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## **PART II**

### **SERVICE-LEARNING IN TEACHING AND TEACHER EDUCATION**

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## CHAPTER 5

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# **SERVICE-LEARNING IN AN ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL AS MEDIATED THROUGH BOOK CLUB DISCUSSIONS**

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The University of Georgia (UGA), where I teach, is similar to many state namesake institutions in that it is attended primarily by White students of comfortable levels of affluence. It further ranks last among the United States' 50 flagship universities in the percentage of minority and impoverished high school graduates it enrolls: Nearly 40% of Georgia high school graduates in 2007 were Black, Latino, or Native American, yet less than 10% of UGA's freshman class emerged from these minority demographics (Haycock, Lynch, & Engle, 2010).

This dominant culture population in turn provides the pool from which the College of Education draws its teacher candidates. Guarino, Santibañez, and Daley (2006), in their comprehensive review of research on teacher recruitment and retention, find that over 70% of all people choosing teaching as a profession are women. Further, they summarize a variety of studies of the demographic makeup of the teaching population and find that the profession is roughly 85% White. Racially categorized pass rates on the Praxis licensure exams, according to one study (Gitomer,

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Latham, & Ziomek, 1999), suggest that “the teacher applicant pool was disproportionately White before testing, so the effect of testing was to make an already homogeneous pool even more so” (Guarino et al., 2006, p. 180). In my 20+ years of teaching certification courses, I have averaged about one non-White student a year, which no doubt follows from the winnowing of potential candidates at the university’s initial admissions level and whatever factors contribute to career decisions in students’ first 2 years of general education coursework.

And yet these largely White teacher candidates end up doing their student teaching and launching their careers in schools with increasingly high minority populations, often comprised of youth from impoverished backgrounds. I do not mean to pathologize minority populations with this claim, but rather to state a fact of life in the postsegregation South. Following the banishment of the majority of the indigenous population to the Oklahoma Territory via a deadly forced march in the 1830s, the primary races in Georgia have been of European and African descent. The original condition of slavery deprived Black people of literacy and educational opportunities, and was followed by a century of segregation and Jim Crow laws prior to the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. This repressive system kept African Americans apart, unequal, disenfranchised, and subject to unabated hostility and subjugation following the abolition of slavery (Wilkerson, 2010).

→ Au: Add Wilkerson 2010 to refs.

In the 45 or so years following desegregation of schools and other institutions, African Americans have remained an underclass in many parts of the state, aside from a growing professional and affluent class in the Atlanta area. Institutions and neighborhoods remain segregated, albeit through informal means; and racism persists. According to the UGA Initiative on Poverty and the Economy (2004-2010), U. S. Census data from 2005 find that statewide, 26% of African Americans, 23% of Latino/as, and 10% of Whites live in poverty. These percentages mask the overall problem that African Americans make up 36% of those living in poverty, Hispanics comprise 21.5%, and Whites account for 52%. The state’s poverty levels surely contribute to its students’ historically low scores on standardized tests relative to other states.

→ Au: Add source for this data. UGA Initiative or U.S. Census Bureau

Beginning with the 1996 Olympics, Georgia also experienced a large influx of Latin@ immigrants who were brought in as a cheap labor source to work on the many construction projects attendant to the games. This population in turn remained to work in the state’s poultry and textile industries and to establish families and communities that provided destinations for further waves of immigrants. Moser (2004) quotes Remedios Gomez Arnau, Atlanta’s exconsul general of Mexico, as saying that the new immigrants are “from the poorest, most rural and impoverished places in Mexico and Guatemala. And they are coming to a place where

→ Au: Add year for Gomez Arnau quote

people are not familiar with migrant laborers, or with Hispanics” (n.p.). Moser, writing for the Southern Poverty Law Center in an exposé of hate crimes against Latin@s, describes vicious acts of violence against many Latin@ immigrants and persistent efforts to segregate and harass them in Georgia. Portes and Smagorinsky (2010) argue that schools have remained relatively stable as the demographics of the state have shifted, responding poorly to new cultural conditions and slow to adopt culturally responsive approaches to teaching and learning that would benefit the changing makeup of the student population.

