responsible citizen” (p. 4). Distinguishing the personally responsible citizen model from the “participatory citizen” (p. 4) and “justice-oriented citizen” models (pp. 4-5), Westheimer and Kahne (2004) posit that the personally responsible citizen model produces students who act responsibly by paying taxes, obeying laws and volunteering in times of crisis. Where participatory and justice-oriented citizen models of service-learning encourage students
to solve problems and improve society by taking on an active role as leader and activist to change structural inequalities, the personally responsible citizen engages in service under the core assumption that to “solve problems and improve society citizens must have good character” (p. 4).

Ivan Illich is one of the sharpest critics of the philanthropic, paternalistic attitudes that can inform charity models of service-learning programs. In a 1968 address to United States volunteer workers at the Conference on Inter-American Student Projects (CIAP) in Cuernavaca, Mexico, Illich (1990) rages against the perception that American volunteers are “doing good” by giving up their summers to “help” the Mexican people.

All you will do in a Mexican village is create disorder. At best you can try to convince Mexican girls that they should marry a young man who is self-made, rich, a consumer, and as disrespectful of tradition as one of you (p. 318).

Illich’s (1990) example illustrates, despite good intentions and a willingness to help, how charity models of service-learning tend to overlook how power and privilege shape the nature (and duration) of the service undertaken and attribute moralistic assumptions about the character of those being served and those rendering service (Camacho, 2004; Eby, 1998; Green, 2001; Illich, 1990). As a result, charity models of service-learning have been criticized for not only failing those they serve, but for replicating existing imbalances of power, privilege and economic injustice (Camacho, 2004; Catlett & Proweller, 2011; Davis, 2006; Illich, 1990), and reinforcing racial stereotypes by perpetuating unjust social hierarchies (Eby, 1998; Green, 2001; Pollock, 2004; Tatum, 1997).
Change Models. In contrast to charity models, change models of service-learning attempt to address social inequalities. Grounded in social reconstruction ideology (Schiro, 2013), or social justice pedagogy, change models of service-learning encourage students to consider the positionality, or relative power and privilege, of all participants in the service-learning dynamic. Students are encouraged to “reflect on targets and agents of multiple systems of oppression (i.e., racism, sexism, classism, ageism, heterosexism, and other) and examine what they can do with that oppression” (Cipolle, 2010; p. 14). In addition, whenever possible, service-learning programs framed around social justice goals provide service opportunities that place student participants on a more level playing field with those they are serving, by ensuring that students providing service are also learning by, and alongside, those they are serving. In service-learning for social justice models, students are encouraged to investigate issues of their own and others’ relative power, privilege, or marginalization. By learning about the social constructions of race, gender, sexuality, religion and other axes of exclusion in American society, students are encouraged to learn about their own positionality as a community member and global citizen by engaging with differently-privileged others.

It is important to note that advocates of service-learning for social justice pedagogies by no means guarantee the elimination of long-standing social and cultural divisions rooted in race, gender and class (Cipolle, 2010). Rather, a social justice model of service-learning provides the space to begin talking about the nature of power and privilege as it operates within established systems and structures (Green, 2001; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). It does this by offering space in the classroom for students
to explore social norms around power and privilege through course readings, class
discussions, and written reflections.

Grounded in social justice theory, change models of service-learning tend to bring
attention to social inequality and disrupt normative modes of thinking and behaving in
the interest of flattening hierarchies and democratizing interactions of curriculum and
instruction within the classroom. They do this by repositioning classroom learning away
from the teacher and onto the students and their experiences in the outside world thereby
giving students the opportunity to access a clear sense of self, others and the broader
social context. The basis for this division is best understood as it applies to the
scholarship of Paulo Freire and social justice pedagogy.

Foundational Framing of Change Models

Paulo Freire’s work with Brazilian “peasants” in his seminal text, Pedagogy of the
Oppressed (2000), is by many accounts, at the core of social justice pedagogy (Cipolle,
2010; Duncan-Andrade, 2011; Ginright & Cammarota, 2002; Gutstein, 2003; Swalwell,
2013). Crediting the discord between wealthy landowners and impoverished laborers to
the dehumanizing relationship between the “oppressors” and the “oppressed,” Freire casts
a critical eye on the role of traditional education in perpetuating oppression. In particular,
Freire criticizes education operating on a “banking model” where education becomes an
“act of depositing,” on the part of the teacher, and students act as empty, passive
receptacles (p. 72). In these scenarios, classroom interactions are centered around the
teacher and students are objectified. In so doing, student voices are silenced, critical
thinking and creativity is inhibited, and all participants-students and teachers alike-are
denied their “ontological and historical rights” to become more human. Freire argues that
this dehumanization afflicts not only those whose humanity has been stolen (i.e., the oppressed peasants), but also those who have stolen it (i.e., the oppressors—wealthy Brazilian landowners) (p. 28). Furthermore, the only way for the oppressed (i.e., Brazilian working class laborers) to reclaim their humanity is by confronting their oppressors (i.e., wealthy landowners). Freire offers “problem-posing education” as an alternative to the banking concept, as a pedagogy that encourages critical thought and dialogue and “stimulates true reflection and action upon reality” (84). Rather than serving as passive “receptacles of knowledge,” Freire argues that problem-posing education encourages students to “engage in inquiry” for the purposes of “creative transformation” and work with their teachers in order to obtain their own humanity.

Freire’s work helps to explain why service-learning for social justice programs and practices can be so challenging to implement from a theoretical standpoint. First, Freire’s pedagogy involves separate steps towards liberation for the oppressors and the oppressed or rather, the oppressed are to rise up against their oppressors and reclaim their humanity, while the oppressors need to be open to their role of oppression and the possibility of working with the oppressed in solidarity, in order to affect equality.

In higher education, this dynamic is difficult to implement for a few reasons. First, Freire’s pedagogy is very much aligned with a political agenda towards creating a more egalitarian society. Freire does this by questioning unequal power structures in order to flatten hierarchies between Brazilian landowners and laborers by modeling this interaction between himself as the teacher and his students. As it applies to higher education, this is problematic for a few reasons. First, not all university personnel support a pedagogy that aligns with the political agenda to mold democratic citizens (Westheimer
& Kahne, 2004). For example, Stanley Fish (2004) is a strong opponent against service-learning as a political agenda in the university classroom and contends that “we should look to practices in our own shop…before we set out to alter the entire world by forming moral character, or fashioning democratic citizens, or combating globalization, or embracing globalization, or anything else” (p. A23). That said, not all university personnel believe that moral education is an objective to a university education.

Second, Freire’s pedagogical model requires a flattening of classroom hierarchy by decentering the role of the professor. In light of the statistic that “83% of all [higher education] faculty use lecturing as the primary instructional method in college classrooms” (Butin, 2006, p. 481), Freire’s model presents challenges for higher education instructors to implement on pedagogy alone.

And third, not all students in higher education classrooms necessarily identify with the oppressor or oppressed groups, respectively. Butin (2010) saliently points out that difficulty often ensues when engaged students identify with a marginalized group. Furthermore, what constitutes as privilege is not always clear. While many scholars tend to divide privilege along lines of race (Cipolle, 2011; McInstosh, 1989; Nenga, 2004; Pollock, 2004; Swalwell, 2013; Tatum, 1997) and socioeconomic class (Andrade-Duncan, 2011; Ginright and Cammarota, 2002; Gutstein, 2003; Dunlap et al., 2007), the line becomes unclear when intersecting identities of oppression converge (Curry-Stevens, 2007) as members across these borders are frequently students within the same classroom, causing students to feel guilty, apprehensive or avoidant (Green, 2004; Nenga, 2011; Swalwell, 2013).
In light of this divide between Freire’s liberatory steps for the oppressors and oppressed, there appears to be quite a bit of service-learning literature explicitly written for privileged students or, according to Freire, “oppressor”-types (Cipolle, 2010; Nenga, 2004; Swalwell, 2013). There is also a fair amount of social justice scholarship for students classified as marginalized or from resilient communities, or in Freirian terms, “oppressed” groups (Duncan-Andrade, 2011; Ginright & Cammarota, 2002; Gutstein, 2003). Namely, in much contemporary work, poor minority youth (e.g., Duncan-Andrade, 2011; Ginright & Cammarota, 2002; Gutstein, 2003) stand in for Freire’s oppressed, whereas white urban and suburban elites (see, e.g., Cipolle, 2010; Swalwell, 2013) have come to stand in for oppressors.

From Pedagogy to Practice: Defining Privilege

In an attempt to understand Freire’s critical framework as it applies to the literature, it is critical to identify what social justice pedagogy and change models of service-learning look like for both marginalized and privileged groups to whom this pedagogy is aimed.

Service-Learning for Marginalized Groups. Scholars argue that social justice pedagogy for both is critical for different reasons. For urban minority youth, social justice pedagogy offers less-privileged students a voice. In light of a growing trend to punish those without privilege for their lack of privilege, evident in the increased forms of social control exercised over minority youth such as heightened surveillance in schools, criminal treatment of youth in the legal court system, and the school-to-prison pipeline (Ferguson, 2000; Ginright & Cammarota, 2002; Giroux, 2011), the purpose of social justice pedagogy for the oppressed is to help “young people to understand the roots of
social inequality and encourage them to exercise power to change how inequality structures their lives” (Ginright & Cammarota; 2002, p. 88).

Although there seems to be considerable consensus in the literature about the nature of social justice pedagogy for marginalized groups that offers students a sense of awareness of self and other in order to gain a sense of agency or activism, it appears that social justice pedagogy is much easier theorized than practiced (Ginright & Cammarota, 2002; Gutstein, 2003), as there appears to be a relative deficit of examples of implementing social justice service-learning programs with marginalized groups. Butin (2010) notes that on the university level, service-learning tends to be directed at the student who is “white, sheltered, middle-class, single without children, unindebted, and between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four” (p. 31), which is not necessarily reflective of the modern-day classroom, which tends to be more diverse in nature.

The lack of change models of service-learning programs in K-12 schools serving marginalized groups is not as clear. One possible reason might be due to the fact that service-learning programs tend to require additional funding for transportation and educational materials to which underfunded institutions may not have access. Another reason that change models of service-learning in public high schools serving marginalized groups are sparse could be due to the pronounced focus on standardized testing and assessment seen in the modern era (Garrison, 2009; Saltman, 2010). Spurred by federal legislation such as NCLB (2002) that penalizes schools for low test scores, and philanthropic organizations that reward schools and educators for high test scores such as Broad, Gates and Walton philanthropies (Saltman, 2010), educators are incentivized to focus all of their time, resources, and efforts on teaching to the test rather than on the
promotion of critical thinking, exploratory learning as exemplified in critical models of service-learning. A case in point is the city of Chicago, where in 2013 alone, 50 public neighborhood schools were closed due to “low test scores” (Vevea, Lutton & Karp, 2013). In light of an educational climate that privileges assessment and standardized testing, there remains little time for progressive educational strategies, practiced though change models of service-learning, that foster critical thought and social reform.

Despite the fact that there appear to be limited programs that advocate service-learning for social justice in schools with students from marginalized groups, there exists an expansive scholarship on social justice pedagogy employed with urban minority youth in secondary schools (Duncan-Andrade, 2011; Ginright & Cammarota, 2002; Gutstein, 2003).

First, the literature surrounding social justice pedagogy for the oppressed is often applied to work with the demographic of poor urban minority youth. For example, Duncan-Andrade (2011) writes about his work with students from East Oakland and Los Angeles, while Gutstein (2003) describes his work at De Diego School in Chicago. Additionally, Ginright and Cammarota (2002) define the marginalized students they work with as “working class, poor families in urban communities” (p. 94). Second, scholars and activists promoting a social justice pedagogy for marginalized groups argue that it is important to give students a sense of awareness at the individual, community, and global level in order to build agency. This is intended not for “celebrating,” but for “analyze[ing] how power, privilege and oppression threaten [young people’s] identities and capacity for self-determination” (Ginright & Cammarota, 2002; pp. 88-89). And third, the literature on social justice pedagogy for marginalized groups purports that once students obtain an
awareness of self and others, they gain a sense of agency or activism and are able to change structural hierarchies in society that produce and sustain inequality (Duncan-Andrade, 2011; Ginright & Cammarota, 2002; Gutstein, 2003).

Despite the research, social justice pedagogy is much easier theorized than practiced. A case in point is the Arizona public schools where several teachers attempted to teach a Mexican American Studies program from a social justice perspective in 2010. In response to this movement, the state of Arizona passed HB 2281 eradicating all Mexican American Studies programs in public schools. Due to the curriculum’s social justice content of bringing awareness, solidarity and action to Mexico’s history and immigrants to the United States, the Mexican-American studies programs were terminated in Arizona on the basis of “advocat(ing) ethnic solidarity, promot(ing) the overthrow of the U.S. government, or cater(ing) to specific ethnic groups” by Tom Home, Superintendent of Public Instruction and Executive Officer of the Arizona State Board of Education (Calefati, 2010). As a result of this legislation, several public school teachers were fired, and public school students across the state of Arizona were denied the right to learn about Mexican-American history, approximately half of which are of Mexican descent (Planas, 2013).

Although there seems to be much agreement in the literature about the nature of social justice pedagogy for marginalized groups, that offers students a sense of awareness of self and others in order to gain a sense of agency or activism, social justice in practice is much harder to implement due to its potential for alienating some groups (as a by-product of bringing together others), disturbing the status quo and thereby threatening “job” security of movement leaders.
**Service-Learning for Privileged Students.** Even though Freire explicitly advises that the oppressor class “can neither liberate or be liberated” (p. 89), as noted above, there is a substantial amount of pedagogy and practice based around the ideals of pedagogy for the privileged. According to Swalwell (2013), social justice pedagogy for privileged students is critical for teaching an awareness of structural inequality and exposing students to a “critical examination of society” in light of the fact that children of privilege often grow up to assume positions of power (pp. 12-14). Similar to social justice pedagogy for poor urban minority youth, social justice pedagogy for privileged groups also seeks to work toward flattening hierarchies and sustaining equality; however, it is generally implemented with students attending predominantly white and elite schools.

For these relatively privileged students, social justice pedagogy often centers on the three overlapping issues of white privilege (Nenga, 2011), white critical consciousness (Cipolle, 2010), and activism (Cipolle, 2010; Nenga, 2011; Swalwell, 2013).

Deconstructing white privilege, or the invisible, unearned, systemic access to resources by the dominant group (McIntosh, 2008, Nenga, 2004; Tatum 1997), appears to be a central theme for critical models of service-learning pedagogy implemented with privileged students (Cipolle, 2010; Nenga, 2011; Swalwell, 2013). Nenga (2011) asserts that “those wishing to dismantle white privilege are encouraged to increase their awareness of white privilege, speak up against racial injustice, become an activist, and serve as an ally to people of color (Ferber, 2010; Kivel 2005 as cited in Nenga, 2011; p. 279). Therefore, a key tenet in social justice pedagogy for privileged groups is to break down White privilege. According to Tatum (1997), white students come to understand racism as a system by moving through the six stages of “contact,” “disintegration,”
“reintegration,” “pseudo-independent,” “immersion/emersion” and “autonomy.”

Subsequently, in critical service-learning models for privileged groups White privilege is often used as a gauge to measure the success of a given service-learning program by measuring what the participants have learned, or their White racial identity development (Green, 2001; Nenga, 2011). For example, Nenga (2011) assigns the White, affluent volunteers she does research with to the four categories or stages of “colorblindness,” “equal opportunity racism,” “meritocracy,” and the “challenging of white privilege.”

Subsequently, the core of social justice pedagogy for privileged students is breaking this privilege down and making students aware of their privileged status.

In addition to White privilege, service-learning for social justice directed at privileged students also seeks to stimulate action or activism (Cipolle, 2010; Nenga, 2011; Swalwell, 2013). Similar to social justice pedagogy for marginalized groups, social justice pedagogy directed at privileged students also encourages students to question existing structures and make social changes that support a more democratic and equitable society. Rather than inspire activism for one’s own group to change structural hierarchies in society that produce inequality, social justice pedagogy for privileged groups encourages students to stand in solidarity alongside the oppressed (Morton & Saltmarsh, 1997). Swalwell (2013) asserts that the objective of service-learning for social justice programs for privileged groups is for students to become “activist allies” who are encouraged to make “connection[s] between the oppression of marginalized groups and their own humanization” in order to realize that “fighting injustice is not just about helping Others, but also about improving their own lives” (p. 100). In so doing, the
objective of service-learning for social justice for privileged groups is about seeing oneself as an agent for social change.

Despite the significant amount of literature delineating social justice pedagogy and service-learning practices for marginalized and privileged students, there does appear to be significant efforts on the higher education landscape toward implementing service-learning for social justice practices for all students, despite their Freirian association. As such, this next section seeks to explore the history of service-learning in American universities and colleges, as well as examine what some of the more successful programs look like in practice.

Service-Learning in Higher Education

Background of Service-Learning Implementation in Higher Education. Barbara Jacoby’s (1996) comprehensive text, *Service-Learning in Higher Education: Concepts and Practices*, carefully outlines how service in America has evolved on college campuses from the mid-1600s to the early-1990s. Tracing the tie between service and higher education to 1636, Jacoby (1996) notes that at Harvard College, the stated objective was to prepare citizens for active community engagement (Smith, 1994 as cited Jacoby, 1996). As colleges and universities evolved through the American Revolution and Civil War, Jacoby (1996) posits that the objective of higher education began to shift away from individual citizenship to national reconstruction. Despite this notable shift, Jacoby (1996) asserts that it wasn’t until the 1930s that service in higher education became more formalized under the Roosevelt administration and its creation of the Civilian Conservation Corps. Offering men between the ages of eighteen and twenty-three jobs related to the development and conservation of natural resources as part of the
New Deal (Chesler, Lewis & Crowfoot, 2005), the Civilian Conservation Corps was one of the first federal efforts to offer service opportunities to students and student-age men.

It wasn’t until the 1960s, however, following the Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War, when service in higher education really abounded. Personally affected by draft laws and racial and gender discrimination, students at university campuses gathered to voice concerns regarding peace, justice and equality. In light of this climate, the federal government established the Peace Corps in 1961 and VISTA in 1963. Jacoby (1996) notes that it was around that time that service-learning pedagogy first emerged in the work of Sigmon and William Ramsey at the Southern Regional Education Board in 1967.

Following the Ramsey publication, the federal government set significant resources to incentivize colleges and universities to embrace service pedagogy. In 1971, the Office of Economic Opportunity established the National Student Volunteer Program, which later became the National Center for Service-Learning. In 1971, VISTA and the Peace Corps merged to form ACTION, a federal organization that featured one of the first service publications and offered seed money to initiate further service programs on college and university campuses. And in 1971, the National Society for Internships and Experiential Education (NSIEE), [which later became known as the National Society for Experiential Education (NSEE) in 1994] was created, a national resource center dedicated to the improvement of experiential education programs through their Experiential Education Academy, research conferences and scholarships (NSEE Website, 2015). But perhaps the most significant development that precipitated the growth of service on university campuses was in 1985 when the Education Commission of the States
established Campus Compact, a national coalition of colleges and institutions dedicated to the promotion of civic engagement and service-learning.

At the end of Jacoby’s (1996) chapter on the history of service in higher education, she concludes that during the 1990s, service-learning experienced a “veritable explosion of literature and conferences” (p. 15). Crediting the federal government’s interest and support of service-learning pedagogy for this growth, Jacoby (1996) cites the establishment of the National Community Service Trust Act of 1990, which in its freshman year, created 20,000 positions in the Americorps national service program and K-16 service-learning programs through Learn and Serve America as well as the NSEE’s Wingspread Conference in 1991 that produced considerable literature on service-learning praxis and development.

**Service-Learning Implementation in Higher Education Today.** Since Jacoby (1996) wrote her comprehensive text, service-learning in higher education has undergone a tremendous shift. In 2015, Campus Compact boasts a membership of over one thousand one hundred colleges and universities, or nearly one-fourth of all colleges and universities in the nation, from nearly five hundred in 1985. Furthermore, with the onset of the Internet, Campus Compact grew from a modest collection of college and university presidents who pledged to encourage service-learning, to a large-scale organization dedicated to facilitating civic engagement initiatives across the higher education community by connecting educators, administrators and community partners and offering them academic resources, scholarships and opportunities to engage (Campus Compact, 2015).
Over the past 25 years, service-learning practice has evolved quite a bit in higher education. While 45% of all service-learning and community service programs were housed in student affairs while the balance operated out of campus ministries, career centers, internship offices and academic affairs offices in 1994 (Jacoby, 1996), today many institutions of higher education maintain their own service-learning or civic engagement centers. These centers serve to support service-learning and civic engagement in the classroom by supporting staff to maintain service-learning courses, grant writing, conducting marketing for service-learning endeavors and supporting professional development initiatives for current and future instructors.

In addition to the creation of service-learning or civic engagement centers on university and college campuses, another way institutions are incorporating service into their academic coursework is by implementing a graduation requirement for all students to take one class that has a service component. While some schools like Tulane, in Louisiana, mandate a service course for all undergraduate students to take towards graduation, other universities like Loyola University and DePaul University in Chicago, respectively, require their undergraduate students to complete an “engaged learning” requirement that can be filled in a myriad of ways having to do with experiential learning.

In light of the many ways service is instituted in higher education, it stands to reason that service is instituted in many different ways across campuses, departments, and even courses. For example, Cheryl Hoftetter Duffy (2010) states her intent for implementing service-learning in her English 101 courses at Fort Hays State University in Kansas was to encourage a deeper connection between her students and community members. Comparing her classes before and after she began centering her coursework
around collaborating with a nearby language institute, Duffy (2010) notes a marked increase in students’ academic and cultural knowledge as a result of the reciprocal learning exchanges prompted by collaborative projects, written assignments and meaningful interactions.

In contrast, Anne E. Green (2001) decided to implement service-learning in her writing courses at Saint Joseph University in Philadelphia for the purposes of opening up dialogue on the topics of race and privilege in the university classroom. Green (2001) concludes that working with university writing center tutors and their outreach with middle school students from marginalized groups offered the space to address structural issues of power and privilege head-on.