Although the canard that teachers tend to come from the lowest quartile of college students gets repeated often—a claim empirically refuted by Guarino et al. (2006)—the preservice teachers who enroll in my class invariably come from their high school’s Advanced Placement, Gifted and Talented, International Baccalaureate, and Honors tracks where they are segregated from students unlike themselves: people of color and people from working class or impoverished homes. The U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights, for instance, reports that enrollment in gifted and talented classes includes the following demographic pattern (<http://www.realizethedream.org/reports/charts/gifted.html>):

← Au: Add to references.

- Asian/Pacific Islander: 10.8%;
- White: 7.6%;
- Black: 3.1%;
- Hispanic: 3.7%;
- Native American/Alaskan: 4.9%; and
- students with disabilities: 0.9%

These statistics reflect the within-group percentage rather than the portion enrolled in the total Gifted and Talented population; given that White students make up about 60% of the total school population, these figures indicate vast differences in the percentages within each class of each racial group, suggesting that White students in advanced or elite programs of study have little contact with people from outside their cultural group of origin.

The general pattern for the students I teach, then, is for them to come from White families of reasonable affluence, go through school segregated in classes with other highly motivated and accomplished students of similar demographics and cultural orientation, and then attend an exclusive public university in which one student out of ten is a person of color and few come from backgrounds of poverty. They have very little contact with the kind of people they are likely to teach, particularly at the beginning of their careers. The National Center for Education Statistics

reports, for instance, that minority students are far more likely than White students to be taught by a teacher with 3 years of experience or fewer (<http://www.realizethedream.org/reports/charts/inexperienced.html>).

Before consulting these statistics, I knew anecdotally that I was preparing students from exclusive demographics to teach in diverse schools. I knew that they often faced dissonance with the cultural practices, literacy performances, behavioral norms, degree of affiliation with the school institution, and other factors of student engagement and disposition that they found among their pupils in school. I knew that I could be doing a better job of educating my preservice teachers about diverse populations, even though they were required to take, with other education majors, a sequence of courses designed to acquaint them with multicultural issues.

In these courses, specific attention to literacy education is folded into general knowledge about cultural diversity and culturally responsive schooling, and often gets lost in the process. To help provide my students with an experience that I believed would educate them in deep and rich ways about the people they would teach, I knew that I needed to do something more than include exhortations, brief attention to diversity in my teaching methods class, or references to the general courses they were required to take in multicultural education. The opportunity to do so was suggested by a student several years ago, and this idea developed grudgingly and with many difficulties into the course that I have developed to meet this need in our program.

### **INITIAL EFFORTS IN ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM**

This course was several years in the making. It originated with the insight of one undergraduate English education student, Kasha Whorton Hayes, who in the fall of 2003 donated some furniture to a local trailer park community primarily serving Mexican immigrants. The following week, Kasha came to the methods class I taught with an impassioned plea to her classmates to provide more comprehensive and systematic assistance to the deeply impoverished immigrants who inhabited this culturally and racially segregated community on the outskirts of town, which at the time lacked basic community services such as a regular bus line. The absence of public transportation further isolated the immigrant community from the rest of the city and created challenges in basic grocery shopping, getting to jobs, and meeting other needs.

The class rallied impressively, planning drives to collect food, clothing, furniture, kitchen ware, and other necessities that were lacking in the residents' homes, and using their talents to put together an equestrian show—Kasha was an accomplished rider in addition to having a profound

commitment to social justice issues—designed to benefit the Catholic mission established in one of the trailers where after-school tutoring services were provided. The class's effort was a breathtaking and profoundly moving success and left me feeling that doing this once was not enough. Some sort of plan needed to be instituted so that both the community residents *and* my students benefitted from their mutual interaction, as had occurred during this initial effort, as a critical component of their teacher education program.

Figuring out how to institute a service-learning dimension took 5 years of frustrating attempts to reproduce the success of this first effort with subsequent classes. I learned that one feature of the success of the first year's program was that it was student-initiated and, through its bottom-up process, had achieved 100% buy-in from the class. In the following year, even though I scaled back the program so that it only required tutoring young children after school, I encountered seemingly insurmountable problems. Forcing this relationship, and doing so in the context of a class on teaching writing—the only undergraduate certification course I was teaching at the time—that was not specifically designed for community participation, invited considerable resistance from some students and their parents. I had some highly critical correspondence from some parents who were persistent in complaining that they did not want their daughters subjected to the perceived dangers to which they were presumably exposed when in this community, in spite of the fact that no threatening actions ever occurred.

Coordinating our teacher candidates' experiences in this community—where tutoring opportunities were only available after school—with other field experiences in mainstream schools as much as an hour away made the logistics difficult to manage. On the whole, my efforts to require students to spend time with cultural others resulted in admirable dedication from a small group of students but was resisted for both pragmatic reasons derived from difficult logistics and what I considered questionable reasons emerging from the prejudices of students and their families against minority students and Latin@ students in particular. One of the main goals I hoped to address through the requirement, then—that of giving students experiences that would challenge assumptions they had about cultural others—was compromised. Indeed, the attitudes were often exacerbated because the initiative's add-on status made it peripheral by design and cumbersome, discommodious, and counterproductive for the students it was designed to benefit.

I nonetheless remained committed to the idea of including an experience with learners very different from our students in our preservice teacher education program. When many of our students initially consider the prospect of teaching, they envision themselves discussing the fine

points of Shakespeare and Milton with the sort of students with whom they have shared classrooms over the years. The plan to have students come in close contact with students from different niches in society than they have occupied thus remained a goal of mine, even as efforts to do so provided only frustration following the initial, highly successfully, student-initiated effort.

I ultimately accepted the fact that in order to include such an experience in our English education program, I needed to establish a whole course dedicated to service-learning, rather than to try to add it to a course in teaching methods or writing instruction that diluted both experiences and provided grounds for students and parents to question that component of the course and my teaching and integrity in general. Finding room for a whole new course in the program proved to be a challenge; it needed to be created amidst university requirements for general education, state requirements for certification, and my colleagues' priorities for other emphases of the program. Fortunately, my colleagues shared my view of the benefits of the course and so helped identify space where we might place it, albeit as an elective rather than a required class. Similarly, our dean's office loved the idea of a service-learning component and touted it in their documentation, even when the idea was floundering through its early ill-conceived iterations. So there was much support for including a service-learning dimension among the faculty and administration, even though I had yet to figure out how to do it well.

### **OFFICE OF SERVICE-LEARNING GRANT**

In the mid-2000s I got an announcement through a university listserv that the campus Office of Service-Learning was accepting proposals for a Fellows group designed to promote service-learning across the university curriculum. I saw this program as an opportunity to jumpstart my effort to include a service-learning course in our preservice curriculum, and with the encouragement of my colleagues, submitted a proposal that, to my dismay, was rejected. I jettisoned the idea of the course, given the initial difficulties I'd experienced with the idea and the failure of my effort to support the project through participation in this program. A year later I got the same announcement for a new cohort of service-learning Fellows, took my original proposal and tweaked it, and submitted it again. This time I was accepted into the program, and my enthusiasm for developing the course was resuscitated and renewed.

The program offered by the Office of Service-Learning "is a year-long faculty development program that provides an opportunity for selected faculty members to integrate service-learning into their teaching,

research, and public service work while becoming recognized campus leaders in service-learning pedagogy and community engagement” (<http://www.servicelearning.uga.edu/blog/department-news/programs/>). It provided a \$1,500 stipend for program development (since increased to \$2,500) and offered monthly meetings with the cohort of 10 or so Fellows in which we discussed our projects, heard from guest speakers, learned of resources available for service-learning, became acquainted with publication outlets designed for or favorable to service-learning scholarship, and entered a structure that helped us stay on track in completing our projects.

My proposal (see the Appendix) was for the design of a service-learning course for preservice English teachers to tutor in the trailer home community in which the idea had been initiated. My involvement with the community had grown since that first exposure through Kasha’s efforts, and I routinely was taking donations of clothing, food, household goods, and other items that had become expendable in our home. I had developed a strong relationship with Sister Margarita Martin, the Spanish nun who had committed to the community by setting up a mission in a trailer in the center of the community. I felt a close bond with the community and wanted to see through our original commitment by situating the course at this site.

As my year in the Fellows cohort unfolded, however, I came to realize the limitations of this site, particularly its availability only within a relatively brief window between 3:30 and 5 P.M., after the children had come home from school. I further had to address the issue that the community’s tutoring program was designed to benefit early primary school children, and my students were having difficulty making the extrapolation from these kids’ needs to their own interest in teaching middle and high school students. I thus, during the course of the year, began to search for other potential sites, and through various searches came up with a menu of tutoring locations in the city.