And finally, Pompa’s 2002 study highlights another way professors can engage their college-level students in service-learning. Teaching her criminal justice course from inside a maximum-security prison, Pompa (2002) argues that this type of learning helps students to develop an understanding of the criminal justice system alongside those individuals who are affected by it. Positioning inmates and students next to one another is critical to course content, as it is the service itself that is being learned, rather than an after-effect. In so doing, Pompa (2010) reports that both students and inmates are able to obtain “a literacy of reciprocity,” “a literacy of context,” “a literacy of liberation,” and “a literacy of transformation” (pp. 512-518).

Understood by many as an experiential pedagogy that can transform classroom learning, improve the community and engage students as democratic citizens, there are still quite a few university professors unwilling to adapt and integrate this pedagogy into their practice.
Challenges Implementing Change Models of Service-Learning in Higher Education

Despite the powerful learning experiences change models of service-learning can present, these programs are not always so easily implemented. As previously discussed, the departure of social justice and service-learning practice from Freirian theory presents one set of challenges for the professor, university and curriculum as it applies to pedagogy and politics however, critics argue that there are also challenges inherent with service-learning practices as well. More specifically, when service-learning programs do not succeed critics argue that oftentimes institutions and teachers do not structure the service requirement in a meaningful way (Eby, 1998; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Jones, Segar & Gasiorski, 2008; Stoecker et al., 2009). Critics also view program failures to be the result of a lack of alignment between course objectives and motivations of service (Eyler & Giles, 1999), inauthentic partnerships between colleges and communities (Eby, 1998), negligence on the part of the course instructor to offer a space in the classroom for reflection on service (Stoecker et al., 2009) as well as time spent with community partners (Nenga, 2004; Stoecker et al., 2009). Leaders of service-learning for social justice programs often struggle with the challenges of leaving students and faculty feeling guilty, apprehensive or avoidant as a result of the highly charged topics presented (Camacho, 2004; Nenga, 2011; Swalwell, 2013).

Another reason why participants in service-learning for social justice programs often incur feelings of discomfort is due to the fact that much of social justice curriculum is based on precipitating “border-crossing” across categories of race, ethnicity, class (im)migration status, language and (dis)ability (Butin, 2010; p. 31). Butin (2010)
saliently points out that difficulty often ensues when engaged students identify with a marginalized group.

**Conclusion**

In light of the broad landscape that has come to define change models of service-learning, scholars continue to seek optimal practices. How these differences were conceived by early visionaries of the social justice movement, and have come to be reenacted into federal legislation in the United States have come to define the landscape of their practice, as programs vary widely. The aim of this proposal is to review the historical context of service-learning practice by reviewing the social, economic and political conditions that led to its pedagogical conceptualization and current practice. Distinguishing change from charity models, as well as service-learning for social justice programs aimed at different groups, I present a review of current service-learning practices in higher education as they appear in the literature. Highlighting the benefits of a change model of service-learning as a potentially liberatory practice that encourages student participants to consider their own power and privilege as it relates to differently privileged others, points to the notion that at even the most mindful, well-intended models can default to charity outcomes, leaving students and educators feeling guilty, uncomfortable, and apprehensive.

Despite these concerns, change models of service-learning continue to present an opportunity to be a transformative pedagogy (Butin, 2010; Duffy, 2010; Green, 2001; Pompa, 2002), repositioning classroom learning to the outside world, and giving students the opportunity to obtain a clearer understanding of self, other and the broader social context. For this reason, I believe more research needs to be done on those university
programs that possess the qualities most integral for a more transformative learning experience. Programs structured around Freirian ideology are a good place to begin, as a pedagogy that not only exemplifies the oppressor/oppressed model to a single university classroom, but also as a pedagogical framework that encourages students to “engage in inquiry” for the purposes of “creative transformation” by encouraging critical thinking and dialogue by flattening hierarchies and creating a more democratic educative space. Additionally, these service-learning for social justice programs should not just be ideologically well-conceived but also mindful in practice as well. Program developers and instructors can achieve this by providing a clear alignment between course goals and service mission, an extensive reflection component, as well as an elongated service commitment.

Studying the implementation of a change model of service-learning is essential in offering new ways to educate students. Linking academic coursework to service experiences that engage students in the world has the potential to offer a deeper, more personal and profound educational experience for students. One that is not limited to the content of the course but, rather extends to a student’s own positionality as it relates to themselves, each other and the greater social context.

My study focused on a university class whose theory and practices possessed the qualities integral for a more transformative learning experience according to the literature review. In so doing, I hoped to explore how university students, engaged in a service-learning for social justice course, come to understand their own positionality as it relates to themselves, each other and the greater social context. It is my hope that by examining how student perceptions of social inequality, social justice and social activism are shaped
as a consequence of engaging in course readings, discussions and reflections and service experience, new light can be shed on how to educate students in a way that is not just content-based, but also critical to shaping engaged and participatory citizens.
Methodology

Conceptual Framework

This study involved observing and interviewing differently-privileged students enrolled in a social justice-oriented service-learning course at Midwest College in the United States. Grounded in critical theory and sensemaking theory, the study sought to examine what students come to understand about themselves, in relationship to others within the broader context on campus and in the city, country and world. Bringing critical theory to the study of a social justice service-learning course provided a framework for understanding how the classroom can create an opportunity to “reflect on targets and agents of multiple systems of oppression (i.e., racism, sexism, classism, ageism, heterosexism, and other) and examine what they can do with that oppression” (Cipolle, 2010; p. 14).

Critical theory, as both a school of thought as well as a process for critique (Giroux, 2004), offers a lens to examine the world by engaging in a deeper and more nuanced awareness of social inequality, as it relates to social relations of power and privilege. With regards to education, “critical pedagogy” is fundamentally committed to the “development and evolvement of a culture of schooling that supports the empowerment of culturally marginalized and economically disenfranchised students” (Giroux, 2003, p.11). It does this by bringing attention to social inequality and disrupting normative modes of thinking and behaving in the interest of flattening hierarchies and democratizing interactions with curriculum, instruction and interaction in the classroom. This process aims at the development of a deeper social cultural consciousness, where students have the tools to envision and enact social change in the interest of shaping a more socially just world. Bringing critical theory to the study of a social justice service-
learning course provides a framework for understanding how the classroom has the potential to create an opportunity to “reflect on targets and agents of multiple systems of oppression (i.e., racism, sexism, classism, ageism, heterosexism, and other) and examine what they can do with that oppression” (Cipolle, 2010; p. 14). In this context, students have the space to explore the origins of systems of oppression, their interrelatedness, and consider ways to challenge and disrupt inequity through activism.

The conceptual framework also draws on elements of sensemaking theory, which is focused on how people make meaning of events or experiences. Sensemaking theory has roots that go back to the 1970s (Dervin & Naumer, 2009) in fields across the disciplines of technology, communication, psychology and education (Dervin, 1998; Russell, Steik, Pirolli & Card, 1993; Weick, 1995). Karl Weick’s (1995) application of sense-making theory is perhaps the most germane to my research, in the work he did with individuals working in organizational settings for the purposes of interpreting events through written or spoken narratives in the mid-nineties. Weick’s (1995) model seeks to deconstruct how individuals make sense of events or experiences, as they relate to the process of understanding as a continuous and reflexive activity, in relationship to contexts and events that are themselves understood as being fluid.

Drawing on Weick’s (1995) research, Tania Mitchell (2014) uses sensemaking theory as a method of understanding how students create meaning around social justice concepts in her study of the Citizens Scholars Program (CSP), an academic service-learning program designed to prepare students to be “agents of change and active participants in communities” (Mitchell, 2007, p 1). Specifically, Mitchell (2014) uses sensemaking theory to help unpack what students, who are part of the CSP, understand
about service and the principles of social justice over time through their participation in
the program. Mitchell’s (2014) application of sensemaking theory is useful to my
proposed study in that it helps provide a framework for focusing on the processes around
which students develop commitments to social justice.

Methodology

The proposed study was approached through a qualitative research design and
created as an intrinsic ethnographic case study, which was ethnographic in so far as it
examined a specific aspect of lived experience. According to Emerson, Fretz and Shaw
(2011), ethnographic research is “a way to understand and describe social worlds,
Drawing upon the theoretical traditions of symbolic interaction and ethnomethodology”
(p. 2). Evolving from the field of anthropology, ethnographic researchers engage directly
with the participants of their study, rather than relying on others’ accounts of a group, as
earlier, traditional “arm-chair” anthropological research was conducted (Gall, Borg &
Gall, 2007). Because my study sought to understand how students interpret their world
and their position in it as a result of engaging in a service-learning for social justice class,
it qualifies as ethnographic research.

According to Creswell (2003), case studies require the researcher to conduct an
in-depth exploration of “an event, activity or process [of] one or more individuals” (p.
15). What differentiates case studies from other methods of inquiry is their bounded
ethnographic case study research by identifying different categories of case study
research. The proposed study fits well with the intrinsic case study model, which centers
on the case as a unique entity of study. That said, because my research focused on a
particular university class over an eleven-week university quarter, I believe the ethnographic intrinsic case study is the most appropriate methodology for the study.

Sample/Site

The University. Midwest College (MC) was selected as the site for my study for a few reasons. As a mid-sized private college, over one-third of the student body self-identifies as students of color while over half of all students enrolled were under the age of twenty-four in 2015, boasting a great deal of diversity in race, age and experience from both urban, suburban and rural backgrounds (MC Website, 2015). In addition to attracting a diverse student body, MC supports many progressive education initiatives including an engaged learning requirement that all students need to complete at some point in their undergraduate experience. The experiential learning component can be fulfilled either through taking a class with a service-learning or engaged learning component, study abroad, a research project, or by studying a nearby community.

The Course. Service Learning for Social Justice (SLSJ) is a course that integrates social justice pedagogy with service-learning practice. Due to its service component, students across the university can take SLSJ in fulfillment of their engaged learning requirement. For this reason, SLSJ is a heavily-enrolled course that tends to run several sections a quarter. While all SLSJ courses are designed to offer students an introduction to the practices of “peacemaking, conflict resolution and social justice,” not all SLSJ sections are the same.
**Professor Jane’s SLSJ Course.** I selected Professor Jane’s section of SLSJ due to her focus on social activism. Due to this focus, Professor Jane’s SLSJ course followed a social justice or change model of service-learning for the privileged as well as for marginalized groups. As such, structural issues of white privilege, white critical consciousness and activism (Camacho, 2004; Green, 2001; Nenga, 2011; Swalwell, 2013) as well as social inequality, discrimination and prejudice across race, religion, gender and socioeconomic status (Duncan-Andrade, 2011; Ginright & Cammarota, 2002; Gutstein, 2013) were addressed in course lectures, assignments and discussions.

As a practicing activist herself, Professor Jane’s syllabus addressed topics of social inequality and injustice as they intersect with “personal, interpersonal, institutional, social ecological and systemic inequality” and activism (Course Syllabus, 2015). Students were also very aware of Professor Jane’s personal dedication to activism and progressive education. According to many students in the class, Professor Jane had a reputation for being an outstanding educator and consequently, her classes were always waitlisted due. For example, Keisha admits, “So many SLSJ students tell me, I don’t care what class it is- White privilege, twenty-five hour service requirement, Professor Jane is just the best!”.

Every week Professor Jane would select readings, class activities and discussion points around a social concern that evidenced structural inequality. The course content dealt with the core idea of inequality in public education, inequality in health care, and
inequality in the prison system.

As such, students were asked to prepare for class by reading social justice authors bell hooks, Jonathan Kozol and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., producing formal written reflections on their experience riding the city train across differently-privileged neighborhoods, and maintaining a “Critical Reflection Journal” linking course content and class discussions to their twenty-five-hour service-learning experience.

Because Professor Jane’s section of SLSJ engages a diverse body of students from across the university and integrates social justice pedagogy with service-learning practice, it was an ideal place to locate my study and direct my main research question: How do university students perceive themselves, each other and the greater social context as a result of engaging in a service-learning for social justice course?

**The Students.** Often taken by MC students in fulfillment of their engaged learning requirement, SLSJ courses tend to consist of MC students across departments and disciplines. Other students who enroll in SLSJ tend to be majors or minors in the department of social justice and community service, respectively. Students who enrolled in SLSJ are generally between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five but during the quarter I observed, ranged between nineteen and twenty-four.

Highlighted in Table 1.1 below, there were twenty-four students ranging in age from nineteen to twenty-four years old, and representing nationalities across oceans and continents including Egypt, China and Nigeria in Professor Jane’s section. Out of the twenty-four students in Professor Jane’s course, twenty-three students signed permission notes to have me observe them during class discussions, as well as time in between. Out of the twenty-three students, eighteen were male and seven were female. Due to the
limitations of observational research, demographic information regarding students’ race, ethnicity and gender were assigned by what students revealed about themselves in class.

Table 1.1. Race, Ethnicity and Gender Breakdown of Students in SLSJ

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Race/ Ethnicity</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bria</td>
<td>Arabic/Muslim</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>Nigerian/Muslim</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faisal</td>
<td>Egyptian/Muslim</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohommad</td>
<td>Egyptian/Muslim</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sammy</td>
<td>Mexican/Catholic</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kristin</td>
<td>White/Christian</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph</td>
<td>White/Christian</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophie</td>
<td>White/Christian</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keyante</td>
<td>Black/Christian</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luis</td>
<td>Latino/Christian</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott</td>
<td>White/Christian</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eduardo</td>
<td>White/Christian</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amit</td>
<td>Indian/Christian</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>White/Jewish</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keisha</td>
<td>Black/Christian</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda</td>
<td>White/Christian</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbad</td>
<td>Arabic/Muslim</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tane</td>
<td>Pacific Islander/Muslim</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman</td>
<td>Slavic/Christian</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachit</td>
<td>Indian/Christian</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claudia</td>
<td>Mexican/Christian</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>Mexican/Christian</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similar to the class’s demographics, the students who agreed to be interviewed for my research project came from incredibly diverse backgrounds of race, religion and socioeconomic class. Table 1.2, labeled, “Demographic Breakdown of Interviewed Students in SLSJ,” demonstrates that out of seven students interviewed, there were two Black students, two White students, one Mexican student, one Indian student and one student from the Pacific Islands. Additionally, three students were Christian, two were Muslim and one was Hindu. Interesting to note is that there was only one female who
volunteered for my study however, this number tends to make sense in the context of a class where the male students outnumbered the female students by roughly one to three, with eighteen male students and seven female students. Table 1.2 breaks down the students who agreed to being both observed and interviewed as part of my study. Due to the personal contact that interview research tends to generate, demographic information regarding race, ethnicity, religion and class were stated by student’s themselves during private interview sessions.

Table 1.2: Demographic Breakdown of Interviewed Students in SLSJ

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Race/ Ethnicity</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>working class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keisha</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>working class poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>middle class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>upper class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachit</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>middle/ upper class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tane</td>
<td>Pacific Islander</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>middle/ upper class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sammy</td>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>lower/ middle class</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the tables offer a brief overview of students by positionality, or race/ethnicity, gender, religion and socioeconomic class, it is important to note that background and experiences also contribute to student perceptions of self and privilege. For this reason, the following is a description of each student participant.

**Interviewed Students.**

*Alex.* Alex describes himself as a Black, Muslim male from a lower/ middle-class background. Originally from West Africa, Alex attended several public schools of varying degrees of segregation and is very aware of systemic inequality. For this reason, Alex hopes to apply his interest in health science and rap music to bringing awareness to diseases that predominantly affect poor minorities like sickle cell and Hepatitis B.
Keisha. Keisha describes herself as a Black woman from a working-class background. Growing up in an area of a town that was predominantly Black and poor, Keisha considered herself lucky to go to a nearby public school that was well-resourced and predominantly White. As one of the few minorities, Keisha reports feeling like she always felt like had to strive for excellence when attending elementary through high school, to prove that she deserved to attend the privileged school as much as her White counterparts who lived closer to the school’s location. As a college junior, Keisha is majoring in elementary school education and hopes to be a role model for the minority students she teaches.

Chris. Chris describes himself as a White Christian male. Growing up in a predominantly White suburb, Chris took several years to serve in the military before attending university. Majoring in IT, Chris is interested in pursuing a career in systems security.

Joseph. Joseph describes himself as a White Christian male from a predominantly White neighborhood. Growing up amid a very segregated city that held strict regulatory as well as physical barriers against desegregation, Joseph is very aware of racism, prejudice and structural inequality. As a declared health science major and community service minor, Joseph believes that the two disciplines together offer him a humanitarian view of society. Joseph spends his time volunteering upwards of eight hours a week, in addition to his coursework, and hopes to reconcile the divide in healthcare upon graduating from university.

Rachit. Rachit describes himself as a Hindu male of Indian descent. Growing up in a middle-to-upper class family in a predominantly white suburb, Rachit considers
himself privileged. Over the course of SLSJ, Rachit expresses a new awareness for social justice issues that he is exposed to in class as well as his service site.

_Tane._ Tane describes himself as a Muslim male from the Pacific Islands. Growing up in post 9.11 society, attending private Muslim schools and his local mosque, in a predominantly Muslim community, Tane has come to experience a deep personal awareness of social inequality based on personal discrimination and prejudice. Consequently, Tane looks to service to maintain a standard of social equality for marginalized groups as part of his service requirement for SLSJ as well as in the outside volunteer work he is engaged in.

_Sammy._ Sammy describes himself as a Mexican male from a working-class family. Growing up in a “dangerous” area of the city where he witnessed many friends commit to gangs and even die, Sammy feels lucky to have been able to attend a selective enrollment high school which, according to Sammy, has enabled him to be one of the first members of his family to attend college.

**Methods of Data Collection**

Following IRB approval, I sought to find a course that applied the social justice tenets to a service-learning experience. Following a series of inquiries from MC personnel, I found the social justice department and the SLSJ course in particular, as a course that subscribed to a social justice pedagogy and a service-learning requirement. Once I made contact with the department chair, she immediately sent me the names of three professors that were all teaching the class in the winter quarter of 2016. Of the three, Professor Jane was the only instructor with personal experience as an activist.
When I reached out to her in the summer of 2015, she was incredibly receptive and agreed to meet with me before the beginning of the fall quarter of 2015.

My initial meeting with Professor Jane was very relaxed. Having taught the class “five or six times before,” Professor Jane was well-acquainted with the course’s logistics as well as the challenges in teaching a course with social justice objectives to a group that is not homogenous. At that time, we spoke at length about her approach to class discussions and student engagement based on her past experiences. We also touched on her expectation for me as a participant observer in her class. Specifically, Professor Jane made it clear to me that by no means did she simply want me to observe the class by just listening and taking notes but rather, to participate in class discussions so that students would come to view me as an insider as opposed to a benign observer.

According to Creswell (2003), ethnography as a research process, “involves extended observations of the group, most often through participant observation” where the “researcher is immersed in the day-to-day lives of the people and observes and interviews the group participants” (p. 68). Similar to Creswell’s (2003) description of a participant observer, Goffman (1989) describes the role of an ethnographic participant observer as undergoing a process of

subjecting yourself, your own body and your own personality, and your own social situation, to the set of contingencies that play upon a set of individuals, so that you can physically and ecologically penetrate their circle of response to their social situation or their work situation or their ethnic situation. (as cited in Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2011, p. 42)
In line with Goffman’s description, because I wanted to understand how students in SLSJ made sense of the course as it related to themselves, I believed the best way to do this is to submit my own “body,” “personality” and “social situation” to the lived context of the course. For this reason, my research approach is best situated as an ethnography that engages in participant observer research. Toward this end, I attended the SLSJ course and prepared for class, alongside the students, by engaging in course readings and reflections and observing in class discussions. In so doing, I obtained a deeper grounding of how students made sense of this course as well as how that grounding has come to shape their understanding of themselves, as it relates to others and the broader social context.

In the fall quarter of 2015, Professor Jane and I continued to communicate over email and meet in-person before the course began in early January of 2016. In the beginning of winter quarter 2016, I attended SLSJ. On the first night of class, all twenty-four enrolled students attended, representing a variety of nationalities (including Mexican and Egyptian), religions (including Muslim, Catholic, Jewish and Hindu) and socio-economic classes. Following an incredibly gracious introduction from Professor Jane, I presented my study to the class and handed out consent forms for students to sign and return indicating their voluntary consent to be observed or interviewed over the course of the quarter. All students enrolled in SLSJ were encouraged to sign a form pledging either their participation in observations only or their participation in observations and interviews, as a consenting adult (over the age of eighteen). Those students willing to participate in the interview component of my research received a total of $15 in Starbucks gift cards: $5 to be handed out upon the completion of the first interview and $10 to be handed out upon the completion of the second interview.
Although students had seven days to consider participation in my study, by the end of the first class, all students but one agreed to participate in my observational research by signing and returning observational consent forms, making for twenty-four participants in the observational component of my study.

As a field-based researcher, my research data collection consisted of observations and interviews. According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), the term observation “captures a variety of activities including both hanging around in the setting - getting to know people and learning the routines - and using strict time sampling to record actions and interactions and a checklist to tick off pre-established actions” (p. 234). Important to note here is that the term, observation, as defined by Marshall and Rossman (2016), is not just used to portray a particular setting or capture the participants’ words, but rather enacted to record a myriad of events that call upon the senses including the smell, feel or sound of a room, or a given participant’s body language, intonation, affect and/or meaning. This nuance is particularly important as it applies to my research with students enrolled in SLSJ. Specifically, students were observed during the SLSJ course for the purposes of examining how this course and its social justice objective, shaped their perception of self, others and the broader social context. These perceptions were recorded by handwritten field notes that were later extended in typed form that reflected spoken language, participant body language, social interactions as well as other unspoken communication.

In addition to taking handwritten field notes of class observations, I also conducted interviews with the professor and seven of the enrolled students during the quarter. According to Hatch (2010), interviews conducted in qualitative research
generally fall into three categories: informal, formal and standardized. As it applied to my study, my interview technique fell between “formal interviews,” where the researcher directs the interview process through a time-limited series of planned questions often recorded by the interviewer (Hatch, 2010) and “informal interviews,” which are largely conducted without a structure in the field (Hatch, 2010) to be more of a semi-structured interview technique.