Ultimately, however, as a way to manage the program more easily, I settled on a single site: one of the city’s two alternative schools. Of these two, one was explicitly “punitive” and housed students with violent and antisocial histories, and the other was more academically oriented. As it happened, the nonpunitive alternative school’s sole English teacher was a past and current student of mine, and I saw that site as having great potential for hosting my students in the course. Having a trusted contact within the school helped with my own credibility in initiating the relationship and provided me with an inside person who could honestly tell me how things were going once the program was under way. One thing I’ve learned from service-learning experiences is that establishing and maintaining relationships is a key part of the effort. After negotiating with the

school administration, I arranged for my students to visit this site as part of their enrollment in my newly designed service-learning course. I next explain how this course has operated in the first few years I have taught it.

### **THE SERVICE-LEARNING CLASS**

The syllabus for the course is available at <http://www.coe.uga.edu/~smago/SL/SLSyllabus.htm>. The course is open presently to any student in the College of Education who wishes to have a service-learning experience. In the first year in which it was offered, it drew students from each of the four grade levels of undergraduate education and primarily students who aspired to enroll in English education. Because it best serves students prior to the declaration of a major, it now enrolls sophomores for the most part. The course met on campus each week for roughly two hours and required an additional hour each week of tutoring and mentoring students at the alternative school.

My goal was to place each of my students in a one-on-one tutoring relationship with a student who came from a radically different cultural environment in terms of race, ethnicity, social class, educational aspiration, family situation, and other such factors. I hoped to provide mutually educational experiences for my students and the young people they tutored: We would provide service to the community by helping struggling students with their schoolwork and progress toward graduation, and by entering a mentoring relationship that went beyond academics and into other life issues; and the students being tutored would educate my students about their life experiences, their perspective on school, the subject of English, the value of an education, their interests and achievements, their families and communities, their short- and long-term goals with their lives, and whatever else emerged from their extended conversations.

The students in the alternative school generally met my criteria for the sort of person I hoped to put my students in contact with. The alternative school was designated a Performance Learning Center (PLC), an initiative of the Communities In Schools organization that helps to establish small, nontraditional high schools for students who are not succeeding in mainstream schools. PLCs, funded through the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and other donors, construct a business-oriented environment that emphasizes online and project-based learning fostered by independent work supported by teachers. The aim of PLCs is to encourage students toward graduation while simultaneously helping them to plan their post-secondary lives, education, or careers, however envisioned.

The students enrolled at the PLC are thus quite different from my UGA teacher candidates in many ways. They exhibit a range of races but

tend to come from lower socioeconomic classes; a number bring their own young children to school with them to take advantage of the school's nursery; some can be observed holding hands with same-sex partners, a behavior unlikely in the mainstream schools; and for the most part, they hate school and are forthcoming in their reasons for their antipathy. They thus provide the sort of interaction that I hope for in helping my students learn about how school may be viewed by students whose life experiences and perspectives on education are considerably different from their own. My students take on the role of tutor and mentor, helping the PLC students not only with schoolwork but with the life management and planning that is part of their education in this setting. Given that my service-learning course is offered in the spring semester, the primary tutoring that my students provide is geared toward helping their PLC student pass the state graduation tests, a service that is greatly appreciated by the alternative school administrators, who base a degree of their claim to success on the graduation rates of their students.

### **Course Project**

For their course project, each student may choose from among three types of synthesis (see <http://www.coe.uga.edu/~smago/SL/SLCourseProjects.htm>). When I originally planned the course, there was a single option: to write a case study of the student they were assigned to tutor. Many students, however, had difficulty establishing such continuity with an alternative school student. The environment is, to say the least, often in flux. Some students tutored kids who dropped out or were dismissed from the school because of absences or other rules violations. Some of the PLC students were undependable so that when my students made the trip to the campus—something around which they planned their day—their mentee never showed up. On such occasions, they met with whatever student was available or otherwise tried to help do what needed to be done at the school.

Because several students had such capricious experiences, we needed an alternative assignment so that students who made good-faith efforts to meet the course requirements could also write a course paper outlining what they had learned, even if they had to weave together their experiences with a variety of kids with whom they did not have the opportunity to develop a sustained relationship. I invited them to come up with an alternative assignment, which one student developed. For this assignment the teacher candidates could report their experiences at the PLC in a categorical report; I subsequently expanded the options for representing their experiences to other forms, including fiction, narrative, journal

entries, and graphic forms. This adjustment was one of many that I made during the first, prototypical offering of the course.

In the second year in which I offered the course, students requested a third final project, one that involves ongoing blogging about their PLC experiences. This option allowed for less formal, more process-oriented writing about their tutoring and mentoring in the same sort of online medium that the students at the PLC use for much of their schoolwork. As the course is offered over time, I expect additional options to become available as students propose them.

I have begun to collect my students' work (when they provide permission to do so) in an online library of course papers available at the syllabus website so that future students may get some sense of how successful students have undertaken this task. It also allows anyone interested in what students make of the course to consult this library to see what students have produced: to see what they have learned through their service to the community.

### **Book Clubs**

Class sessions on campus include attention to three areas. Early on, students learn procedures for how to conduct a tutoring session; and at various points during the semester, students are given class time to ask questions about how to develop their course projects. The majority of the class sessions, however, are devoted to book club meetings. Book clubs have become established as a legitimate pedagogy in English education (Daniels, 1994; Faust, Cockrill, Hancock, & Isserstadt, 2005; McMahan, & Raphael, 1997; O'Donnell-Allen, 2006; Raphael, Pardo, Highfield, & McMahan, 1997). Because I want to use the class as a way to open students' eyes to alternative pedagogies, I adopted a book club format for running the campus-based classes.

I wanted the menu of readings to represent a range of issues that might arise in students' engagement with high school students of various cultural backgrounds. I thus conducted internet searches and got recommendations from colleagues who taught multicultural courses to assemble a reading list from which students could select their book club readings. The books that I identified included attention to socioeconomic, race, culture, social class, immigration, bilingualism, gender, and related issues. Because this list is online, I am able to continually update it when I learn of new titles. I found, for instance, that my students felt that my original list of "classic" texts lacked contemporary perspectives on the issues, and so I continued to add current publications as I hear of them. I invested my \$1,500 from the service-learning Fellowship in a classroom library that

allowed students to browse the original set of books I'd identified, and have since built this library with titles from my own shelves and from books I received as payment for reviewing manuscripts for book publishers. I was also able to apply to the Office of Service-Learning after my second year of teaching the course for a \$500 grant to purchase additional books for the classroom library, which I expect to continue to grow over time.

To help students further with their selections, I scour the internet for book reviews of each title (or sometimes add titles after I read a review from <http://www.edrev.info/> or other source) and link them along with the book listing at the website. I also request student reviews of the titles they read in their book clubs as a way to validate their readings and to provide a student's perspective (rather than a more experienced scholar's) on the selections, linking them alongside the other reviews I have located.

The class is structured so that each book club group of four to five students discusses three books during the course of the semester. Each book occupies them for 3 weeks. During the first session they discuss the book however they wish; during the second session they continue this discussion while also planning for what they will do during the third session; and during the third session they "present" their book to the class through whatever means they think will be most interesting, informative, and compelling for their classmates. The idea behind this approach is to put both the selection of topics (within the boundaries of the course's goals) and the means of discussion in the hands of the students. The pedagogy I employ is designed to help students see that there are alternatives to the lecture-and-discussion approach to teaching that they have experienced throughout much of their school lives, including (and perhaps especially) at the university itself.

I also chose this approach because I want the students to discuss issues that they might resist, without the problem of my initiating and directing their inquiries. In our location in the Deep South, most students come to UGA with conservative political values and often reject professorial attempts to reroute their values to more progressive beliefs. One student, during a recent interview I conducted as part of the research dimension I will describe later, described how angry she felt at the instructor who taught a Foundations of Education course required in our professional sequence, who used his position in class to berate and belittle George W. Bush, whose election she had supported in her first opportunity to vote as a citizen. Like this professor, I voted for President Bush's opponents, but I feel that using my podium to preach liberal values to conservative students not only violates my authority but also works against my own goals for the course, which are for the students to wrestle with difficult ques-

tions that are new to them and arrive at their own conclusions regarding what is fair and effective in education.