The reason why semi-structured formal interviews were the best fit for my research is due to the fact that, unlike informal interviews which are largely conducted without a structure in the field (Hatch, 2010) and structured interviews which draw largely on post positivist principles by asking the same questions of all participants in the exact same order as a method of comparison, informal interviews err somewhere in the middle by eliciting participant responses while refocusing digressions (Chiseri-Strater & Sunstein as cited in Hatch, 2010). Interviews were audio-recorded, between forty-five and sixty minutes in length, and conducted twice during the course of study: once during the second through the sixth week of the course (January – February of 2016), and a second time at the end of the course or a few weeks after it was over (February to May of 2016).

Important to note, is that SLSJ had a truly diverse group of students from various races, cultures, religions, genders, socioeconomic levels and nations. In light of the various population stratifications, Professor Jane attempted to employ both a pedagogy for the privileged and marginalized within one classroom. As such, structural issues of white privilege, white critical consciousness and activism (Camacho, 2004; Green, 2001; Nenga, 2011; Swalwell, 2013), as well as social inequality, discrimination and prejudice
across race, religion, gender and socioeconomic status (Duncan-Andrade, 2011; Ginright & Cammarota, 2002; Gutstein, 2013) were addressed in course lectures, assignments and discussions. Requesting students to apply course readings, service experiences and their own positionality during class discussions, perceptions of activism were present, yet varied.

Methods of Data Analysis

Once observational and interview data was obtained, all handwritten notes and audio recordings were immediately expanded into typed transcripts, for the purposes of identifying codes. In qualitative research, there tend to be two approaches researchers employ when coding ethnographic research: open coding and focused coding (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2011; Flick 2008; Gall, Borg & Gall, 2007).

According to Flick (2008), ethnographic researchers engage in open coding for the purposes of obtaining a “deeper understanding of the content and meaning of the text beyond paraphrasing and summarizing it” (p. 317). Towards this end, I engaged in open coding by reviewing my typed transcriptions of course observations and student interviews, and actively highlighted moments in the transcripts that were germane to my research questions around what students came to understand about themselves with relation to others and the broader social context by participating in a service-learning for social justice course. I did this by repeatedly reading through my transcribed notes, highlighting passages, and copying and pasting similar passages into separate documents filed under the name of the code that emerged. For example, as a result of open coding, a common code that emerged was that students experienced challenges with their community organization. Mentioned by five different students during class observations
and interviews, and recorded in my transcribed notes, Community Organization Challenges emerged during open coding as Code #25. I continued to apply open coding to my data to determine emergent themes or concerns until the point of theoretical saturation (Flick, 2008; Gall, Borg & Gall, 2007, p. 469). As a result of this effort, I emerged from the process of open coding with thirty-six codes.

Following open coding, I then undertook a more focused coding effort, where I reread transcribed data for topics that had been already identified in open coding, for the purposes of refining codes and themes to contribute to my categories. According to Glaser (1978 as cited in Chamaz, 2014), focused codes “advance the theoretical direction of [the] work” because “these codes are often more conceptual than many initial word-by-word, line-by-line and incident-with-incident codes” (p. 56). That said, focused coding was conducted, not for the point of finding more details to add to my categories, units or descriptions, but rather to see what patterns emerged once these codes were collapsed into broader categories and themes. I did this by printing out my 36 codes and organizing and reorganizing them into broader categories. From there I took my broader categories and returned to my research question, on what we can understand about students and their perceptions of self, other and the broader social context as a result of engaging in a service-learning for social justice course, in order to determine themes.
Trustworthiness

When conducting qualitative research, it is critical that the study be reflective of sound quality and rigor. Lincoln and Guba (1985), among the most frequently-cited scholars on the topic of trustworthiness in qualitative research, assert that in order to determine the trustworthiness of a given body of research, questions around validity (internal/external), reliability and objectivity (p. 290) should be asked and answered. Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) critique of validity, reliability and objectivity for qualitative research is that the vision of an objective observer is not possible because the core of these assumptions tend to subscribe to a positivist empirical ideology. Due to Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) wariness to apply quantitative methods of data analysis to qualitative research, they describe a series of “techniques” to conduct qualitative research that achieves the criteria they outline including techniques for establishing “credibility,” “transferability,” “dependability” and “confirmability.” To evidence my study as best aligned with Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) definition of trustworthiness, I will lay out how my research also employs the “techniques” for establishing “credibility,” “transferability,” “dependability” and “confirmability”.

In order to ensure “credibility” in qualitative research, Lincoln and Guba (1985) list seven techniques qualitative researchers can employ including “prolonged engagement,” “persistent observation,” “triangulation,” “peer debriefing,” “negative case analysis,” “referential adequacy,” and “member-checking.” For the purposes of my study, I employed “persistent observation,” in so far as I was able to attend all eleven SLSJ classes and was able to consistently observe all classroom interactions and exchanges. Additionally, I was also able to implement “peer debriefing” and “member checking,” as
I frequently followed up with student participants and Professor Jane to check meanings and intentions of interactions during course discussions, activities, service experiences as well as one-on-one interviews. Furthermore, I was able to ensure “credibility” that my research results did in fact reflect the perceptions of how students came to understand themselves, each other and the broader social context by engaging in a service-learning for social justice course by asking the student participants themselves, who are arguably, the only ones who can legitimately judge the “credibility” of the results.

Second, I employed Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) techniques for establishing transferability by using thick description in my notes of class observations, student interviews and peer-to-peer, and peer-to-instructor interactions. In so doing it was my hope that my research is able to be transferred to a different context, while retaining the same results.

Third, I employed Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) technique for establishing confirmability by keeping an “audit trail” or a record of all of my observations by handwritten notes and audio-recorded interviews for which the results could be confirmed or corroborated by others. I did this by documenting the procedures for how I set up my research site, obtained research participants, collected my research, transcribed my data as well as how I came to my emergent codes, categories and themes. Furthermore, I was able to employ the technique of “triangulation,” by confirming the intention of what was said and intended in my notes and audio recordings by conducting member checking with Professor Jane and other student members, as well as discussed my research results and analysis with my dissertation chair, who pressed me to consider and reconsider my findings.
Finally, I employed Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) technique for establishing *dependability*, or ensuring that my results would appear again should the same study be conducted for a second time, by conducting my interviews within the same private office space, scheduling interviews within the same timeframe in the quarter and asking the same questions around students’ perceptions of service and attempting to keep my observations, conduct and interview style as a researcher intentionally neutral so as not to create an additional variable. To this end, however, I realize the challenge of ensuring external validity in qualitative research, as it would be difficult to duplicate the backgrounds, experiences and positionalities of my research participants, as well as the time this research was conducted.

Throughout my research, it was my intention to not just observe students and their perceptions of a change model of service-learning. As a participant-observer who was asked to participate in class discussions and individual reflections, I was also very aware of my own deepening awareness of social injustice, social inequality and social change, as a result of this engagement. Consequently, coming to this study of social justice education and experiential learning for my own personal reasons, I feel like my work obtained “transformational validity” in so far as my own ability as the researcher to obtain a deeper, nuanced understanding of myself while working with my research participants.
Ethical Considerations

My study reflected the ethics code outlined in The Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) at the University of Miami’s IRB training in that research participants will be treated with beneficence, “not only by respecting their decision and protecting them from harm, but by making efforts to secure their well-being.”

Every precaution was taken to ensure the data was secure. All identifiers were pseudonimized, recorded and stored under aliases. Additionally, all electronic documents and computers were password-protected and only I, as principal researcher, had access to my computer. The audio recordings were destroyed as soon as they were transcribed and checked for accuracy, and the typed transcripts of expanded handwritten observations were destroyed upon completion of the dissertation even though the IRB gave me permission to retain this information.

Informed consent was sought and documented for every participant in the study. To ensure the protection of vulnerable subjects, informed consent forms were created, approved by IRB (see Appendix C, p. 136), and prepared for participants and his/her legally-authorized representative in accordance with Code 46.116. That said, all participants were over the age of eighteen.

Researcher Positionality Statement

According to Bailey (2007), a researcher’s ability to connect with their study participants for the purposes of gathering information depends largely on their “history, personality, values, training, and status characteristics – gender, race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation and social class” (p. 6). Therefore, in light of my experiences teaching
and learning across boundaries of privilege, it is important for me to reflect on my positionality as it has informed data collection and analysis.

I was forty-three in the year of my fieldwork, married, with two small children at home. I suspected this divide in age and stage of life might be difficult for me to bridge as the ethnographer, in so far as to recognize that the ethnographer does not offer a “view from nowhere” (Bordo, 1990 as cited in Bettie, 2003, p. 23). Throughout my twenty-year teaching career, I have had the opportunity to work with a variety of students, schools, communities, and cultures both domestically and internationally. These experiences have given me tremendous insights into the learning and development of young people, as well as how individuals process that learning. In the past eight years, I have worked for MC as an adjunct faculty instructor in the departments of Writing and Education, respectively. These experiences have enabled me to familiarize myself with the concerns, challenges and perceptions of undergraduate students, as well as the concerns, challenges and perceptions specific to students attending MC. In addition to these perceptions, I have also come to familiarize myself with the challenges a social justice class can present having taught my first social justice course a year before I conducted my research.

Despite these experiences, my identity as a white, heterosexual, middle-class woman in many ways represents the dominant discourse in terms of my relative privilege. I was aware that when students would speak with me, they saw me as a member of the dominant culture. An example of this is during an interview with one of my student participants. Keisha remarks that one of the preschoolers she works with in her service site asked her why she speaks like a specific White teacher even though she looks like his (Black) mom. She explains, “I don’t know Deborah, how many people have told you that you are so well-spoken?” According to Keisha’s response to me as her interviewer, it is
clear that despite my best effort to maintain social neutrality, I will always be viewed as a white woman.

In addition to being viewed as a White woman, and member of the dominant group, I also realize that my status as an adult and instructor in the university also served to separate me from the students in the class. With this in mind, I was careful to dress more casually when I came to the university to attend SLSJ classes and meet with interview participants. Furthermore, to gain access to students and student cliques, I acted mindfully when approaching and engaging with students in SLSJ, and entered relationships through group-sanctioned methods (Bettie, 2003) rather than approaching them in a more authoritarian way.

Limitations/Delimitations

I recognize my findings might be limited to the students, school, professor and time within which my research is situated. Although consistent with ethnographic case study, I realize that my sample of twenty-three students and one professor is a relatively low number compared to how many students take SLSJ over the course of a year as well as how many university students take a service-learning for social justice course in general. I also understand the limitations of studying a student sample engaged in an eleven-week class, which is a relatively short period of time for students to make connections with course content, other students in the class, the professor, and most significantly, the community partners. Finally, I understand the limitations of studying a student sample made up of unique backgrounds and experiences, at a specific moment in time.
Despite these limitations, this study has the potential to provide compelling evidence about how student perceptions of themselves, others and the larger social context are shaped by engaging in a social justice course with a service-learning component. As such, these findings have the potential to make contributions to the scholarship of social justice and service-learning pedagogy and practice in how educators are able to make sense of what students come to understand about themselves, in relation to others and the broader social context.
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others”
~ Mahatma Gandhi

Introduction

Gandhi’s quote above speaks to not only the importance of helping others, but also the very important notion that in helping others, one is able to thereby discover oneself. Well-known for his commitment to nonviolent action as an initiator for social change, Gandhi was no stranger to the conceptions and critical nature of self-fulfillment by engaging with others. Assassinated almost seventy years ago, the world we have come to know since Gandhi left this earth has changed considerably. Despite the divide of time and space, the perception of understanding of the self by engaging with others, remains a critical piece in Western educational practice. For this reason, observing college students express their developing perceptions of self and the world around them while engaging in a service-learning class proved, for me, to be a critical view into how self-positionality is created, shaped and remolded.

My qualitative study sought to explore how students come to understand themselves with relationship to others and the broader social context as a result of engaging in a change model of service-learning. In order to get at these perceptions, students were observed and interviewed during an eleven-week social justice course with a twenty-five-hour service-learning component where students were asked to reflect on these experiences through course readings, written assignments, class activities and discussions.

In support of the main research question, how students come to understand themselves with relation to others and the broader social context from engaging in a
change model of service-learning, this study sought to examine the following sub-questions: What do students come to understand about social inequality, social justice and social activism in the context of this course? What do students come to understand about their own positionality though this experience? What do students come to understand about themselves with relation to others and the broader social context through this experience?

Following a three-month, intensive observation and interview process, including data coding and careful analysis, several themes emerged with regards to how student perceptions of social inequality, social justice and social activism are shaped in the context of a service-learning for social justice course with relation to self, others and the greater social context. First, how do students come to understand themselves and the role they play in their service site as helpers, activists and/or role models, and how they come to perceive differently privileged others. And second, how do these interactions affect student perceptions of the community organizations they work with and the work that they do in the context of a social justice for service-learning course with relation to their own future plans beyond the university?

**Theme 1: Student Perceptions of Self: Helper, Role Model and Activist**

As students engaged with the course material and their respective community organizations, the broad theme of Perception of Self emerged in terms of how students came to understand their role in their respective service sites. Student perceptions of self seemed to splinter into three smaller subthemes including perceptions of self as helper, role model, and/or activist.
Self as Helper. A prominent finding that emerged in my research was that most students described the underlying work they did with their community partners in their service in terms of helping.

An example of how the “helper” perception emerges in my research is when Chris, during a private interview, was asked what he perceives his role to be in his service site. Chris states, “Well, for me…just I enjoy being able to help people that need help and want help.” Despite the fact that Chris, simultaneous to visiting his service site, is regularly attending a weekly course on how to enact social justice ideals, he still emerges from his experience with the isolated perspective of himself in his service site as “helping” individuals who need help.

It is important to note, however, that not only did the “helper” perception emerge in a change model of service-learning, but also that the subtheme of “helping” is nuanced in that not all students perceive “helping” in the same way. While some students perceive their role in their service site as “helping” those individuals who are served by the community organizations, others view their role in their service site as “helping” the community organizations themselves. For example, both Chris and Joseph serve at separate immigration centers and while they reflect similarly on the nature of their work as “helping” the center tutor children by volunteering their time, they arrive at different perceptions for their respective roles in the agency. Chris says, “Helping children that don’t really have any other option…[because] if the children being served) weren’t in this program, they would probably be at home.” In other words, for Chris, “helping” consists of assisting children with their homework so that they do not stay in their homes without any outside assistance in school.
In contrast, Joseph perceives his role at the immigration agency as more nuanced than “helping” the children themselves, but also the organization and community at-large.

Yeah, I’m think I’m helping because, um, the money the (community organization) gets is very limited by the government, and I think college students can help a lot um, and probably even high school students—uh, some of them, can help with homework, or just being able to talk with someone. Because when we’re not there, there are only two people that run it, and they would not be able to, they are like kids there running around like everywhere, and they would not be able to… give individualized attention.

For Joseph, “helping” at the immigration agency does not just consist of assisting students to complete their homework, but rather “helping” consists of providing students an ear to listen to as well as assisting those running the agency in the face of low-funding and minimal volunteers to help manage the program. Evident from Joseph’s quote, the term “helping” is nuanced and is not necessarily restricted to charity motivations. Rather, “helping” can also be used to describe the student perception that service site hours contribute more to the individuals that students directly interact with, but that they also contribute to assisting the community organization and community at-large.

Still, the perception of self as “helper” is not just limited to students who believe their role is to help the individuals served by the community organization, or the community organization itself, but it can also be widened to embrace the larger community. A case in point is in Tane’s explanation of the work he does in his service site as not just “helping” the organization, in this case a protection agency for women, but also the community organization he serves. Tane states, “I actually really do believe in
their message, and I think it’s a very important organization.” Furthermore, Tane’s ability to connect the work he does with his community organization to helping the broader society also has real effects on how he perceives his responsibility to his own Muslim community.

The biggest thing I can do, is to give back to the things I know the most about. So part of it is that in volunteering at my mosque/community center, just recently I made fliers for them, and made marketing for them, and MC’d one of their events… Giving back to me is kind of a specific thing. I know people tend to use it in a large way, like I want to give back… Everyone is raised in a community in some way. Like no one is completely isolated from a community. And I think, if you continue to share the same beliefs as that community. To me, if you are enriched, you should go back to the community that raised you and give it a little bit of a boost and so that the next generation of people that the community raises has as much or more awareness than you did when you go out. So part of what that means is that I feel a sort of responsibility to my mosque community and ah, you know, not just help out in some material way like the fliers, but actually interact with the community… um, using whatever I learned in college.

For Tane, “helping” consists of not just assisting his community organization or those served by it. Rather, Tane perceives his role in the protection agency, for the women he works with, as inherently tied to the responsibility he feels for his own Muslim community. Using the writing, marketing and thinking skills he gained in college, Tane acutely feels his obligation to “help,” not just the women of the community organization he works with, or the community organization leaders and mission themselves, but rather
to “give back to” the very community that gave him the foundation that led him to college and to obtain skills to facilitate his ability to contribute in the first place.

To conclude, student perceptions of their role in their service-learning site as “helping” is by no means straightforward. There are different ways to perceive “helping” depending on who the student perceives they are helping. Furthermore, these perceptions can shift contingent on context. For example, my findings reveal that who students feel they are “helping” can range from the service recipients the community organization serves, the community organization and its leaders, the community itself, and even the larger world. Furthermore, unlike the literature that seems to assign students feeling like “helpers” as an outcome of service-learning objectives and reflective of the structure of a charity model, my study found that students can also depart from change models of service-learning that have deep ties to coursework, class discussions and written assignments, designed to reflect on social inequality and students’ own positionality as “helpers” as well.

**Self as Role Model.** A second finding that emerged in my research was that students who self-identified as coming from Black or Latino families from low-income or working class backgrounds, and/or first-generation college students, described their role in their service site as a “role model” for younger minority service recipients.

An example of how the “role model” perception emerges in my research is in Keisha’s description of an interaction she had in her service site, located in a neighborhood elementary school with Davis, one of the two-year-olds to whom she is assigned. She explains,
Like, all the teachers (at the school) are either White or Latina, now they hired another Black teacher, so it’s just me and Ms. Lurie, so are like we are like the only Black teachers there...And like one of the two-year-olds came up to me, and his name is Davis and he was like, “Ms. Keisha, you look like me, I mean – he’s just like you remind me of my mom.” I’m like and it just really made me realize that when I go to Beecher Elementary School, I mean, even when I’m not in a predominantly African-American school, even when I’m in a predominantly Caucasian place, regardless of what I sound like, I am a role model, and someone who can be looked up to that looks like that. And so, even if my experiences were different, I can still say that like, hey, you can persist, and you can succeed if you want to succeed. And like, I’m not just like telling you that, or talking out of the side of my face, I genuinely believe that you can because I could.

For Keisha, perceiving herself as a role model was a critical outcome of her service-learning experience. When asked to think further about her positive influence on children with similar backgrounds to her own, unsurprisingly, Keisha recalls her own experience as a young Black student in a predominantly White school, being influenced and inspired by a teacher who looked like her.

I think it’s really important to have someone that looks like you. Because I remember my first Black teacher … her name was Senorita Johnson. I was like where did you go to school, because like, I wanted to know because I was just like her. And she actually went to MC. And I’m just now thinking about the influence that she had on me. I didn’t realize. It made me think, oh I can do this if I really
want to because she did. Regardless, I don’t even know where she was from, like

I didn’t care. We have that bond of being African American I think.

Emerging from a service-learning for social justice course as a role model was not unique to Keisha, as a Black woman from a working-class background, but it appears to be a pattern in students of color from working class backgrounds who appear to have “made it” based on their standing as a college student.

For example, Alex, a male student, who appears to share similar social markers to Keisha including skin color, dialect and speech pattern, also uses the word “role model” to describe the way he is perceived by the children he encounters in his service site at an urban neighborhood elementary school as a recess monitor.

I guess like a reluctant role model. Because I, because I can relate. I mean where they’re all like, so why are you here? I’m like, I go to college, I go to Midwest College. And they’re all, but you dress like this and you’re all of that, you know, and I can talk to them like that. I can conveniently have a conversation with them, you know, interact with them because of that it’s like oh well, it’s like I can sort of see kids kind of gravitate toward me, because they think I’m cool or something like that. Which is like (laugh) you know, cool or something like that (laughs), because I’m not trying to be like this super cool kid, or anything like that.

Like Keisha, Alex also perceives himself as a role model for working class Black children like himself. Unlike Keisha, however, Alex actively tries to relate to the children he serves with his dialect as well as his dress to show them that college is attainable.

Important to note, however, is that the emerging perception of self as a role model is not unique to Black students from working-class backgrounds. Sammy, who self-
identifies as a Mexican male and first-generation college student from a working-class background, also speaks to his perception as a role model in his interview as well. Like Alex, Sammy also relays he, too, would intentionally wear his college sweatshirts to his service site so the children he worked with would ask him about his college experience. When pressed further, Sammy explains that it is important for students who want to go to college to know someone who has had college experience to help guide them.

‘cause when I was growing up, no one would talk to me or have those conversations. Like the steps, or how it was to apply. Like most of it I had to learn on my own, so it’s kind of like, you know when you have family members who have gone to college, you kind of know how it is. But out of my entire family like uncles and cousins, I was the first person to go to college.

Sammy explains that the position he finds himself in his service site, as a role model, extends beyond providing a good example of a community member who is able to succeed by attending college, but also as a resource for how to obtain scholarships and apply to and pursue an education beyond high school.

To conclude, in contrast to a literature base that does not really address how low-income, minority, and/or first-generation students come to experience a service-learning model for social justice, the perspective of the self as a role model is a significant finding. Not only does the role model perspective give a window into how students relate to the service recipients in their respective service sites, but it also serves to reaffirm students’ perception of their role in their service site as more than just helping the service recipients and/or the community organizations they serve, but also serves to contextualize for students where their position is on the spectrum of power and privilege. In this way,
students gain a better understanding of who they are, where they have come from and where they are going.

**Self as Activist.** The third subtheme that emerged from my research was that students described themselves as “activists” in their respective service sites. A key tenet in social justice pedagogy, *activism* is often the focused objective of many service-learning for social justice courses. As noted in the literature review, the very foundation of social justice pedagogy, rooted in the teachings of Freire, speaks to enabling students to commit to an “action upon reality” for the purposes of encouraging critical thought, discursive dialogue and transformative thinking.

For this reason, it was not surprising to find several students perceive themselves as activists, both in relation to the class curriculum and in their service sites. The first case in point is in Tane’s perception of himself as a social activist. A Pacific Islander male student from a middle-class Muslim family who grew up in post-9/11 America, Tane has come to know tremendous discrimination in his personal life and consequently looks to service to maintain social equality. In his description of his role in his service site working for an organization that assists survivors of sexual exploitation, Tane admits,

> I’m getting a sense about survivors of sexual exploitation, whether it be rape or human trafficking, what kind of issues they are going through, what kind of things the average person can do to help. Kind of, what kind of work goes into organization building, and what I can do to help.

As evidenced in Tane’s quote above, students who come to perceive themselves as activists by engaging in a social justice course with a service-learning experience, are able to see how they are able to address power and privilege inequality through their own
social action as a result of seeing social activism in action. Or rather, if Tane had not been exposed to the service experience of helping survivors of sexual exploitation, and never had conversations in class about structural inequality on the basis of gender, race and ethnicity, he might never have come to understand how it is that women can be sexually exploited, and moreover, what he “can do to help.”

Similar to Tane, Joseph also perceived his role in his service site as an activist however, unlike Tane, Joseph’s perception of self as activist comes more from his own position of power and privilege, and less from watching his assigned community organization. It is important to note, though, that Joseph’s perception of his own power and privilege is very much rooted in the curriculum of SLSJ. He notes several times in class as well as during our private interview, that before Professor Jane’s class he just “didn’t know” the depth of structural inequality. In the example below, Joseph responds to his prior understanding of the way public schools were funded prior to taking SLSJ:

Like I didn’t know it was so much based on property taxes. I can’t believe I didn’t know that. I feel embarrassed that I didn’t know that. I just thought the money flowed, flew from the government. I didn’t know. So like I can see they are not given the same opportunities. They have like thirty-five, thirty-six kids in a classroom, in Harrington Square that’s what I hear. They don’t even have science teachers in some cases. You know, not what I had. And you know, public school, should be the same.

Joseph further explains that as a consequence of SLSJ, and his new conceptualization of structural inequality, he understands his role as an activist in his service site.
I think it makes me realize the privilege, and the duty that someone, anyone, in a higher position, that isn’t subjected to certain injustices, and it’s their call to action to help voice the concerns and address them.

For Joseph, a white male student from an upper class Christian family, service is a way to balance the privilege he was born with and address his white guilt. Earlier in the transcripts, Joseph recalls growing up in a very segregated pocket within a major urban Midwestern city,

[I went to a] nearly all white school, … I mean maybe 5 or 6% are African American or higher. …it is, predominantly white, it is mostly ahh, Christian, very conservative area, and not much diversity. And it’s so strange, because it’s neighboring Diego, and I think it’s got a history, institutionalizing and like preventing African-Americans from entering. I mean, I don’t know, it’s like a heresy but there is like a street called A--- that like divides D--- from G---.

There’s a word for it, but there’s something like on top of a fort, they have like a gun thing, that like, it’s like a turret, or something. And like it sits on top, and they had it with like guns on it when the riots broke out.

Growing up in a very segregated community that held strict regulatory as well as physical barriers against desegregation created an early awareness of structural inequality for Joseph. A Health Science major and Community Service minor, Joseph admits that as a junior, once he takes on a service assignment with a community partner, he tends to keep that commitment long after the course is over. As a junior in college, Joseph has continued to work with two service sites he has picked up in previously-attended community service classes, that give him the opportunity to work with disadvantaged
children as a reading and science tutor. Maintaining both for three years and going, Joseph viewed himself as a social activist in the organizations he serves, long before entering SLSJ.

Despite their different positionalities, Tane and Joseph both maintain a past and ongoing commitment to service outside of the university classroom as a result of an ability to link the key tenets of social justice pedagogy to their own personal backgrounds and experiences. Armed with a profound understanding of structural inequality, prejudice and discrimination from their personal lives, both students were able to perceive their service engagement to have broader effects than the service-learning requirement of the course itself. That said, students who described themselves in their service sites as activists tend to have a history with discrimination and/or prejudice and therefore are predisposed for activism before entering the service-learning for social justice course.

**Conclusion: Perceptions of Self.** According to my findings, students emerged from a service-learning for social justice course carrying three prominent perceptions of self: helper, role model and activist. And although these perceptions are nuanced and deeply rooted in student positionality, background and experiences, they can tell us a few things about how students are conceptualizing their service experience in the context of a social justice class.

First, in contrast to the literature that attributes student perceptions of self as “helpers” to more charity-based models (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004), students can still emerge from a service-learning for social justice course with the perception that they were engaging in their service site to “help,” as all students tended to understand that their ultimate role in their service site was to help. In that same vein, the term “helping”
is incredibly nuanced and by no means driven by purely charitable motivations. For example, although Joseph and Tane also used the term “helping” to describe their role in their respective service sites, they were describing their work as affecting not just the individuals they worked with but also their community organization, its greater mission, as well as the broader social context.

Second, unlike the literature which tends to categorize students into stagnant categories (Westheimer and Kahne, 2004; Green, 2011), these perceptions of helper, role model and activist are not stagnant labels, as they frequently shift and change and are able to be held in conjunction with other roles. For example, even though Alex and Tane perceive their respective roles in their service-learning sites as helping the community, they are also still able to see their positions as activists as well, as these perceptions of self are not mutually exclusive of each other.

Third, what ultimately determines student learning outcomes from a service-learning experience in terms of perception of self is not necessarily related to the service they engaged in, the course they are enrolled in, or the community organization with which they partner, but is deeply impacted by the student’s own positionality that they bring with them when they first walked into the class. For example, only working-class, first-generation minority students Keisha, Sammy and Alex emerge from their service experience with the conceptualization of themselves as role models. And only students who had previous experience with prejudice and discrimination, like Tane and Joseph, were able to perceive their role in their respective service sites as social activists.

It is important to note, however, that SLSJ still had a profound effect on student perceptions of self, even though engagement in the course did not necessitate a change in
perception. In other words, even though student perceptions of self as helper, role model
and/or activist did not appear to change as a result of taking Professor Jane’s service-
learning for social justice course, the course did provide a space for students to learn,
engage and reflect on social justice issues and relate them back to their own positionality,
background and experiences. For example, for Joseph, SLSJ provided a space for him to
examine his preexisting perceptions of self as an activist, generated by his experience
growing up in a profoundly unequal community. Consequently, as a result of his
engagement in SLSJ, Joseph obtained a better understanding of his role, not only in his
service site, but as an agent of change in society.

Theme 2: Student Perceptions of Self in Relation to Less Privileged Others

As students engaged with the course material, class discussions, and written
reflections, as well as spent time with their respective community organizations, a second
theme that emerged was how students perceived themselves in relation to less privileged
others. Similar to the first theme, student perceptions of others were not as effected by the
service-learning for social justice course they engaged in as much as they were
influenced by their own positionality, background, and/or experiences, or how students
understood themselves on the scale of power and privilege before entering the course and
service experience. As a consequence to these varying positionalities, student perceptions
of self with relation to less-privileged individuals seemed to splinter into smaller
subthemes that captured their emotional reactions including feeling guilty, straddling the
insider/outsider continuum, and feeling silenced/avoidant.
Feeling Guilty. According to my research, feeling guilty for disadvantaged individuals was a prominent finding in my observations and interviews. Student expressions of feeling badly for having more privilege than disadvantaged individuals manifested in three ways: articulation, blame and anger. In other words, while some students articulate that they felt guilty for having more resources, privileges and/or opportunities than less-privileged others, other students blamed less privileged others for their disadvantages, while others expressed outward anger and even avoidance when discussing less-privileged individuals.

In the literature, feeling guilty for having more resources than somebody else is a common outcome of social justice pedagogy for privileged students (Camacho, 294; Cipolle, 2010; Dunlap et al., 2007; Nenga, 2011; Swalwell, 2013). The reason for this is attributed to the belief that social justice and service-learning practice is rooted in Freirian ideology. Or rather, the oppressors, or privileged classes, need to recognize their “oppressive” behavior, and therefore open to the possibility of working with the oppressed in solidarity for the purposes of enacting a more equal society. For this reason, when this pedagogy is implemented with privileged students who are asked to realize the role they play in structural inequality and the benefits they receive due to their privilege (McIntosh, 1989), it is often met with feelings of guilt (Butin, 2006, 2007; Camacho, 2004; Green, 2001; Nenga, 2011; Swalwell, 2013).

Because social justice pedagogy is grounded in Freirian ideology, it was not surprising to see that guilt was a prominent finding as a common emotion expressed by students engaged in a service-learning for social justice course. How this guilt manifested however, was largely contingent on students’ respective experiences, backgrounds and
positionality. According to my findings, guilt for disadvantaged others manifested in three ways: through articulation, blame and guilt and anger/avoidance.

Guilt and Articulation. Students expressed guilt in relation to their service site for two reasons: they had more privilege than the service recipients they serve, and two, they couldn’t come as frequently as the service recipients would have liked. Students who felt guilty for having more resources, privileges and/or opportunities than less-privileged individuals they encountered in their service site, often attributed their advantages to “being privileged” or “lucky.” For example, Rachit asserts,

I feel like being upper middle class I have a lot of privileges. Like I’ve never gone hungry or not had a place to sleep at night. So I feel pretty privileged to have a place and food and clothes that are new.

Like Rachit, Joseph also reports feeling guilty when discussing the racial inequality he grew up with in his hometown. Growing up in a privileged, White neighborhood surrounded by pockets of poor, black neighborhoods, Joseph confesses,

I feel a bit of despondency at moments… you know if people were to ask me where is your home, I would have said you know, it’s back in M--, but now it’s not just that. I mean, I don’t go to certain neighborhoods, and you know I feel bad.

Even though Joseph “feels bad” for the way his white, privileged community is so close in proximity to neighboring poor, black neighborhoods, he admits to perpetuating this physical segregation by not “go[ing] [in]to certain neighborhoods” and thereby contributing to the perception that those with less than him have less advantages due to their moral and cultural deficiencies.
Keisha also speaks about having more resources growing up compared to the children she serves in her service site. Unlike Rachit and Joseph however, Keisha grew up very similarly to the children she engages with in her service site. Describing her family as “poor and Black,” Keisha’s distance from the children she serves, on the scale of power and privilege, is relatively closer than her peers. Unlike the children she serves however, Keisha admits attending a predominantly white, privileged public school with significantly more resources.

Oh my gosh, there were more resources in my school (than in the school she fulfills her service hours)…. The kids go to school where the pencils are like this (shows an inch with her fingers), the principal was like giving us a tour of the school and he was like so proud that they had like soap and paper towels in their bathroom. And so like that’s a privilege to have soap and paper towels in the bathroom. Like they could fit it into their funding. And that just, I was like, I would never known about this. Like my experience of elementary school, I would never even dreamt of not being able to do my work because I literally didn’t even have a pencil.

Despite their varying positions on the scale of power and privilege, Rachit, Alex and Keisha all admit to having been brought up with more advantages than the individuals they engaged with in their service site and consequently, feel guilty.

A second reason why students reported feeling guilty with regards to engaging in a service-learning for social justice course was because they could not attend their service sites due to scheduling restraints. For example, Sammy, wishing to attend his service site more than just once or twice a week, struggles with not being able to give more time to
the underserved population he serves due to his own student commitments. Sammy admits during a class discussion in week four,

    A lot of them are so excited to see us when we go there. It’s incredible the impact you have on them. They’re like are you going to come back tomorrow? It’s incredible. It’s hard when you have to say, I have class today.

Similar to Sammy, Joseph and Rachit also report feeling guilty they cannot attend their understaffed service sites more often.

    Because when we’re not there, there are only like two people that run it, and they would not be able to – there are like kids there running around like everywhere, and they would not be able to, you know, give the individualized attention, in talking and asking them how their week was. So I think that, hopefully, it is in fact helping.

Joseph’s response was typical for students working in understaffed organizations set up to assist children in the areas of teacher’s assistant, recess monitor and homework helper.

    In conclusion, in alignment with service-learning literature, there is a notable tendency for students to feel guilty for the disadvantaged individuals and communities they work with in their service sites. Consequently, there is a tendency for students to try and reconcile these feelings by bringing additional resources to their service site (i.e., Kesha) as well as continuing to serve at their service sites beyond the course requirements (i.e., Tane, Joseph and Sammy).

    Like students’ conceptions of self as helpers, role models and activists, student perceptions of disadvantaged others were not predicted by the model of service students engaged in, the course or the professor, but rather depended heavily on positionality,
background and/or experiences, or how students understood themselves on the scale of power and privilege before entering the course and service experience. In other words, students who articulate their feelings of guilt for disadvantaged individuals tended to have personal experience with prejudice, discrimination and activism at a young age, and were therefore more able to voice these feelings.

Guilt and Blame. Important to note is that not all students who felt guilty when engaging with individuals with less privilege than them were able to articulate that the emotion they were feeling was, in fact, guilt. Rather, other students expressed their uncomfortable feelings for disadvantaged individuals by blaming them for their disadvantage.

A case in point is with Chris, a White male student from a privileged suburb, who expressed guilt for his privilege when describing the children he worked with in his service site at an afterschool program for immigrant children. Chris reflects,

And then, there’s like a couple of kids who like they just don’t care. You can just tell like in their home, there is probably like no emphasis at all at like them doing good in school. Cause like they like, kind of have an attitude. And honestly I don’t really see how like, kids in kindergarten are having that without, like some sort of influence. So?

Chris’s description of kindergarten kids who “don’t care” or who “have an attitude” as affected by some sort of at-home “influence” seems to imply that the reason for the children’s expressed apathy is due to bad parenting rather than the social challenges many immigrants face when arriving to a new country. Rather than perceiving the kindergarten students he serves as struggling with language, culture and financial
stability, Chris emerges from the service-learning for social justice course with the
perception that disadvantaged individuals earn their disadvantage due to cultural and/or
moral deficiencies.

It is important to note that Chris’s positionality as a White, male from a privileged
background adds to the relative distance between him and the demographic with which
he works. At a later point in the interview, he remarks that the course “showed me that…
their schooling is not as good as it could be- compared to what I grew up with.”
Understanding that gap in privilege and opportunities, Chris still fails to demonstrate an
understanding for the population he serves outside of a “deficit” framing.

Chris was not alone in his understanding of less privileged individuals as
deficient. Other students mentioned similar feelings to Chris, in week two of class, while
discussing their experience fulfilling the class assignment of riding the local train
throughout different neighborhoods in the city. Sophie, a White female student from an
upper-class suburb notes, “I feel like there are some people who are pretending to be
homeless on trains, maybe to buy drugs or something.” Amit, a male Indian student from
an upper-class suburb echoes Sophie’s sentiments, “That’s why I never give money to
homeless people in public. I just don’t do it….I don’t feel it’s right to give anyone money
so they can buy drugs.” Similar to Chris, Sophie and Amit also blame disadvantaged
others for their disadvantage, like the homeless individuals they encountered on the train.

In conclusion, a second finding in my research, is that some students expressed
their guilt for disadvantaged others by blaming disadvantaged individuals for their
disadvantage. In other words, poor, immigrant children are poor due to cultural and/or
moral deficiencies and homeless people are homeless due to their immoral decision to
use drugs. And similar to previous themes, student perceptions of others were not
determined by the model of service students engaged in, but rather depended heavily on
positionality, or how students understood themselves on the scale of power and privilege
and their perceptions of individuals with less privilege than themselves, before entering
the course and service experience. For example, Chris’s, Sophie’s, and Amit’s perception
of individuals affected by poverty and homelessness as somehow deserving of this
disadvantage is a point of view embedded in their consciousness long before enrolling in
SLSJ, and very much a construct of their own positionality on the scale of power and
privilege as middle to upper-class people with very little experience interacting with
individuals with less privilege than themselves.

Guilt Expressed through Anger and Avoidance. Not all students expressed feeling
guilty in a passive way. Rather, others expressed their guilt in terms of anger and
defensiveness. Professor Jane speaks to this phenomenon in her interview that I
conducted with her several weeks before class began. When asked what her biggest
challenges were with teaching SLSJ, Professor Jane answered that she struggles the most
with a particular type of student who often finds themselves in her class.

Every once in awhile I’ll get a student, usually it’s a male student, that feels
particularly closed down, and maybe targeted. Oftentimes it’s a white student.
…I think maybe because they don’t get teachers that do that, or maybe it’s
because it just is really threatening for them to talk about this work and this stuff.
Politically they feel very marginalized, from a positionality perspective they feel
very marginalized, and so, I think with those students, I am really working to sort
of, rope them back in. Um, but, I find it really helpful for those students to be in
the classroom because it allows the other students to figure out how and in what ways they are going to engage with that student. Oftentimes, that student sort of represents a perspective that feels really hard to navigate or get around. Professor Jane then goes on to describe this type of student she had as recently as this past summer.

I had a student who, um, was really aggressive, white, male, took up a lot of space in the room. And I think he was confronted a number of different times by students in the classroom, I worked with him, and then by the fifth or sixth week he just dropped off the map. And that was really hard for me. I just kept trying to reengage and reengage, and it was clear that --- it could have personal, it could have been a lot of things…

True to Professor Jane’s prophesy, Scott, a White, male who “took up a lot of space in the room,” displaying many of Professor Jane’s descriptions, ended up dropping the class in week six. Scott’s behavior, as an angry and defensive White male, had strong effects on the class. Most notably, these effects were most clear in class two when Professor Jane introduced the class to a graphic organizer describing the estimated median average of wealth among Blacks, Latinos and Whites in the year 2013. Shown in this excerpt from my notes below, Scott exemplifies guilt through aggressive behavior.

Scott laughed openly and announced to the class, “Latinos have all their money in cars.” Quick to throw out stereotypes about racial groupings other than his own, Professor Jane acknowledged Scott’s “contribution” before turning to the class and asking to describe how the figures make them feel.
Sophie: “It made us all really uncomfortable to be guessing really low numbers for the uh.. Black people.”

Sammy: “I’ve seen that before and it’s really sad but once you know why it’s that way it gets even more depressing.”

Scott: “Who are they?”

Sammy: “White people?”

Scott: (forced laugh)

Sammy: White institutions

Scott: White Institutions?

Scott’s reaction of anger, defensiveness, and ultimately avoidance in week seven when he abruptly dropped the course, presents a third way of expressing guilt in light of a service-learning for social justice course that intentionally presents topics that are challenging to White privilege.

Anger and avoidance, as an outcome of feeling guilty, is inherently tied to students’ understanding of the nature of inequality. While individuals who appear angry and avoidant might behave differently than other students who are able to articulate their feelings of guilt, or blame disadvantaged individuals for their disadvantage, ultimately all reactions stem from the same feelings of guilt for having more resources, opportunities, and privileges than disadvantaged individuals affected by homelessness, poverty, general inequality and/or some sort of moral deficit.

In conclusion, similar to my findings on students’ perceptions of self, the way students were able to articulate their guilt for disadvantaged others is very much hinged on their own prior backgrounds, experiences and positionality before entering the course.
For example, Keisha, Alex, Joseph and Sammy’s respective experience with structural inequality made them aware of their relative privilege prior to the course, thereby facilitating their ability to articulate their guilt for disadvantaged others during SLSJ. Whereas although Sophie, Amit and Scott, also felt guilty, due to their personal inexperience with structural inequality, this guilt manifested as blame of disadvantaged others. Furthermore, Scott’s positionality as a dominant white male with little personal exposure to disadvantaged others before entering SLSJ, ultimately effected his expressed reaction of anger and eventual avoidance. And similar to my first finding, that SLSJ had relatively no effect on student perceptions of self, it did provide a space for students to learn, engage, examine, and reflect on social justice issues and relate them back to their own positionalities, backgrounds, and experiences. In so doing, it can be argued that SLSJ provided students a place to react to disadvantaged others for the purposes of thinking through how they came to those perceptions and how they can use them towards affecting social change.

**Feeling Like an Insider/Outsider.** A second perception students expressed while engaging in a service-learning for social justice course was feeling like they straddled the insider/outsider continuum. Or rather, there was a trend for some students to feel like they were insiders among similarly privileged individuals encountered in their service site, which simultaneously made them feel like outsiders during class discussions among their peers. This positionality shift was expressed in student accounts as feeling like an insider and outsider contingent on context.
Although service-learning literature does not include many accounts of students feeling like they straddle an insider/outsider continuum as a result of engaging in a service-learning for social justice course, the work of Curry-Stevens (2007) does shed some light on privilege relativity and the notion that privilege should not be viewed in the binary but rather as a complicated, nuanced position that tends to shift and change contingent on context. For example, a White poor man has arguably less privilege than a White middle-class man, but more privileges than a Black poor woman. For this reason, Curry-Stevens’ (2007) scholarship on privilege relativity sheds a great deal of light on student perceptions of straddling the insider/outsider continuum, as they navigate experiences with individuals with more or less privilege than themselves.

An example of Curry-Stevens (2007) privilege relativity from my research occurs in the case of Sammy, who expresses a deep compassion for the public school children he serves in his service site as a recess monitor:

I think it was just like more the idea like, these kids, like um, grew up, some of them grow up where there’s a lot of gun violence. And like I grew up with a lot of that. Like, I couldn’t go out, I couldn’t enjoy being a kid, because I couldn’t go outside. So like the natural thing would be to play like video games or something. And a lot of them would be like yeah I can’t go out sometimes, because there are a lot of gangbangers. And it’s kind of sad to experience that. To see people get shot, it’s like yeah. Cause when I was 7-12, I probably saw seven people get shot in my neighborhood-like on my block, like right in front of my house. Comparing his own experiences as a child, and the dangers he grew up with that prohibited him from playing outside, to the children he works with, Sammy is able to
align himself with the individuals in his service site as an “insider.” Yet, the “insider” status Sammy feels with the students in his service site also makes him feel like an “outsider” in class when he discusses this alignment, especially in light of discussions with students of white privilege, like Scott:

I guess what I always find challenging is to get people to see reality that don’t want to see it. Like the day that Alex and the kid with the cap on (Scott)… That’s why most white people feel that way, they were raised that way. I mean if I were raised in a white neighborhood I would probably act white too.

Sammy goes on to note his insider status enables him to understand power and privilege in a way his peers are unable to comprehend. That learning about social inequality can never take the place of actual experience.

So I can read there were twenty shootings in the S----, but depending on where I live, I don’t really care. It’s just that.. experiencing something, it just hits you really a lot harder, when someone dies in your family, than if a stranger dies.

Noting the inexplicable tie between an individual’s given experiences and their overall worldview, Sammy describes feeling like an insider with regard to the students he serves who, like him, are from working-class Mexican families who live in neighborhoods plagued with violence, yet also like an outsider in relation to some of his classmates like Scott, Sophie and Chris, who come from White, middle-class families.

Feeling like an insider/outsider was most commonly experienced by students who grew up with a similar position of power and privilege to those individuals they engaged with in their service sites, as they examined course materials, and came to understand their own positionality on the scale of power and privilege. Because power and privilege
operate on a spectrum, and an individual’s position on the scale of power and privilege is
determined by positionality, or race, religion and socioeconomic class, students who
voiced feeling like an insider/outsider often expressed feeling simultaneously pulled and
aligned with their peers and the individuals they served in their service sites depending on
the situation. And similar to my other findings regarding students’ perceptions of self and
feeling guilty, feeling like an insider/outsider, was very much determined by students’
individual backgrounds, positionalities, and experiences they carried before attending
SLSJ. For example, only students who shared similar positions on the scale of power and
privilege to the individuals they served in their service sites like Sammy, could
simultaneously feel like an insider in his service site, and an outsider during class
discussions, yet also like an insider during class discussions and an outsider at their
service site as a result of their shifting positionality from citizen of the community of P--,
SLSJ classmate and college student.

**Feeling Silenced/Avoidant.** A third subtheme that emerges in the research is that
students experienced feeling silenced during class discussions held during a service-
learning for social justice course that focused around their own historically-marginalized
populations in a service-learning for social justice class.

According to a wide body of research, in addition to feeling guilty, students
frequently depart change service-learning experiences with feelings of apprehension and
avoidance (Butin, 2006, 2007; Camacho, 2004; Green, 2001; Nenga, 2011; Swalwell,
2013). Much of the reason for this had to do with the topics that social justice education
poses to students regarding their relative privilege and power with relation to
disadvantaged others. Discussed earlier in this chapter in terms of student perceptions of
disadvantaged individuals lacking resources, under the first subtheme of feeling guilty, I offered evidence from the research that demonstrates that students frequently depart service-learning for social justice models feeling guilty, which has similar implications for also feeling silenced and avoidant. What has not been considered, however, is that students also feel silenced when discussing their own lack of privilege in the context of a service-learning for social justice course.

An example of feeling silenced, as a result of engaging in a service-learning for social justice course, emerges in the interview transcripts of Tane, a male senior who describes himself as a first-generation South Asian student from a conservative Muslim family. Growing up in post-9/11 America, he admits that, “there’s still a part of me that is afraid to be fully Muslim.” Growing up in a close-knit Muslim community outside of a Midwestern city and attending an Islamic school, Tane reports wearing his cultural Muslim dress frequently yet choosing to stop when he ventured outside of his community due to the reaction he received at a very young age.

It was a few years after 9/11…. So this happened maybe when I was 11 or 12. I’ve got insults hurled at me, I’ve gotten a gun pointed at me once. This was interesting. I got stuff thrown at me, etcetera. So like I was like… I don’t know if I should (dress this way).

In other words, Tane speaks to an early understanding that there are components of his identity that need to be “silenced” in order to be accepted into American culture. Tane notes that he feels the pressure to “silence” his conservative Muslim beliefs not only in mainstream culture but also in his interactions at the university. Yet, despite this pressure, Tane recognizes that the university does attempt to address the “silencing” of students
whose beliefs, cultures and customs go against the dominant discourse. One example of
this is a multicultural university club that reached out to all students to attend their annual
interreligious celebration in traditional garb. Tane reports feeling internally conflicted on
whether or not to attend the event in his religious Muslim dress; however, once he did,
having a very positive experience because even those individuals who oppose his identity
as a Conservative Muslim are silenced in the greater university discourse. Tane
concludes,

I came to realize, [this university] is not going to do that. Even if people had
tomatoes ready to throw at me, they’re not going to mentally engage with that
idea, because for better or worse, even their views, however bigoted, are kind of
like silenced.

In addition to events organized by the diversity club, the university also offers places for
students to break their “silence” from voicing points of view that go against the dominant
discourse in some university classrooms. One example is in social justice courses like
SLSJ. Yet, similar to Tane’s experience in organized campus events, he also reports
feeling “silenced” due to his faith in class.

My peers here, when they hear about my own views, they would just label as
conservative like – oh like Fox News- like you know, again, when I talked to
them, there is a bit of ideological bullying.

Tane continues, that many courses at the university, like SLSJ, attempt to address
ideological bullying with the conception of safe spaces but are unsuccessful.

I hate safe spaces. I can’t stand the concept. But anyway, those ideas about a safe
space, is like oh, anyone can talk about whatever, but when they’re like, well,
we’re the majority, so like whatever you’re going to talk about is going to be pitted against the majoritarian view-so like whatever that’s going to look like.

Despite the university’s substantial attempts to make space for different types of ideas by sponsoring university events and fostering opportunities to promote classroom discourse, according to Tane that “silencing” still occurs when student views conflict with liberal Christian ideology, or the dominant discourse, as a perspective that appears to prevail in much of the university’s discourse.

Similar to the other subthemes, of feeling guilty and straddling the insider/outsider continuum, students who reported feeling silenced also were predisposed to feeling this way due to their own respective backgrounds and experiences they incurred as a result of their race, religion, gender, and class, among other dimensions as a result of their shifting positionalities.

Students emerged from a service-learning for social justice course voicing three dominant feelings when engaging in class discussions and serving in their service site: feeling guilty, feeling like they straddle an insider/outsider continuum and feeling silenced/avoidant. When applied to the research, my findings revealed four main points.

First, the emergence of guilt in a service-learning for social justice course among student participants is common and nuanced. Namely, while many students conveyed feelings of guilt, not all students expressed it in the same way. These reactions ranged from being able to articulate one’s guilt, to blaming disadvantaged others for their disadvantage, to feeling silenced, angry, and even avoidant. Furthermore, student participant reactions to guilt seemed to align with their own positionality, or relative experience with prejudice and discrimination. For example, students who had experience
with relative prejudice and discrimination generally tended to articulate their guilt, where students from traditionally privileged positionalities and backgrounds exhibited behaviors of defensiveness, silence, and anger.

Second, in contrast to the literature on service-learning for social justice models that pinpoint guilt and avoidance as common outcomes of students of White privilege, my findings revealed that guilt is not just a consequence of White privilege. Rather, because privilege is relative and operates on a continuum, guilt was found to be a common finding among participants from Black and Latino cultures, as well as students from all income brackets depending on who the individual was “standing next to.”

Third, not all students are silent in a service-learning for social justice class because they are uncomfortable with the topics a social justice pedagogy addresses. Silence was also found to be a method students implemented to abstain from voicing an unpopular perception that contradicted dominant ideology.

And fourth, not all students in SLSJ aligned themselves from the position of student (in class) or a volunteer (in their service site). Rather, students’ perceptions of self, or where they viewed their position to be on the scale of power and privilege, was deeply contingent on a given individual’s perceived positionalities, background and experiences. Referenced in my findings as “straddling the insider/outside continuum,” students who aligned themselves with the population they frequently served found themselves feeling at times more aligned with the groups they were serving instead of their fellow classmates. Consequently, several students reported feeling like they had straddled different worlds depending on their location. Not surprisingly, students who reported feeling like they “straddled the insider/outside continuum” tended to be
minorities from low-income families. And finally, SLSJ did not necessarily necessitate a shift or change in student perceptions of self and feelings of guilt for disadvantaged others, the course did provide a space for students to learn, engage and reflect on social justice issues and relate them back to their own positionalities, experiences, and backgrounds. Or rather, engaging in SLSJ offered students a space to think about their own positionality as an insider/outsider.

**Theme 3: Student Perceptions Beyond the Service-Learning Classroom**

A third and final theme that emerged in the research was that students emerged wanting to address the social concerns presented in a social justice for service-learning class. This last theme emerged as students discussed their partnerships with their service site and tended to frame their experiences in three ways: frustrating, venerating, and exemplifying. In other words, when students encountered challenges in their service site that prevented them, in their perspective, from contributing to the common good, they voiced frustration. When students encountered individuals in their service site who, in their perspective, were contributing to the common good, they voiced respect. And when students could see how they could contribute to the common good in the future, outside of their service site, they voiced hope and a plan for incorporating service into their future.

**Service-Learning as Frustrating.** When prompting students to discuss their engagement in their service site, while taking a service-learning for social justice course, a prominent finding in my research was that students often incurred frustration in their service sites. This finding was not particularly surprising considering a significant
literature base that speaks to the challenges with university and community partner alliances (Tryon, 2008; Tryon and Stoecker, 2012; Sylvester, 2012). Tryon and Stoecker (2012) write about the frustration students incur from their service engagements at length in their well-known text, *The Unheard Voices: Community Organizations and Service-Learning*, from the other side, the community organizers. Tryon and Stoecker’s (2012) interviews with community organizations especially revealed that community organizers are frequently frustrated with students for the challenges that come with short-term service often attributed to service-learning engagements that are linked to a short-term university course. They maintain that there are four challenges that short-term service-learning falls under including: investment of time in working with short-term service-learning students, incompatibility of short-term service-learning with direct service, issues with timing and project management and community and campus calendar issues (p. 58).

Similar to the literature, students often voiced frustration when describing their experiences in their service sites. In alignment with the literature, the structure of SLSJ was not created with community partners in mind. Rather, as an eleven-week course with a twenty-five-hour service component, the structure of SLSJ tended to favor the university calendar by structuring a short-term service requirement to fit a university class. For this reason, it was not surprising to find several students emerge from the class with the perspective that engaging with community partners led to frustration on their end as well.

In contrast to Tryon and Stoecker’s (2012) finding, students in SLSJ found their partnerships with community organizations frustrating for different reasons than calendar
issues and short-term assignments. Rather, they voiced frustration with their community partners for disorganization, poor leadership, and even an unwillingness to make much-needed changes. Several students reported disorganization on the part of their community partners which was, perhaps, the most prominent source of frustration. An example of this is reflected in Tane’s reflections, voiced during a private interview. In the passage below, Tane relays his experience working with an organization that was too disorganized to direct their student volunteers.

The problem is that when we asked them what we can do there was never any kind of answer- to the degree to that we were like we’ll do anything…and they were like no, not today. You know like maybe later. And it was like always maybe later. And then they were like no, come, come, and we would venture out there but when we got there, they would be like, no there’s nothing.

Following these reflections, Tane accounts for how he finally asked his community organization if there was some way he could bring the organization’s mission to the university. He alleges that his community partner agreed that they would set up some table in the student union to sell dolls, bracelets, and offering brochures on the organization’s mission statement.

And we had to cancel with the Office of Student Involvement three times because they never gave us the actual material. And some of the days we had to set up, they just didn’t respond to us. And one of them, just like left for New York. It was just extremely difficult to communicate with them.

When they were finally able to coordinate, the community organization did not give Tane and Sophie the correct material. After attempting to connect with their organizational
partner several times, Tane and his partner from class, Sophie, eventually had to find a different placement in week seven of the eleven-week quarter.

Although frustration was a common description for students when describing their experiences with community partners, what students were most frustrated with was not just the community partners themselves, but rather their own inability to serve the common good. A case in point is in Tane’s interview when he concludes, “It really is too bad it didn’t work out with C--- because I really believe in their mission there, you know, what they are trying to do.”

In summary, a prominent finding in my research is that students appeared to voice frustration when working with community organizations. However, this frustration was not necessarily directed at the community organizers so much as the students’ own inability to figure out a way to get around these challenges so that they were able to direct their efforts at supporting the common good.

Admiration. A second finding that emerged in my research under Student Perceptions Beyond the Service-Learning Classroom, is that when students encountered individuals in their community organizations who, in their perspective, were contributing to the common good, students expressed admiration. Despite this, there is very little existing research outlining students’ perceptions of community organizations. Nevertheless, student expression of admiration for their community partner for contributing to the common good was a prominent finding in my research.

A case in point is in the reflections of Rachit. A Health Science major considering a profession in medicine, Rachit expresses admiration for the employees of
the tenant organizations he works with who work tirelessly to appraise tenants on their rights to lawful living conditions.

I was surprised to see the great chemistry they had with each other. Like I was like, people come here everyday, like this is their job, and like, to come here and like this is your job. Like I’m sure they’re not like making bank, like a lot of money off of it, but really learning about the people that help, like is really kind of a subculture in and of itself and I really wasn’t aware of like how much these people are really willing to give. It’s a small reward for this output, was like, really, it was like really neat to see this, so it was good.

From his reaction, it appears that as a direct consequence of working with his assignment community organization, Rachit not only obtains an exposure to people who are driven by a passion for what they do rather than the paycheck that they receive, but he also develops an admiration for the way individuals in his community organization are able to build community within themselves as well as contribute to the common good.

Like Rachit, Tane also describes observing the passion demonstrated in the community organization to which he was assigned. Working with an organization that addresses the sexual exploitation of women, Tane describes a specific day when a state lawmaker tried to pass a bill that allowed drinking in strip bars, and observed the workers come together to combat this action.

In seeing that I noticed something about, kind of the individual feeling that each person in the office had for the issue. That’s something that I never really thought about before. Because again, when you are working in an organization, you kind of see the organization, yeah people are empowered,
people are coming together, but rarely is it about the importance of each person in the organization having some sort of personal connection, and personal ethical responsibility to what is happening, and I think that is one of the things that makes an organization the most powerful and the most influential when everyone in the organization genuinely, from their own experience, believes a certain thing and aligns with the ideals of the organization.

Evidenced above, Tane notes that in working with his community organization, he has come to admire the deep passion, empowerment and commitment each employee seems to possess for the organization and its mission.

In summary, my findings demonstrate that many student participants voiced their admiration for their partner organizations. This admiration was not just directed at the community organizations themselves, but the very individuals who operated them for their hard work ethic, commitment to social issues, as well as their passion and ability to bringing people together towards a common goal.

**Incorporation of Service in the Future.** The third subtheme that emerges in the research under *Theme 3: Student Perceptions Beyond the Service-Learning Classroom* is that students experience feeling that the work that they do in their service-learning sites has some relevance or direct application to their future plans. Similar to the other subthemes in this section, there was very little research in service-learning literature on students’ incorporation of service in their future however, it was a prominent finding in my research.

For some students like Keisha and Tane, who fulfilled their service-learning hours working with organizations they would like to work for following graduation, the link
from service site to career path is clear. For example, Keisha’s service-learning experience serving underprivileged African-American children in an elementary school is very much what she hopes to do following her graduation with a BS in Elementary Education. Similarly, Tane’s work providing communications for a nonprofit organization whose mission it is to address social injustice is also a plan he wishes to continue once he obtains his degree in Liberal Arts.

For others, however, their service-learning engagement might not have such direct links to their future career plans, but still provide relevant experience in the world beyond college. For example, Rachit reflects on his service working with a government-sponsored landlord/tenant organization, that his experience has provided him with real-world application.

[L]earning about tenants’ rights and learning about how it works. Diving into all that stuff is kind of brand new for me. I will soon be having to apply what I understand once I have a job and start living on my own rather than figuring all of this out.

In addition to being able to directly apply what they learned in their service-learning sites to an actual job or process, students expressed indirect takeaways from their experience in a service-learning for social justice class as well. For example, Sammy, Keisha, Tane, Joseph and Alex all expressed regret at the end of their service hours. Therefore, it was not surprising that Sammy, Tane, Joseph and Alex continued to work with their community partners for four weeks after the course was over.

Alex admits,

I do still go, out of class… Yeah. I’ve been a couple of times. Yeah, my
Like Alex, Tane also admits that as a result of his positive interactions at his service site, he is not just able to perceive his role in the future as being important to his community organization, the individuals he serves and the common good, but that this experience has led him to understand that he has a social responsibility to his own Muslim community.

Giving back to me is kind of a specific thing,…To me, if you are enriched, you should go back to the community that raised you and give it a little bit of a boost and so that the next generation of people that the community raises has as much or more awareness than you did when you got out. So part of what that means is that I feel a sort of responsibility to go back to my mosque community and ah, you know, not just help out in some material way like the fliers, but actually interact with them. Um, using whatever I learned in college. Not in an overall preachy way, as college students tend to do, but in some degree, at some level.

Tane reflects that returning to one’s own community for the purposes of “giving back,” or contributing newly acquired skills and talents to the community that gave him the educational foundation to obtain those skills and talents is a critical component of his belief system. Actualized through SLSJ, and the mandatory 25-hour service component, Tane was able to see, firsthand, how he can fulfill that mission and goal.

Overall, my findings revealed that interactions between students and their community organizations had profound and far reaching positive effects on students. Following a service-learning for social justice course, students expressed admiration and even professional emulation for their community partners. Furthermore, even when
criticizing community partners, student comments came more out of frustration of not being able to contribute to the common good, rather than a reaction to the organization’s poor leadership and disorganization.

Specifically, students emerged from a service-learning for social justice course voicing three dominant perceptions of community organizations and the work that they do when engaging in class discussions and serving in their service site: frustration, admiration or future emulation.

First, in alignment with the literature, service-learning work can be frustrating on both ends. Namely for the purposes of my research, students incur frustration when they feel they are unable to contribute to the common good. Perhaps the largest named obstacle for students’ efforts was the limitation of time. That said, although concerns with community partners were mentioned, students rarely blamed the community organization leaders themselves, but rather attributed issues they were having to the structural challenges of low funding, low staffing and high community need that served to redirect community organizers away from interns.

Second, the commitment and passion demonstrated by strong community partners can have a significant effect on students, on both a personal and professional level. Oftentimes, observing, hard-working, compassionate and dedicated individuals’ work towards fulfilling a moral, ethical, or social goal can be very empowering to university students, who are relatively new to the professional realm. Additionally, when students obtain the opportunity to use their talents and skills in the workplace, they are also presented with a good way to try-out, practice, and even network themselves for life beyond the university. As such, community organizations can be a solid place for
university students to find strong role models to demonstrate professional behavior, leadership skills and passion and engagement in social issues.

In conclusion, how students came to understand social inequality, social justice and social activism through a service-learning for social justice course was a fairly, nuanced and complicated process. My findings revealed that much of what students come to perceive about themselves, disadvantaged others and the world around them is strongly tied to their own positionalities, experiences and background, often obtained before the course began. How students perceived themselves in the context of a service-learning for social justice course, and ultimately in the context of a socially-unjust world, was perhaps most evident in the terms they used to describe the roles they played in their respective service sites. Whether they described themselves as helpers, role models and/or activists, it is important to note that ultimately student perceptions of self were tied to previous conceptions of self, which were deeply grounded in their own experiences and backgrounds. This was also true for the way students perceived disadvantaged others. Whether students expressed guilt, felt like an insider/outsider or pressured to keep silent/avoidant, ultimately these reactions were based on students’ previous conceptions of their own relative power and privilege.

Just because student conceptions of self were often determined prior to course enrollment does not mean that a service-learning for social justice course has no effect on student learning. Rather, it is to say that service-learning for social justice courses can benefit student learning by providing a space for students to learn, engage, and reflect on social justice issues and relate them back to their own shifting positionalities; and
arguably, as a result of this engagement, many students obtain a better understanding of their role, not only in their service site, but as agents of change in society.

A second finding highlighted in my research was that, as a consequence of taking a service-learning for social justice course, where the course objective was to locate and address social inequality and injustice through activism, students emerged with a strong intent to contribute to the common good. For this reason, interactions students had with their community partners were significant. When students were prevented from contributing to the common good, students voiced frustration. When students were supported with contributing to the common good, they voiced admiration for their community partner. And when students could see that the community organization they were paired with was successfully contributing to the common good, they voiced intent to work towards that effort in their professional future.

While these findings have merit on their own, they reach new significance when applied against a wide body of literature that came before them. For this reason, the next section will analyze my findings as they relate to the greater literature base of service-learning practice and social justice theory.
Chapter 5: Analysis

Much of the literature around social justice pedagogy is framed around the foundational work of Freire and his seminal text, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2000) (Cipolle, 2010; Duncan-Andrade, 2011; Ginright & Cammarota, 2002; Gutstein, 2003; Swalwell, 2013). Attributing the civil unrest in Brazil from the discord between wealthy landowners and impoverished laborers to the dehumanizing relationship between the “oppressors” and the “oppressed,” Freire makes the case that educational practices that operate on a similar model, where teachers serve as the “oppressors” and students serve as the “oppressed,” deny both students and teachers their “ontological and historical” rights as human beings. Furthermore, Freire claims that the only way for the “oppressed” (i.e., Brazilian working class laborers) to reclaim their humanity is by confronting their “oppressors” (i.e., wealthy landowners). Freire continues, that once hierarchies are flattened and the center is decentered, “problem-posting education” can exist, a pedagogy that encourages critical thought and dialogue, and encourages students to “engage in inquiry” for the purposes of “creative transformation.”

Mirrored on Freire’s pedagogy of “problem-posing education,” the objective of social justice pedagogy attempts to create an educational environment that flattens hierarchies for the purposes of creating an atmosphere that supports student inquiry, dialogue and creative transformation. Because the steps towards humanization are different for the “oppressors” and the “oppressed,” social justice pedagogy, and service-learning for social justice practices, as a subset of social justice pedagogy, is often divided along lines of privilege. Namely, in much contemporary work, poor minority youth (e.g., Ducan-Andrade, 2011; Ginright & Cammarota, 2002; Gutstein, 2013) stand
in for Freire’s oppressed, whereas white urban and suburban elites (see, e.g., Cipolle, 2010; Swalwell, 2013) have come to stand in for oppressors. Furthermore, similar to Freire’s recommendations towards humanization for the oppressors and the oppressed, in the literature, social justice pedagogy for poor urban youth looks different for white students of privilege. Namely, for poor urban youth, social justice pedagogy tends to direct students to stand up for their legal and historical rights through social action and activism (Ginright & Cammorota, 2002; Gutstein, 2003). In contrast, social justice pedagogy for white students of privilege often centers on the three overlapping themes of white privilege (Nenga, 2011), white critical consciousness (Cipolle, 2010) and activism (Cipolle, 2010; Nenga, 2011; Swalwell, 2013).

When paired with a service-learning experience, social justice education can have profound, transformational effects on student learning (Butin, 2007; Duffy, 2010; Pompa, 2002). Despite these positive outcomes, there are a fair amount of challenges that occur with the implementation of a social justice pedagogy and service-learning curriculum in higher education. First, Freire’s pedagogy is very much aligned with a liberal political agenda, a perspective not all university personnel may be aligned with (Fish, 2004; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Second, Freire’s model requires a decentering of the professor and a flattening of classroom hierarchy, despite a recent statistic that 83% of all higher education faculty use the lecture method in college classrooms (Butin, 2006). And third, not all students in higher education necessarily identify with the oppressor or oppressed groups, respectively. It is on this last point that my work is directed.
My study sought to explore what a service-learning for social justice course looked like in light of a differently-privileged student demographic. In contrast to the literature that seems to divide service-learning practice and social justice pedagogy along lines of privilege, it was my hope to obtain a more nuanced insight into how university students come to understand themselves in relation to others and the greater social context, particularly among individuals with differing positions, or positionalities, on the scale of power and privilege as a result of engaging in a social justice course with a service component.

In support of the main research question, *What do students come to understand about social inequality, social justice and social activism in the context of this course?*, this study sought to examine the following sub-questions: *What do students come to understand about their own positionality though this experience? What do students come to understand about themselves with relation to others and the broader social context through this experience?*

According to my study of how social inequality, social justice and social activism are shaped in the context of a service-learning for social justice course, my findings revealed the following to be true. First, much of what students come to perceive about themselves, disadvantaged others, and the world around them is strongly tied to their own perceptions of self, which is heavily influenced by their own experiences and background, often obtained before the course began. Whether they described themselves as helpers, role models and/or activists, silenced, insider or outsiders, or described others with guilt, apprehension, or avoidance, ultimately student perceptions of self were tied to previous conceptions of self, and their own positionality on the scale of power and privilege. And
second, that as a consequence of taking a service-learning for social justice course, students emerged with a strong intent to contribute to the common good. From these findings, two themes emerged in terms of how students come to understand social inequality, social justice and social activism in the context of a service-learning for social justice course: how students come to dismantle privilege and how students navigate and negotiate relationships with their community partners in serving the common good.

**Theme 1: Dismantling Privilege: Helping Who?**

The first theme that emerged from my study was the way in which students came to dismantle privilege. As previously noted, although students’ perceptions of power and privilege were most likely obtained before the course began, as strongly tied to their own perceptions of self, SLSJ offered a space for students to think, understand, and reflect on their own positionality, and the positionality of differently-privileged others. For the purposes of my study, these perceptions were recorded as students described the role they played in their service sites as helpers, role models and activists. How students ascribed these roles to themselves depended largely on who they perceived they were “helping.”

According to my research, all students in my study described themselves in their service sites as helping. This finding was of particular interest when paired with service-learning literature that tends to ascribe “helping outcomes” to charity models of service-learning (Illich, 1990; Westheimer and Kahne, 2004). Specifically, helping outcomes are ascribed to service-learning models that carry no real tie to school curriculum or any sustained reflection on service experience (Jones et al., 2008; Vogelgesang & Astin, 2000), where students incur less contact hours with community organizations (Stoecker, Tryon & Hilgendorf, 2009) and lack meaningful connections.
In contrast, the literature ascribes change models, or service-learning for social justice models to avoiding helping outcomes by addressing social inequality and offering space in the classroom through assigned readings, class discussions and written reflections encouraging students to serve alongside community partners and service recipients and encouraging deep reflection of students’ own positionality or relative power, privilege or marginalization.

Because SLSJ fit the parameters of a change model of service-learning, it was surprising to find that “helping” was such a prominent perception among SLSJ students. One reason for this deviation could be attributed to the use of the term helping, which is incredibly nuanced and not always reflective of purely charity motivations.

My study revealed that there are three different ways to perceive helping depending on who the student perceives they are helping. While some students believed to be helping the disadvantaged individuals who were being served by the community organization, others attributed their service efforts to the community organization leaders. Other students contended that their role in their service site helped to address the broader social community itself.

To obtain a better understanding for who students believed to be helping in their service site, it is helpful to think more about how students conceptualize privilege, or rather, how students conceptualize why some individuals need help or lack privilege while others do not. For this reason, it is important to consider the scholarship of Michael Katz (2013) and his research on conceptions of poverty.

As stated in the literature, Katz (2013) contends that there are six perceptions of what causes poverty: persons, places, resources, political economy, power and markets.
As it relates to my study, students attributed three of Katz’s (2013) six reasons for why individuals lack power and privilege: 1.) individuals who lack privilege, lack resources; 2.) individuals who lack privilege, suffer from poor moral character and; 3.) individuals who lack privilege, lack structural equality. Critical to note is that these perceptions strongly correlated with how students perceived themselves in their service site, or rather, what type of help they considered themselves giving as well as to whom. For example, students who attributed poverty to a lack of resources, tended to perceive their role in their service site as helping to fill the void of a lack of resources by providing hands-on assistance by mentoring, doing office work or bringing office supplies or food to their community partners. Whereas, students who perceived themselves as role models in their service sites understood helping as providing an example for younger, minority students to succeed in school, enroll in college and even leave a violent neighborhood.

An example of the connection between students’ perception of privilege and their self-ascribed role(s) in their service site is evident in the following case from my study. Chris, who articulated the belief that poor people lacked privilege due to poor moral character, perceived the “help” he was giving to his community partner, in this case an immigration center, as purely superficial in the sense that he was “helping” students with their homework, period. In contrast, Joseph, who articulated the belief that poor people lack advantage due to structural inequality, perceived the “help” he was giving to his community partner, also an immigration center, as not just “helping” students with their homework, but also the community organization and the community at large, who lacked the funds and staff to properly serve the children he was mentoring.

In breaking apart how a given student’s understanding of privilege relates to how
they conceive of themselves and their role within a given community organization, it is

critical to turn back to the literature to obtain a better sense of how students are arriving
at these perceptions of privilege, and how they relate to their own positionality.

**Poor people lack moral character.** As cited in the literature review, the

perspective that individuals with less privilege suffer from poor moral character has roots
that date back over three-hundred years to the Charity Organization Movement (Katz,
2013; Morton and Saltmarsh, 1997). Evidenced in many current social programs offered
by the government, public institutions, and private corporations, it is therefore not

surprising that many service programs operate on this perception as well, often classified
in the literature as charity-based (Westheimer and Kahne, 2004). Some of these messages
include the belief that charitable donations can replace larger policy, part-time untrained
volunteers can replace full-time trained professionals (Petras, 1997, p. 1587) and that

social problems are due to poor moral character.

Reverting back to Chris’ transcripts, for example, it is clear that he subscribes to
the notion that poverty is due to poor moral character. Disdainfully regarding the
kindergarten children he tutors as not caring or “having an attitude” due to some sort of
at-home “influence,” the implication here is that the reason for the children’s expressed
apathy is due to bad parenting rather than the social challenges many immigrants face
when arriving in a new country. Rather than perceiving the kindergarten students he
serves as struggling with language, culture and financial stability, Chris emerges from the
service-learning for social justice course with the perception that disadvantaged
individuals somehow come to earn their disadvantage due to some sort of cultural and/or
moral deficiencies.
Like Chris, Sophie and Amit also demonstrate their understanding of privilege as a lack of moral character, when discussing their respective experiences of fulfilling the class assignment of riding the city train. Sophie remarks that she does not give money to people on trains because she “feels like there are some people who are pretending to be homeless on trains.” Nodding his head in agreement, Amit responds to Sophie’s comment, “That’s why I never give money to homeless people in public… so they can buy drugs.” In other words, Sophie and Amit perceive individuals who have less privilege than they do, like the homeless individuals they encounter on city trains, are somehow at fault and therefore to blame for their own disadvantage, or in other words, *homeless people deserve to be homeless because they buy drugs with the money they receive.*

Students who perceived disadvantaged individuals as lacking privilege due to cultural or moral deficiencies perceived their role in their service site as “helping” the clientele of the community organization. Of the students who voiced the perception of less-privileged individuals as somehow accountable for their own disadvantage, most of them were White, and in one case Indian, but all of them describe their backgrounds as middle- and upper-class. Most notably, however, students who voiced these perceptions of the poor quite often lacked personal experiences with prejudice or discrimination.

And like the previous themes, student perceptions of others were not predicated on the model of service students engaged but depended heavily on positionality, or how students understood themselves in terms of power and privilege and their perceptions of individuals with less privilege than themselves before entering the course and service experience. In other words, Chris, Sophie and Amit’s shared perceptions of individuals
affected by poverty and homelessness as morally deficient was embedded long before enrolling in SLSJ. Furthermore, their perception of people affected by homelessness was embedded has more to do with their own positionality as middle- to upper-class individuals with little experience engaging with people with less privilege than themselves.

This is not to say however, that Professor Jane’s SLSJ course had no effect on Chris, Sophie and Amit, or that all students who were from middle- to upper-class backgrounds, exclusively perceived individuals with less privilege than them as morally deficient. Rather, SLSJ gave students a context to apply their backgrounds, experiences and previous knowledge to issues of social justice, inequality and activism. For example, Sophie and Amit were able to explore their perceptions around individuals affected by homelessness as a result of fulfilling Professor Jane’s assignment of riding public transportation from one side of the city and reflecting upon that experience. Furthermore, by participating in class discussion and listening to other students discuss their perceptions of privilege and power, students like Chris, Sophie and Amit had the opportunity to see that their shared viewpoint was not necessarily the only viewpoint. For example, following Sophie and Amit’s comments on their aversions to engaging with individuals affected by homelessness on trains, Joseph added that as a Black male, he felt badly when White people held aversions to him. To evidence this sentiment, Joseph recounts his experience on the train when a White woman wearing “very high, uncomfortable-looking shoes” refused the open seat next to him to instead, stand against the door for twenty minutes. Joseph shrugs, “I find it super foolish- I hope that woman breaks her heel- they’re just missing out they could have had a great conversation with
me about politics.” Evident from the different perceptions and positionalities voiced in
class, a service-learning for social justice course arguably offers students the space to
consider their own shifting positionality as it relates to power, privilege, and equality.

The resource disadvantaged. A second finding in my research was that students
who considered their role in their service sites as helpers and role models often attributed
the underlying causes of privilege to stem from resource insecurity.

In the literature, the perspective that individuals with less privilege, or that poor
people are poor because they lack resources or money is largely propagated by
economists and politicians. Katz (2013) asserts that the view that poverty is a problem of
resources arguably began in the 1960’s with economist Milton Friedman’s introduction to
the negative income tax and the federal government’s launch of the War on Poverty. In
recent years, however, Katz (2013) concedes that the conception of “resources” has
broadened to include human capabilities,” as a “measure identifying what is necessary for
an individual to realize her human potential and lead a full and productive life as a
citizen” (p. 272).

Janes Addams, and her partner Ellen Starr, were perhaps one of the first leaders to
attempt to reconcile disadvantaged individuals’ deficit of resources, in the work they did
with Hull House in Chicago. Offering non-dominant groups, including immigrants,
members of the lower classes, and women, the opportunity to learn technical, language,
and literacy skills, as well as a voice to advocate for their concerns for the creation of a
juvenile-court system, better working conditions, and the ability for women to vote (Jane
Addams Online Museum, 2009), Addams’ work with Hull House sought to redefine
common misperceptions of the poor perpetuated by the Charity Organization Movement
of the 1880s and 1890s and as such, was a direct reaction to the idea that society’s marginalized populations were responsible for their own lack of resources.

Students who voiced the perception that lack of privilege stems from resource insecurity tended to be from low income, minority families who had come to personally experience prejudice or discrimination. Often exposed to more privileged organizations, schools and institutions, students who held these perspectives were often quick to blame lack of funding or resources for the reason why the disadvantaged individuals they worked with in their service sites lacked privilege. In reaction to this thinking, students who held these perceptions often tried to make up for this inequality by bringing in pencils, food and equipment to their service sites or even just using their voice to advocate for better conditions.

Keisha is an example of a student who perceived privilege to stem from resources. As a Black woman from a working-class family, Keisha describes her role in her service site as helping a resource-insecure school, which had an understaffed faculty and few supplies, and reports that “the biggest difference” she finds is that her assigned school lacks, pencils, soap in the bathroom, and paper towels, and concludes, “I would never even dreamed of not being able to do my work because I literally didn’t even have a pencil.” Attributing the neighborhood school and its disadvantage to a lack of resources, in comparison to her own elementary school, Keisha brings pencils to her students to reconcile this disadvantage.

In addition to Keisha’s conceptualizations that individuals lack privilege due to the absence of resources, Sammy also articulates his role of helper and role model in his service site. But unlike Keisha’s understanding that privilege can be reconciled with
resources, like pencils or money for a new basketball rim, Sammy quantifies privilege in terms of the resources he has as a college student who understands the application process. In order to reconcile the lack of resources the students in his service site has, Sammy admits to wearing his university sweatshirt to his service site for the purposes of initiating conversations around college admission and success, so that he himself, can be a resource for the children he serves.

Similar to student perceptions of individuals who lack privilege to suffer from poor moral character, students who perceive individuals who lack privilege to lack resources is also complicated and nuanced. As previously noted, student perceptions do not operate as mutually exclusive to one another. For this reason, it is not surprising that many students who voiced the perception that an individual’s lack of privilege was due to resource insecurity also noted that privilege was tied to structural equality or power.

The only difference between those students who voiced resource insecurity as a cause of an individual’s lack of privilege between those students who did not, is that those students had personal experience with being resource insecure themselves, and viewed the deficit as a symbol of inequality, neglect and disrespect. For example, Alex, a male Black student, who grew up in a similar school to the one he serves as a recess monitor, comments below on the lack of gym equipment:

[I]t’s not like they don’t get what’s going on. They maybe should have more funding. And be as simple as *wow that basketball rim is always broken and they never fix it* – type thing. That to them is saying that I guess we don’t have money to fix it, so I guess like man *we have so many people in our classrooms* and things of that sort, and that’s just based in the lack of funding.
To Alex, for the children in the elementary school he serves, not having a working basketball rim in the gym and attending overcrowded classes is more than just a problem of resources, but sends a direct message to the children of the school that there are simply not enough funds for them. In his second interview Alex admits that understanding the structural nature of inequality, he has come to understand that it is not just about some this particular school, or some oppressed group but that its larger than that. Citing the bell hooks article on the “Oppression Olympics” assigned in class he reflects,

Um, probably for the most part the reinforcement of intersectionality. You really can’t be for one oppression without being for the other. The systems oppressions really sort of work together to function and it’s just somehow reinforced there and so like after the fact, I guess I’m just more cognizant and like I’m constantly thinking like well, I kind of can’t exclude this person, or if I’m preaching for something I really can’t down someone who’s preaching for something else.

For students like Keisha, Sammy and Alex, even though their perceptions of disadvantaged individuals as lacking resources were embedded long before enrolling in SLSJ, as dictated by their individual positionalities, experiences and backgrounds, SLSJ gave them the space to reflect on systems of oppression through course readings, class discussions, and service experiences.

**The structurally disadvantaged.** A third way students defined privilege was that individuals who lack privilege, lack structural equality or power. Similar to the students who believed that privilege was a consequence of resources, students who perceived privilege to stem from structural inequality and power considered their role in their service site as inherent in making these changes as a social activist.
Katz (2013) asserts, while the perception that poverty is a consequence of a lack of resources can be addressed through legislation and policy, the perception that poverty is a consequence of powerlessness must be directed “beyond the formal political arena” in grassroots movements (p. 274). Furthermore, Katz (2013) clarifies that real change does not “come about as a result of elite goodwill,” but rather, “requires countervailing centers of power” (p. 274), a sentiment at the heart of social justice education.

The perspective that disadvantaged individuals lack power is perhaps most evident in students who have personal experience with prejudice and discrimination. A case in point is in the recorded interviews and classroom observations of Tane, a young male and first-generation college student who hails from a conservative Muslim family who grew up in post 9.11 America. As an individual who was personally affected by discrimination and prejudice, Tane has obtained a deep understanding of the structural challenges that assign some individuals with more power and privilege than others. With this lens, Tane, perceives the work that he does with his community partner, and the effect it had on the community as well as his own Muslim community, because Tane was able to understand the lack of privilege some individuals face to be the result of structural inequality, rather than a lack of resources or poor moral character.

Joseph and Alex also speak to reconciling the social inequality they see in the way they are constructing their professional careers. Joseph explains his decision to major in both health science and community service. Basing his decision on the “humanistic approach” it offers Joseph maintains that he is interested in “studying the social determinants of health” for the purposes of making healthcare more equitable. Similarly, Alex describes his goal to study “epidemiology” and “health disparities between social
classes.”

I want to go into research…Because like race is like a social construct which like causes a lot of these environmental factors and that sort. So it’s like, some disparities between race are due to social situations. And that’s something that I want to bring awareness to and go into.

Alex later goes on to say that his greatest dream would be to bring awareness to social class inequality through the music he performs.

In general, students who identified as a cultural or religious minority, who had experienced some sort of discrimination or prejudice, were able to articulate that the underlying cause of privilege disadvantage was embedded deep within the social structure like Sammy, Tane, Keisha and Alex. The one outlier in this category was Joseph. White, male and from a Christian upper class background, not only did Joseph articulate the nature of privilege as structural, but he also deeply considered his role in his service site to be an activist, as well as incorporated this notion of activist in his plans for the future. Joseph’s perception of privilege as structural, despite his upper class upbringing is rare, but not without cause. When asked how he came to this perspective, Joseph admits that his awareness has a lot to do with where he grew up. Attending privileged public schools with high all-white enrollments, next to very poor all-Black public schools, he grew up deeply wary and uncomfortable about the geographic divide and therefore planned to address it in his academic and professional career.

Student perceptions of self and others depended heavily on positionality, background and/or experiences, or how students understood themselves on the continuum of power and privilege, before entering the course and service experience. All students
who understood privilege to be a product of structural inequality had personal experience with prejudice and discrimination. For this reason, all students who voiced privilege as a construct of power, perceived their role in their service site as an opportunity to reconcile this structural inequality, and for this reason, considered their role in their service site as activist.

In conclusion, the way students in a service-learning for social justice course came to understand themselves in relation to others was deeply connected to the way students came to understand the nature of privilege, or rather, why some people have relatively, more, or less access to power and privilege than others. Students appeared to conceive of themselves as helpers, role models and/or activists in their service site as it related to their own personal experiences, backgrounds and positionality as a consequence of their perspectives of the underlying causes of privilege.

**Dismantling Privilege Within: Shifting Positionalities**

A second way students came to dismantle privilege was in thinking about their own positionality, or power and privilege, relative to SLSJ and the course materials, class discussions, and service experience. It is interesting to note that my findings revealed that student positionalities appeared to shift and change relative to context, in contrast to the literature, that tends to frame student learning along a line of phases that students pass through on their way to activism.

Service-learning research often quantifies student learning outcomes in terms of a linear progression (Cipolle, 2011; Green, 2001; Nenga, 2011; Tatum, 1998). This is true in Nenga’s (2011) work on White racial identity development where she assigns the
White, affluent volunteers she does research with to the four categories or stages of “colorblindness,” “equal opportunity racism,” “meritocracy,” and “challenging of white privilege.” Ranking the White racial development of the volunteers she studies, Nenga (2011) suggests that learning to be a social activist occurs as students move along a linear progression from “colorblindness” to the “challenging of white privilege”. Important to note, is that the conceptualization that students come to understand a social justice curriculum on a measurable linear scale is not unique to Nenga (2011), and has come to contextualize much of the service-learning literature. Subsequently, the core of social justice pedagogy for privileged students is breaking this privilege down and making students aware of their privileged status.

In contrast to the literature base that frames service-learning pedagogy as the linear acquisition of measurable stages, my study revealed that what students come to understand about themselves and their own positionality is incredibly nuanced and in fact, nonlinear. For example, even though Sophie voices the perspective that she would not give money to individuals affected by homelessness due to their tendency to use it to buy drugs (due to poor moral character), earlier in the quarter she speaks out against the structural inequality that is preventing her colleague from staying in a community that is undergoing gentrification. This example demonstrates that Sophie is able to perceive privilege as both a consequence of poor moral character and structural inequality contingent on the context.

Furthermore, when applied to a literature base that tends to divide service-learning practices for students along lines of privilege, my findings also revealed that the lines of privilege are not always clear. For example, while some scholars tend to divide
privilege along lines of race (Cipolle, 2011; McInstosh, 1989; Nenga, 2004; Pollock, 2004; Swalwell, 2013; Tatum, 1997), others tend to divide privilege along lines of socioeconomic class (Andrade-Duncan, 2011; Ginright and Cammarota, 2002; Gutstein, 2003; Dunlap et al., 2007) or even gender (i.e., Addams and Starr). Moreover, as the work of Curry-Stevens (2007) reminds us, the lines of privilege become unclear when intersecting identities of oppression converge.

When trying to explain the patriarchal experience for a poor, White man, for example, it is helpful to describe his experience of patriarchy being moderated by being White and exacerbated by being poor (p. 37)

The privilege Curry-Stevens (2007) portrays depicts the individual as possessing plural identities that may or may not carry oppression to the context of another. Furthermore, Curry-Stevens’ (2007) depiction of privilege places the individual on a spectrum in relation to other individuals. For example, a White poor man has arguably less privilege than a White middle-class man but more privilege than a Black poor woman.

Sophie demonstrates Curry-Stevens’ (2007) notion of privilege relativity in Class Two, as both a member of the oppressor group, as well as the oppressed group, when discussing her experience riding the local train. Specifically, Sophie demonstrates her membership to the oppressor group when reflecting on her reason for not giving money to people on trains. She remarks, “I feel like there are some people who are pretending to be homeless on trains, maybe to buy drugs or something.” Reenacting the perception that poverty, or disadvantage, stems from poor moral character, Sophie’s comment about individuals affected by homelessness as “pretending to be homeless” for the purposes of “buying drugs” stems from her positionality as a White person from the dominant group.
Interesting to note however, is that Sophie’s “oppressor” identity shifts to a member of an “oppressed” group in her next statement, when she admits to feeling physically vulnerable due to her female status. “I made sure to take my boyfriend with me because a lot of times people approach girls like me on the {train}.” Evident from Sophie’s statement, her positionality is not set or stagnant like the literature suggests, into oppressor and oppressed groupings, nor does it move through different phases towards activism, but rather, appears to shift depending on context as an individual who is White and female.

This notion that student positionalities shift and move relevant to context is also apparent when applying my finding of the expression of guilt to the literature. According to my research, guilt was found to be a common outcome of student engagement in SLSJ across boundaries of privilege, and, like positionalities and learning outcomes, highly dependent on context, or rather, who the student was standing next to with relation to their own position of power and privilege.

Not surprisingly, a wide body of service-learning literature indicates that a common outcome of change models of service-learning is guilt. In contrast to my finding however, the outcome of guilt is predominantly reserved for White, privileged students (Camacho, 294; Cipolle, 2010; Dunlap et al., 2007; Nenga, 2011; Swalwell, 2013). The reason for this is attributed to the belief that social justice pedagogy and service-learning practice is rooted in Freirian ideology that the oppressors, or privileged class, need to recognize their “oppressive” behavior, and be open to the possibility of working with the oppressed in solidarity towards goal of social equality. Therefore, when privileged White students are asked to consider the role they play in structural inequality and the
benefits they receive as a result of this privilege (McIntosh, 1989), the outcome is frequently feelings of guilt.

An example of the contextual-nature of guilt is in the interview transcripts of Keisha, a student who described herself as coming from a “poor, Black” family who attended a “rich, White high school.” Admitting that she did not grow up as well off as some of the other students in the SLSJ class, she confesses to feeling guilty for the fact that she attended a nice school with more resources than the children she works with in her service site in a poor urban school that do not have enough funding for pencils or paper towels in the bathroom. Keisha’s admission of feeling guilty, as a Black woman from a working-class family, next to children who are growing up with less privilege than she had, evidences the point that the service-learning outcome of guilt is not just for privileged, White students, but contingent on context.

As evidenced above, in contrast to a literature base that implies that students engaging in service-learning practices are set into the defined categories of White and privileged, or poor minorities, my research does not align. Moreover, in contrast to a literature base that perceives learning outcomes of change models of service-learning to move in a linear progression, my research also, does not align. Rather, my findings revealed that student positionalities are constantly shifting and changing and deeply dependent on context. Therefore, students’ positionalities as oppressors or oppressed, privileged and resource deficient and insiders and outsiders, are ultimately determined by who students are standing next to on the scale of power and privilege.
Theme 2: Contributing to the Common Good: Problems, Partnerships & Professional Goals

Grounded in social construction ideology (Schiro, 2013), or social justice theory pedagogy, service-learning for social justice models tend to bring attention to social inequality and disrupt normative modes of thinking and behaving in the interest of flattening hierarchies and democratizing interactions of curriculum and instruction within the classroom. They do this by repositioning classroom learning away from the teacher and onto the students and their experiences in the outside world thereby giving students the opportunity for a clear sense of self, other and the broader social context. Furthermore, by learning about the social constructions of race, gender, sexuality, religion and other axes of exclusion in American society, students are encouraged to learn about their own positionality as a community member and global citizen by engaging with differently privileged others.

Due to the social justice orientation of service-learning for social justice models, a primary objective of service-learning for social justice education is for students to emerge from their experiences as more aware of their own power and privilege as well as others (Nenga, 2011; Camacho, 2004; Catlett & Proweller, 2011) and be therefore better positioned to promote social change (Cipolle, 2010; Morton, 1995). For this reason, it was not surprising to find that a second major theme in my analysis was that students, as a result of engaging in a service-learning for social justice course with a twenty-five hour service requirement, emerged with a strong commitment to contributing to the common good. Important to note however, is that while all students articulated a desire to contribute to the common good, not all students voiced this desire in the same way.
Student responses for being able to contribute to the common good splintered into three subthemes including: problems, partnerships and professional goals. Or rather, some students voiced frustration with not being able to contribute to the common good in their service site due to *problems* with their community organization, while other students voiced admiration for their community *partner* and the work they did in their service site. Still, other students reported working with service sites that modelled professional behavior and even carried a path to a *professional* goal for them beyond the university.

**Problems.** The first subtheme that emerged from my findings around working with community organizations was that when students encountered individuals in their community organizations who, in their perspectives, were working against student efforts to contribute to the common good, students expressed feelings of frustration. A common perception held by students of the community organizations they serve in their service sites is frustration (Tryon, 2008; Tryon and Stoecker, 2012; Sylvester, 2012). Tryon and Stoecker (2012) write about the frustration students incur from their service sites at length in their well-known text, *The Unheard Voices: Community Organizations and Service Learning*, from the other side, the community organizers. Specifically, Tryon and Stoecker’s (2012) interviews with community organizations revealed that community organizers are frequently frustrated with students for the challenges that come up with short-term service often attributed to service-learning engagements that are linked to a short-term university course. They maintain that there are four challenges that short-term service learning encounter including: investment of time in working with short-term service learning students, incompatibility
Frustration was a common student perception of students’ when describing their engagement in their service sites. In alignment with the literature, for an eleven-week course with a twenty-five-hour service requirement, SLSJ fit the description community organizers complained about in Tryon and Stoecker’s (2012) research of short-term service and campus calendar issues. Therefore, it was not surprising to find several students emerge from the class with the perspective that engaging with community partners led to frustration on their end as well.

Many students incurred feelings of frustration when working with their assigned community partner organizations. Short-term service engagements and limitations on student time were often attributed to the frustration students felt for not being able to contribute to the common good. An example of this frustration is evident in Sammy’s expressed frustration for not being able to give more time to the underserved population he serves due to his own student commitments.

Short-term service engagements and time limitations were not the only source of student frustration. Tane and Sophie speak at length about the frustration they incurred with a community partner that lacked organization, leadership and support to the degree that they had to change service sites three-quarters of the way through the quarter. Important to note is that students who faced challenges with their community partners, rarely blamed the community organization leaders themselves but rather the structural challenges of low-funding, low-staffing, and high-community need that served to redirect
community organizers away from interns, for their own inability to carry out the organization’s mission, and to this point, serve the common good.

**Partnerships:** A second subtheme that emerged from my findings around working with community organizations is that when students encountered individuals in their community organizations who, in their perception, were contributing to the common good, students expressed feelings of admiration or respect.

There is very little existing data outlining students’ perceptions of community organizations. Consequently, there is not much literature on my finding that students emerge from a service-learning for social justice course with admiration and respect for their own ability to contribute to the common good. For this reason, my finding that students emerge with the perception of admiration and respect for their respective community organizations and the work they do has little tie to existing scholarship.

Still the finding that students emerged from a service-learning for social justice course with admiration for their community organizers and an expressed importance to serve the common good was a prominent finding in my research. An example of this is in the quote below where, Rachit, a health science major considering a profession in medicine, expresses admiration for the employees of the tenant organization he works with, who work to appraise tenants of their rights to lawful living conditions. Specifically, Rachit notes the “great chemistry” the employees of the tenant organization had as individuals “really willing to give” for such “a small reward for this output” despite the fact that, “they’re not like making bank.” Like Rachit, Tane also speaks of his admiration and respect for the people he meets working in his assigned community organization. Unlike Rachit however, Tane doesn’t just notice how hard the individuals
work for little pay but rather, Tane admires how each person in the organization feels some sort of “personal ethical responsibility” to the organization’s mission. Despite their different stated perspectives, what Rachit and Tane ultimately have come to respect and admire about the individuals they encounter in their respective service sites is their commitment to the common good. Whether that comes in the form of contributing to worker camaraderie, working for little pay or feeling a “personal ethical responsibility” to serving the organization’s mission, both students are voicing respect and admiration for the individuals they work with in their respective community organization for their personal commitment to the common good.

**Professional Goals.** The third theme that emerges around the topic of community partners is that students’ experience feeling that the work that they do in their service-learning site has some sort of relevance or even direct application to their future plans to the world beyond college.

A case in point is in the interviews and class observations of Rachit, a SLSJ student of Indian descent, who is fulfilling his service hours by working with a government-sponsored landlord/tenant organization, who noted that his experience has provided him with real-world application that will serve him well by informing him of his rights as a tenant of a rental property.

Service-learning engagement also proved to be a way for other students to do something in the face of structural inequality. As Professor Jane notes in our interview prior to class, “Service-learning is a way for students to address the structural inequality we learn in class, for them to go out and do something.” To evidence this claim, following the class several students articulated an ability to see beyond the statistics
presented in class illustrating social inequality in education, healthcare, prison, etcetera; to personally address the inequality they saw as activists, as a result of engaging in their service sites.

For other students, the link between what students were doing in their service sites went deeper and aligned well with their future career plans. For example, Keisha, who served her hours in an elementary school, is acutely aware of the future impact her service engagement will have on her career as an elementary education major. Similarly, Tane, who served his service-learning hours working on public relations for a non-profit, is also cognizant of the work he could do following graduation. Unlike Keisha however, Tane, came to realize the connection between his service hours and a possible career path well into his service. As a fourth-year university student with a religious studies major, Tane had no real clear career path until he began his service assignment providing communications for a nonprofit organization whose mission it is to address social injustice. When I interviewed Tane three weeks after SLSJ was over and his service hours were filled, he admitted that he continues to do work for the organization and maintained that it was very much something he wanted to continue once he obtains his degree in Liberal Arts in June.

Critical to note is that for some students, service-learning and engagement with a community partner is more than just bringing curriculum to life and scaffolding textual information but rather a way to give students experience in the professional realm that serves to better position them for employment following graduation as well as citizens in the world.
Contributing to the Common Good: Problems, Partnerships & Professional Goals

A second theme highlighted in my research was that students emerged with a strong intent to contribute to the common good, as a consequence of taking a service-learning for social justice course, where the course objective was to locate and address social inequality and injustice through activism. For this reason, interactions students had with their community partners were significant. When students were prevented from contributing to the common good, students voiced frustration. When students were supported with contributing to the common good, they voiced admiration for their community partner. And when students could see that the community organization they were paired with was successfully contributing to the common good, students voiced intent to work towards that effort in their professional future. That said, my research revealed that when investigating student outcomes of a service-learning for social justice model of education, student perceptions of how they were able to meet the course objective of serving the common good seemed to fall into the three smaller themes: problems, partnerships and professional goals.

On the first theme of problems, it is critical to note that all students observed and observed/interviewed in my study voiced some sort of problem, be it concern or challenge with their respective service site, community partner or even scheduling. To reiterate, at no point did a student direct blame of being a problem, but rather focused it on their inability to serve the common good.

Second, on the first theme of partnerships, students appeared to learn a great deal from their assigned community organizations, the work they do and the communities they serve. Praising community organization leaders for their passion and commitment to
work that is not always fairly-compensated, students frequently emerge from these experiences with a deep understanding of social inequality and how to address it by observing activists in the field, as well as working themselves for the common good.

And third, on the theme of professional goals, for many students, observing their community partner in the field is helpful for solidifying their future plans. Working with community organizations in action is helpful for students like Keisha and Tane, who hope to hold those very positions in education and marketing respectively. But it is also effective for students like Amit, who can learn about landlord responsibilities as a current renter, and Chris as a student who simply wants to help, to know that those programs exist.

Overall, there is much for SLSJ students to learn while engaging in their required service hours with community partners. Primarily, when learning about the key social justice tenets of social inequality, social justice and social activism, students emerge from their service-learning for social justice experience with the opportunity to witness discrimination and structural inequality first-hand in their service sites. Observing community organization leaders attempt to contribute to the common good by addressing these issues in the community, students are able to see what they can do as students, citizens and activists, both now and in the future, to address the inequality presented in SLSJ.

In conclusion, my study revealed that when students engaged in a service-learning for social justice course, and were encouraged to think about issues of power and privilege in the context of a service experience, two themes emerge. First that much of what students come to perceive about themselves, disadvantaged others and the world
around them is strongly tied to their own positionalities, experiences and backgrounds, often obtained before the course began. How students perceived themselves in the context of a service-learning for social justice course, and ultimately in the context of a socially unjust world, was perhaps most evident in the terms they used to describe the roles they played in their respective service sites. Whether they described themselves as helpers, role models and/or activists, what is important to note, is that ultimately student perceptions of self were tied to previous conceptions of positionality, and based on background and experience. This was also true for the way students perceived disadvantaged others. Whether students expressed guilt, felt like an insider/outsider or need to keep silent/avoidant, ultimately these reactions were based on students’ previous conceptions of their own relative power and privilege.

And second, students come to see how social inequality can be addressed in the world outside of the university classroom. For many, these experiences helped students to understand social inequality, social justice and social activism as it relates to themselves as students, helpers, role models and/or activists. How these roles are conceived however, is deeply tied to students’ individual perceptions of privilege as it pertains to their own positionality, background and experiences often established prior to course enrollment.

Regardless of these findings however, what is not established prior to the course, is how students emerge from a service-learning for social justice course wanting to contribute to the common good. Or in other words, when students encountered problems in their service sites that hindered them from contributing to the common good they voiced frustration. When students partnered with a strong community organization that helped them contribute to the common good, they voiced admiration and respect for the
work they were able to do and the community organizations they were able to do it with, and sometimes a desire to integrate this type of work into their future goals and aspirations.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

A wide body of research suggests that students frequently depart change service-learning experiences with feelings of guilt, apprehension and avoidance (Butin, 2006, 2007; Camacho, 2004; Green, 2001; Nenga, 2011; Swalwell, 2013). Despite these concerns, change models of service-learning continue to present an opportunity to be a transformative pedagogy (Butin, 2010; Duffy, 2010; Green, 2001; Pompa, 2002), repositioning classroom learning to the outside world, and giving students the opportunity to obtain a clearer understanding of self, other and the broader social context.

Social justice models of service-learning are the closest pedagogy we have to helping students discover who they are as a basis to understanding what they know about the world. That curriculum is not one-size-fits-all, and neither is student learning. And most of all, student perceptions of what they come to know about themselves, each other and the broader social context has everything to do with their own positionality on the continuum of power and privilege before they walk through the classroom door.

It is for this reason that the qualitative study I conducted sought to explore how university students perceive themselves, each other and the greater social context as a result of engaging in a service-learning for social justice course. Towards this end, my research consisted of engaging in Service-Learning for Social Justice (SLSJ), an eleven-week course designed to offer students, as outlined in the syllabus, an introduction to the practices of “peacemaking, conflict resolution and social justice” in the face of “personal, interpersonal, institutional, social ecological and systemic inequality” through course readings, written assignments, and class activities and discussions as a participant observer.
Following my time researching, organizing and analyzing my findings, I have come to understand the following about my guiding research question: How university students perceive themselves, each other and the greater social context as a result of engaging in a service-learning for social justice course? 

According to my findings, much of what university students came to understand about social inequality, social justice and social activism in the context of a service-learning for social justice course had to do with students’ conceptions of privilege and how those conceptions relate back to their own personal backgrounds, experiences, and positionality. Students appeared to attribute three reasons for why some individuals lack/or possess access to privilege including having access to resources, having good moral character or possessing structural power. Oftentimes these perceptions of privilege are established long before enrolling in the course.

Similar to what students come to understand about social justice, social inequality and social activism through engaging in a service-learning for social justice course, much of what students come to understand about themselves and their own positionality is predetermined before enrolling in the course. Guided by Curry-Stevens (2007) research on privilege relativity, my findings revealed that because privilege is relative, students come to understand their own positionality better in the context of different privileged individuals and are thereby able to draw conclusions about their own relative role in their service site. In my study, three themes emerged in terms of the roles students assumed in their service sites including helpers, role models and/or activists. Furthermore, my analysis concluded that these roles do not operate as mutually exclusive of one another, as a given individual could have more than one, or even all three, and are deeply
connected to students’ perceptions of privilege, or why some individuals have more/less than others.

Additionally, what ultimately determines what students learn from a service-learning experience in terms of their perception of self, is not necessarily related to the service they engage in, nor the community partners with whom they work. Rather, student learning outcomes are mostly affected by the student’s own positionality before they walked into the class. For example, only students who perceived themselves as having little power and privilege due to their cultural background, belief system or socioeconomic class described their role in their service site as a role model. And only students who had previous experience with social activism or a personal connection to prejudice and discrimination were able to perceive themselves as social activists.

And third, what students come to understand about themselves in relation to the broader social context as a result of engaging in a service-learning for social justice course is greatly nuanced. Namely, when students engage in their service site with community partners, whether they experienced problems or professional direction, ultimately, they wanted to be able to find a way to contribute to the common good, or enact the social justice pedagogy as presented in class. In other words, regardless of a given student’s positionality, experience and background, when students encountered challenges in their service site that they believed prevented them from contributing to the common good, they voiced frustration, when students encountered individuals in their service site who, in their perception, were contributing to the common good, they voiced admiration, and when students could see how they could contribute to the common good
in the future, outside of their service site, they voiced hope and a plan for incorporating service into their future.

**Implications for Service-Learning Pedagogy**

Grounded in social reconstruction theory (Schiro, 2013), or social justice pedagogy, service-learning for social justice models of education encourage students to consider the positionality, or relative power and privilege, of all participants in the service-learning dynamic. Despite the transformative effects a service-learning for social justice model can have on student learning, scholars and educators in the field attribute service-learning failure to short-term service experiences (Nenga, 2011; Stoecker, Tryon & Hilgendorf, 2009), a misalignment between course objectives and the service experience, and/or the service needs of the respective community partners (Eby, 1998; Eyler & Giles, 1999), a lack of reflection time on the service experience (Duffy, 2010; Stoecker, Tryon & Hilgendorf, 2009) and structured in a way that does not honor all participants (Butin, 2010; Pompa, 2002). Furthermore, even when these programming goals are met, scholars (Burin, 2006; Fish, 2006) argue that service-learning pedagogy does not always align with university teaching, politics and curriculum. But perhaps the most pressing concern of current service-learning practice at it appears on the higher education level is that much of current practice and pedagogy is geared towards the “white, sheltered, middle-class, single without children, unindebted, and between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four” (Butin, 2007; p. 31), which tends to be more diverse in nature. Furthermore, a wide body of research reports that students who fit this description frequently depart change service-learning experiences with feelings of guilt,
apprehension and avoidance (Butin, 2006, 2007; Camacho, 2004; Green, 2001; Nenga, 2011; Swalwell, 2013).

In light of these concerns, I believe my study can offer scholars, educators and practitioners further insights into the implications of service-learning for social justice pedagogy for five reasons. First, and most notably, because students’ understanding of power and privilege are deeply rooted in positionality, experience and background, it is critical that educators spend more time understanding the place from where students begin when planning course assignments. This can be done by creating more assignments that foster personal reflections in the form of journals, memoirs and personal histories as they relate to the course topics of social justice, social inequality and social activism.

Second, whether students perceived of themselves as helpers, role models and/or activists in their service sites, or expressed guilt, felt like an insider/outsider or a need to a pressure to keep silent/avoidant in class, ultimately these reactions were based on students’ previous conceptions of their own relative power and privilege they had obtained before enrolling in the course. For this reason, educators should spend a bit more time breaking down perceptions of privilege, where they come from, and how they contribute to students’ own reactions when working with disadvantaged individuals.

Third, when planning service-learning for social justice courses, educators should not only spend time planning course reading materials, designing class activities and coordinating service sites, but also make a concerted effort to consider student positionalities and the effects of student backgrounds and experiences bring to the class, their service sites, as well as their own learning. For arguably, students can obtain a better
understanding of their role, not only in their service sites, but as agents of change in society as a result of this engagement.

Fourth, despite a great deal of service-learning scholarship for privileged groups that tends to frame student learning along a line of phases that students pass through on their way to activism, my findings revealed that student positionalities do not move in a linear direction but rather, are constantly shifting and changing with relation to context. In light of this finding, educators should conceptualize social justice learning as not a linear progression towards activism, but a constantly shifting movement that changes according to student positionality and context.

Fifth, in contrast to much of the existing social justice literature that distinguishes between service-learning pedagogy of the privileged (Cipolle, 2010; Nenga, 2011; Swalwell, 2013) and marginalized (Duncan-Andrade, 2011; Ginright & Cammarota, 2002; Gutstein, 2003), respectfully, educators should not have to choose which pedagogy to implement with a given classroom, as lines of convergence are not always clear and once again, hinge largely on an individuals’ positionality with relation to who they are standing next to. Rather, educators should avoid teaching along boundaries of privilege, and consider teaching along points of intersectionality, where students can learn from one another’s shifting identities as simultaneously advantaged, disadvantaged, oppressors and oppressed with relation to context.

Sixth, as a consequence of engaging in a service-learning for social justice course, where the central tenets are social justice, social inequality and social activism, students ultimately emerge wanting to fulfill the objectives of the pedagogy. For this reason, they tend to emerge with a strong desire to contribute to the common good. As this relates to
their experience in their service site, student reactions can range depending on if and how they were able to fulfill this objective. For example, when students encountered challenges in their service site that they believed prevented them from contributing to the common good, they voiced frustration. When students encountered individuals in their service site who, from their perspective, were contributing to the common good, they voiced admiration. And when students could see how they could contribute to the common good in the future, outside of their service site, they voiced hope and a plan for incorporating service into their future.

And finally, a seventh implication of my study to the field of service-learning pedagogy is that service experience is not just relevant to educational practice due to its ability to teach course work in an experiential manner. Nor are service-learning for social justice models only essential due to their ability to enhance students’ understanding of social justice, social activism and social inequality. Moreover, service-learning for social justice models of service-learning are perceived by students as critical for offering students the opportunity to obtain experience in the outside world. Whether this be in the university in a professional role they are considering pursuing following graduation.

These findings, I believe, have strong implications for the way educators approach service-learning for social justice courses on the higher education level. First, when educators consider how to evaluate service-learning for social justice programs for the purposes of gathering ideas for best practices, perhaps a more precise place to look is not in the structural concerns of service hours, alignment in objectives, and service needs but rather, in the way that this pedagogy is structured to fit student positionalities, experiences and backgrounds, and helping them to see beyond their own possibility or
positionality on the scale of power and privilege. And second, service-learning for social justice classes are critical for offering students a space to learn, engage and reflect on social justice issues and relate them back to their own positionality, background and experiences. Many students can obtain a better understanding of their role, not only in their service site, but as agents of change in society as citizens, professionals and social activists as a result of this engagement. It is for this reason that more work needs to be done to determine how students come to understand social justice, social inequality and social activism in a service-learning for social justice course.

Implications for Future Research

I recognize the limitations in the scope of my study, and the restrictions it presents with regards to the students, school, professor and region in which my research is situated. Although consistent with ethnographic case study, a sample section of 23 students and one professor is a relatively low number compared to how many students take SLSJ over the course of a year as well as how many university students take a service-learning for social justice course in general. As will studying a student sample engaged in an 11-week class, is a relatively short period of time for students to make connections with course content, other students in the class, the professor, and most significantly, the community partners. The student sample consisted of unique backgrounds and experiences, so the results of this study cannot be generalized in the traditional sense, but can inform studies similarly formed along the line of the research questions, context and characteristics of those in the study sample.
Despite these limitations, this study has the potential to provide compelling evidence about how student perceptions of themselves, others and the larger social context are shaped by engaging in a social justice course with a service-learning component. As such, these finding have the potential to make contributions to the scholarship of social justice and service-learning pedagogy and practice.


Fish, S. E. (2004, February 13.). “Intellectual diversity”: The Trojan horse of a dark


Sage.


http://www.servicelearningclearinghouse.gov


Ravitch, S. M., & Carl, N. M. (2016). *Qualitative research: Bridging the conceptual, theoretical, and methodological*. Los Angeles: SAGE.


34.


Student Interviews: Part I
(To be conducted between Weeks 2-6 of WQ.)

Spoken Transcript to Initiate Interview:
Thank you for talking with me today. This conversation is being recorded for research purposes. Every precaution will be taken to ensure the data be secure. Names will be recorded and stored under aliases and recorded, transcribed and analyzed by only me, as the sole and primary researcher. Additionally, all electronic documents that store this information will be password protected. Do you have any questions?

That said, I’m interested in learning about how student perceptions of social inequality, social justice and social activism are shaped in the context of a service-learning for social justice course. Specifically, my interest is in how your own life experiences, background and understanding of self, other and the broader social context are affected in light of a social justice class with a service-learning component. I am interested in these reflections and how they might relate to who you are as a person, member of society and how you include in your definition of community.

The interview questions are very open-ended and I want you to share with me only what you are comfortable sharing. Please let me know if you do not agree to being recorded. You may request that the recording stop at any time. Do you have any questions before we start? Recording will begin now.

Background
1. What year are you?
   a. What is your major?
   b. Where are you from?
   c. How would you describe your family and community?

2. How would you identify yourself in terms of race, culture, social class, religion?

3. What prompted you to come to DePaul?
   a. What do you like about DePaul?
   b. What do you dislike about DePaul?

The Class (perceptions of social inequality, social justice and social activism)
4. Why are you taking SLSJ?

5. What is your understanding of the course objectives of SLSJ?

6. What have you learned from taking this class?
   a. What have you learned about yourself?
   b. What have you learned about other groups/communities?
   c. What have you learned about the broader social community as a result of taking this course?

7. What have been the most challenging aspects of this course to date?
   a. Why have these issues been challenges for you?
8. Have you visited the service site?
   a. If so, how many times?
   b. What has been your experience?
   c. What have you learned?

9. Did visiting the service site have any connections to the course? If so, what were they?

Student Interviews: Part II
(To be conducted between Week 8 of WQ 2016 and Week 11 of SQ 2016.)

Spoken Transcript to Initiate Interview:
Thank you for talking with me today. Similar to our first interview, this conversation is being recorded for research purposes. Every precaution will be taken to ensure the data be secure. Names will be recorded and stored under aliases and recorded, transcribed and analyzed by only me, as the sole and primary researcher. Additionally, all electronic documents that store this information will be password protected. Do you have any questions?

To reiterate, I am interested in learning about how student perceptions of social inequality, social justice and social activism are shaped in the context of a service-learning for social justice course. Specifically, my interest is in how your own life experiences, background and understanding of self, other and the broader social context are affected in light of a social justice class with a service-learning component. I am interested in these reflections and how they might relate to who you are as a person, member of society and how you include in your definition of community.

The interview questions are very open-ended and I want you to share with me only what you are comfortable sharing. Please let me know if you do not agree to being recorded. You may request that the recording stop at any time. Do you have any questions before we start? Recording will begin now.

1. After having a few weeks to reflect on SLSJ, what do you think you learned about privilege, power and oppression?

2. After taking this course what is your conception of social justice?

3. Service-learning is an educational practice that integrates course work with a service experience. (In the case of SLSJ, your course work was linked to your engagement at the ________). What have you learned from participating in this service-learning activity?

4. Overall, is there one story you can share about your experience in SLSJ that you feel has impacted you the most?
   a. Why?
   b. In what way?

5. What role do you feel you can have in bringing about change in your own or other communities?
COURSE INSTRUCTOR INTERVIEW
(To be conducted Week 1 of WQ 2016)

Spoken Transcript to Initiate Interview:
Thank you for talking with me today. This conversation is being audio-recorded for research purposes. Every precaution will be taken to ensure the data be secure. Names will be recorded and stored under aliases and recorded, transcribed and analyzed by only me, as the sole and primary researcher. Additionally, all electronic documents that store this information will be password protected. Do you have any questions?

That said, I'm interested in learning about how student perceptions of social inequality, social justice and social activism are shaped in the context of a service-learning for social justice course. Specifically, my interest here is obtaining context around how PAX 200-802 is structured in terms of rationale, pedagogy and objectives.

The interview questions are very open-ended and I want you to share with me only what you are comfortable sharing. Please let me know if you do not agree to being recorded. You may request that the recording stop at any time. Do you have any questions before we start? Recording will begin now.

1. What brings you to teaching this course?
2. What is your pedagogical approach to teaching SLSJ?
3. What do you want students to understand or know as a result of taking this course?
4. What kinds of assignments and assessments are important for students to experience as part of this course?
5. What do you see as being the purpose of the service-learning experience?
6. What is your experience of how students respond to the service experience?
Instructor - ADULT CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Conceptions of Self, Other and Society:
Exploring the Impact of a Social Justice for Service-Learning Course on University Students

Principal Investigator: Deborah Rintels Weiner, EdD Candidate, Doctoral Student
Institution: DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois, USA
College: College of Education
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Amira Proweller, College of Education DePaul University

What is the purpose of this research?
We are asking you to be in a research study because we are trying to learn more about social justice education and the effects of service-learning experience on students perceptions of self, other and the broader social context. This study is being conducted by Deborah Rintels Weiner at DePaul University as a requirement to obtain her Doctoral Degree. This research is being supervised by her faculty advisor, Dr. Amira Proweller. We hope to include about 24 people in the research.

Why are you being asked to be in the research?
You are invited to participate in this study because you are the instructor of the course, Perspectives on Peace, Justice and Conflict Studies, or PAX 200.

What is involved in being in the research study?
There are two levels of engagement in this study as the instructor in PAX 200: observations and interviews.

1. Observations: The first is to consent to be observed during all class sessions in the course as well as all other informal interactions with participates such as during class breaks, via handwritten notes.

2. Observations and Interviews: The second level of participation in my study is to consent to observations (as outlined above) as well as agree to sit for one, face-to-face, audio-recorded, 45-60 minute interviews. Interviews can be conducted in my private, WRD office in the SAC building, or your office, during the week day and evenings, pending your availability, and are designed to obtain the context around how the course is structured in terms of rationale, pedagogy and objectives.
Every precaution will be taken to ensure that all data obtained from both class and site observations and interviews will be secure. Names will be recorded and stored under aliases. Furthermore, only I will have access to this information that will be stored in a password-protected computer to which only I have access. The audio recordings will be destroyed as soon as they are transcribed and checked for accuracy and the typed transcripts will be kept indefinitely but direct identifiers will be removed as soon as possible in the research process.

**How much time will this take?**
This study will be implemented over the course of winter and spring quarter, 2016. The time commitment for this study is largely dependent on which level of participation you decide to engage.

1. **Observations:** Participation in the observational component of this study requires no additional time constraints other than the course time you would otherwise have to do for PAX 200.
2. **Observations and Interviews:** Participation in the second level of my study involves observations, as outlined above as well as one interview. The interview component of this study will consist of one, 45-60 minute interview to be conducted in the first few weeks of class.

**Are there any risks involved in participating in this study?**
Being in this study does not involve any risks other than what you would encounter in daily life. You may feel uncomfortable being observed in the classroom. You may feel awkward about answering certain questions during the interview protocol. There is also the possibility that others may find out what they have said, but we have put protections in place to prevent this from happening. That said, every precaution will be taken to ensure the data be secured and kept confidential.

**Are there any benefits to participating in this study?**
You will not personally benefit from being in this study. We hope as a result of being able to conduct this study to learn how to better educate students in higher education.

**Is there any kind of payment, reimbursement or credit for being in this study?**
You will not receive any payment for being in the observational component of the research. However, should you decide to consent to participating in the interview section of the study, you will receive a $15 Starbucks gift certificate that will be handed to you at the conclusion of the interview.

**Can you decide not to participate?**
Your participation is voluntary, which means you can choose not to participate. There will be no negative consequences, penalties, or loss of benefits if you decide not to participate or change your mind later and withdraw from the research after you begin participating.
Who will see my study information and how will the confidentiality of the information collected for the research be protected?

The research records will be kept and stored securely. Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study or publish a paper to share the research with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. We will not include your name or any information that will directly identify you. We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information, or what that information is. However, some people might review or copy our records that may identify you in order to make sure we are following the required rules, laws, and regulations. For example, the DePaul University Institutional Review Board may review your information. If they look at our records, they will keep your information confidential.

The audio recordings will be kept until accurate written notes have been made, then they will be destroyed.

You should know that there are some circumstances in which we may have to show your information to other people. For example, the law may require us to show your information to a court or to tell authorities if you report information about a child being abused or neglected or if you pose a danger to yourself or someone else.

What if new information is learned that might affect my decision to be in the study?

If we learn of new information or make changes to any portion of the study, and the new information or changes might affect your willingness to stay in this study, the new information will be provided to you. If this happens, you may be asked to provide ongoing consent (in writing or verbally).

Who should be contacted for more information about the research?

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints about the study or you want to get additional information or provide input about this research, you can contact the researcher, Deborah Rintels Weiner at 312.498.4965, dweiner2@depaul.edu or her dissertation chair, Amira Proweller at aprowell@depaul.edu.

This research has been reviewed and approved by the DePaul Institutional Review Board (IRB). If you have questions about your rights as a research subject you may contact Susan Loess-Perez, DePaul University’s Director of Research Compliance, in the Office of Research Services at 312-362-7593 or by email at sloesspe@depaul.edu.

You may also contact DePaul’s Office of Research Services if:
- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

**Statement of Consent from the Subject:**

I have read the above information. I have had all my questions and concerns answered. By checking one or both of the boxes below, I indicate my consent to be in the research.

- **Observations.** By checking this box, I authorize, Deborah Rintels Weiner, EdD Candidate, to take handwritten observations on my interactions in class as well as all other informal interactions with research participants.

- **Observations and Interviews.** By checking this box, I authorize, Deborah Rintels Weiner, EdD Candidate, to take handwritten notes on my interactions in class including informal interactions with research participants as well as consent to engaging in one 45-60 minute interview.

Signature:_______________________________________________

Printed name: ____________________________________________

Date: _________________
ADULT CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Conceptions of Self, Other and Society:
Exploring the Impact of a Social Justice for Service-Learning Course on University Students

Principal Investigator: Deborah Rintels Weiner, EdD Candidate, Doctoral Student

Institution: DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois, USA

College: College of Education

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Amira Proweller, College of Education DePaul University

What is the purpose of this research?
We are asking you to be in a research study because we are trying to learn more about social justice education and the effects of service-learning experience on students perceptions of self, other and the broader social context. This study is being conducted by Deborah Rintels Weiner at DePaul University as a requirement to obtain her Doctoral Degree. This research is being supervised by her faculty advisor, Dr. Amira Proweller. We hope to include about 24 people in the research.

Why are you being asked to be in the research?
You are invited to participate in this study because you are enrolled in Professor Jerica Arents’ course, Perspectives on Peace, Justice and Conflict Studies, or PAX 200.

What is involved in being in the research study?
There are two levels of engagement in this study as a student in PAX 200: observations and interviews.

1. **Observations:** The first is to consent to be observed during all class sessions in the course and attended service experiences by the researcher as well as all other informal interactions with participants, via handwritten notes.

2. **Observations and Interviews:** The second level of participation in my study is to consent to observations (as outlined above) as well as agree to sit for two, face-to-face, audio-recorded, 45-60 minute interviews. Interviews will be conducted in my private, WRD office in the SAC building during the week day and evenings, pending your availability, and are designed to examine how your perceptions of social inequality, social justice and social activism are shaped in the context of a service-learning for social justice course as presented in class. For this reason questions in the interviews will relate to self-awareness and your positionality as it relates to your own background and perceptions of
social justice, social inequality and social activism (as presented in class). Queries around background consist of questions that request open-ended information around your progress in school, major, where you are from, reasons for coming to DePaul as well as cultural identification. These interviews will be conducted at two separate points in the quarter: once during the 2nd through the 6th week of the course (Weeks 2-6 of Winter Quarter), and a second time after the course is over (between Week 8 of the Winter Quarter and the end of the Spring Quarter).

Every precaution will be taken to ensure that all data obtained from both class and site observations and interviews will be secure. Names will be recorded and stored under aliases. Furthermore, only I will have access to this information that will be stored in a password-protected computer to which only I have access. The audio recordings will be destroyed as soon as they are transcribed and checked for accuracy and the typed transcripts will be kept indefinitely but direct identifiers will be removed as soon as possible in the research process.

**How much time will this take?**
This study will be implemented over the course of winter and spring quarter, 2016. The time commitment for this study is largely dependent on which level of participation you decide to engage.

1. **Observations:** Participation in the observational component of this study requires no additional time constraints other than the course time and service site hours you would otherwise have to do for PAX 200.

2. **Observations and Interviews:** Participation in the second level of my study involves observations, as outlined above as well as two interviews. The interview component of this study will consist of two, 45-60 minute interviews to be conducted on two separate occasions. Once during the 2nd through the 6th week of the course (Weeks 2-6 of Winter Quarter), and a second time at the end of the course or a few weeks after it is over (between Week 8 of the Winter Quarter and the end of the Spring Quarter).

**Are there any risks involved in participating in this study?**
Being in this study does not involve any risks other than what you would encounter in daily life. You may feel uncomfortable being observed in the classroom or service experience setting. You may feel awkward about answering certain questions during the interview protocol. There is also the possibility that others may find out what they have said, but we have put protections in place to prevent this from happening. That said, every precaution will be taken to ensure the data be secured and kept confidential.

**Are there any benefits to participating in this study?**
You will not personally benefit from being in this study. We hope as a result of being able to conduct this study to learn how to better educate students in higher education.
Is there any kind of payment, reimbursement or credit for being in this study?
You will not receive any payment for being in the observational component of the research. However, should your decide to consent to participating in the interview section of the study, you will have the opportunity to receive a total of $15 in Starbucks gift certificates. One $5 card will be rewarded at the conclusion of the first interview, and the second, for $10, will be handed out at the conclusion of the second interview.

Can you decide not to participate?
Your participation is voluntary, which means you can choose not to participate. There will be no negative consequences, penalties, or loss of benefits if you decide not to participate or change your mind later and withdraw from the research after you begin participating. Your decision whether or not to be in the research will not affect your grade in PAX 200.

Who will see my study information and how will the confidentiality of the information collected for the research be protected?
The research records will be kept and stored securely. Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study or publish a paper to share the research with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. We will not include your name or any information that will directly identify you. We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information, or what that information is. However, some people might review or copy our records that may identify you in order to make sure we are following the required rules, laws, and regulations. For example, the DePaul University Institutional Review Board may review your information. If they look at our records, they will keep your information confidential.

The audio recordings will be kept until accurate written notes have been made, then they will be destroyed.

You should know that there are some circumstances in which we may have to show your information to other people. For example, the law may require us to show your information to a court or to tell authorities if you report information about a child being abused or neglected or if you pose a danger to yourself or someone else.

What if new information is learned that might affect my decision to be in the study?
If we learn of new information or make changes to any portion of the study, and the new information or changes might affect your willingness to stay in this study, the new information will be provided to you. If this happens, you may be asked to provide ongoing consent (in writing or verbally).

Who should be contacted for more information about the research?
Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints about the study or you want to get additional information or provide input about this
research, you can contact the researcher, Deborah Rintels Weiner at 312.498.4965, dweiner2@depaul.edu or her dissertation chair, Amira Proweller at aprowell@depaul.edu.

This research has been reviewed and approved by the DePaul Institutional Review Board (IRB). If you have questions about your rights as a research subject you may contact Susan Loess-Perez, DePaul University’s Director of Research Compliance, in the Office of Research Services at 312-362-7593 or by email at sloesspe@depaul.edu.

You may also contact DePaul’s Office of Research Services if:
- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.

**Due Date: January 14, 2016 6pm.**
Please note that all students will have 7 days from the time the study is announced to consider participation in my study. Consent forms can be turned into me at our next class meeting (Week 2), submitted to me at my office at SAC 494, or electronically uploaded and emailed to me at dweiner2@depaul.edu

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

**Statement of Consent from the Subject:**

I have read the above information. I have had all my questions and concerns answered. By checking one or both of the boxes below, I indicate my consent to be in the research.

- Observations. By checking this box, I authorize, Deborah Rintels Weiner, EdD Candidate, to take handwritten observations on my interactions in class as well as in the course service site as well as all other informal interactions with research participants.

- Observations and Interviews. By checking this box, I authorize, Deborah Rintels Weiner, EdD Candidate, to take handwritten notes on my interactions in class as well as in the course service site as well as all other informal interactions with research participants. In addition, I consent to engaging in two 45-60 minute interviews over the course of WQ 2016 and SQ2016 with researcher, Deborah Rintels Weiner, EdD Candidate.

Signature:_______________________________________________

Printed name: ____________________________________________

E-mail Address: ___________________________________________

Date: _________________

(E-mail address will be kept confidential and will be used by the primary researcher, for the purposes of contacting student to arrange the interview sessions.)
INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN STUDY: SCRIPT READ TO CLASS

Script read to SLSJ students on the first day of class with Professor J present.

Good Evening, I am a doctoral student in the College of Education at DePaul University and wanted to introduce myself to you. This quarter, I will be researching this class for my dissertational research. I will not be enrolled in this class as a student. However, as a researcher, I will be attending this class alongside all of you, reading course materials, observing class discussions and activities, and attending select service sites.

I am interested in learning about how student perceptions of themselves are affected as a result of engaging in a social justice course with a service-learning component. Specifically, my interest is in how your personal life experiences, background and understanding of self, other and the broader social context are affected in light of this class and your 25-hour service requirement in terms of how they might relate to who you as a person, member of society and who you include in your definition of community.

There are two ways to participate in my study, observations and observations and interviews. To participate in the observational component of my study, you must concede to being observed during classroom time and the service site as well as all other informal interactions. This option requires no additional time constraints on your behalf outside of the time you would be spending in this class and its service component otherwise. To participate in the second level of my study, you must concede to observations (as outlined above) as well as participating in two privately, audio-recorded interviews with me at approximately 45-60 minutes each, for a total of between 90-120 minutes.

Questions in the first interview relate to self-awareness and your own positionality as it relates to your own background and perceptions of social justice, social inequality and social activism (as presented in class); where questions in the second interview will relate to your understanding of the course concepts of social change, social justice and social inequality, your experience(s) in the course, and how those things have affected you and your perception of yourself in your ability to change.

Those students willing to participate in the interview component of my research will be receiving a total of $15 in Starbucks gift cards, $5 to be handed out upon the completion of the first interview, and $10 to be handed out upon completion of the second interview.

Should you decide to participate in my study and you are over the age of 18, please read, sign and return the Consent Form to me. Should you wish to participate in my study and you are under the age of 18, you will need to obtain written parent/legal guardian permission and provide assent (your agreement) to be in the study. Please read, sign and return the Assent Form to me along with the signed parent/legal guardian permission.

Version 12/22/15
Please note that all students who wish to participate in this study will have 7 days from today, to consider participation. Consent, Assent and Parent/Legal Guardian Permission Forms can be turned into me at our next class meeting (Week 2), submitted to me at my office at SAC 494, or electronically uploaded and emailed to me at dweiner2@depaul.edu.

Looking forward to working together!