With this recognition in mind, I hope that, given the value systems and experiences with which they enter the class, they choose books and undertake discussions during which they raise the questions most relevant to their growth as educators. I have no illusions that this approach would dramatically alter their politics; I make considerable efforts as a teacher not to impose my political beliefs on my students, even though I make no secret of them. The problem is a delicate one for any progressive educator working with students from conservative political backgrounds: how to invite a consideration of current and controversial educational issues without trampling on the students' prior beliefs.

My hope is that the book club format will enable students to express their beliefs honestly and forthrightly in the company of their classmates without concern for how I might interpret them as people in light of what they say. Their growing ambivalence becomes apparent during the class session that they lead about the book they have discussed. One group that read Jonathan Kozol's *Savage Inequalities* (1992), for instance, got caught between value systems, saying repeatedly something along the following lines: "I reject Obama's socialism, but what do you do about kids who are in classrooms where the ceiling tiles are falling on their head while they're trying to learn?" This sort of wrenching internal conflict is, I believe, far more valuable to my students than professorial lectures about the value of progressive beliefs.

### RESEARCH DIMENSION

For a number of years, I have been interested in how beginning teachers develop conceptions of how to teach English (e.g., Smagorinsky, Cook, & Johnson, 2003). Toward that end, I recorded the book club discussions for each of four groups each time they met during one offering of the class. The questions driving the study are as follows:

1. What conceptions of teaching, schooling, social equity, gender issues, social class factors, immigration, racial factors, and related cultural influences do the preservice teachers demonstrate at the three stages of data collection (e.g., the recordings of the book club discussions for each of the three successive books)?
2. To what extent does their thinking demonstrate coherence as a concept over the course of the three stages of data collection, and to what extent does their evolving conception develop a linear vs. twisting path of concept development?

3. In what ways can the participants' concept development be attributed to the three primary variables designed into the course: the tutoring experience, the readings, and the book club discussions?
4. In what ways do the students' written papers for the course corroborate or disconfirm the findings from the analysis of the book club discussions?

Based on what I have heard in class, I believe that the students do go through concept development as a result of their engagement with the PLC, the readings, and the discussions. This study will enable me to analyze in details whether or not such development actually occurs and which direction this development takes, and provide insights into the mediational role of each of the three variables central to the course: the tutoring, the reading, and the discussions. I have also gotten seven students to volunteer to participate in a longitudinal study of their concept development throughout their university training and into their careers. I can imagine other sorts of studies available in a class of this sort, including an analysis of the tutoring meetings themselves, a study of the interpersonal dynamics involved in school/university partnerships of this sort, and many other possibilities.

### **COURSE OUTCOMES**

I compute the students' grades based on three interrelated factors:

1. Tutoring Sessions 30%: 2 points awarded for each of the 15 hours spent at the PLC;
2. Class Sessions 30%: Includes book club discussions and student-led discussions; and
3. Course Project 40%: Awarded for successful completion of a case study, PLC report, or blog.

Much of the course grade follows from participation in the routine requirements of the course. I find that the students who enroll in the class take their work very seriously, often spending more than the 15 required hours at the site, assisting the student with transportation on occasions, providing help filling out college application forms, and taking on other mentoring obligations that greatly exceed the course requirements. They develop strong relationships with the students they tutor; often they are roughly the same age, and after working past some very tough exteriors, develop close relationships that extend beyond the course experience. I

have heard many of my students speak joyously of their intention to attend their mentee's high school graduation and of the reciprocal satisfaction that followed from their relationship. Many of the students from my class return to the PLC the following year to meet their field experience requirements for program admission because of the positive experience they had their first time through.

Many of my students' projects are posted at the links available at <http://www.coe.uga.edu/~smago/SL/SLCourseProjects.htm>. I will quote from one to reveal what I see as typical of the statements made by students in considering the influence of the class on their thinking:

Throughout the Book Club readings this semester, every group has recognized the multitude of issues among conventional schools as well as those that resemble the PLC, but the books have left the solutions open-ended. In *Jocks and Burnouts*, Eckert [1989] primarily focuses on the differences that exist among students and how they view high school through different lenses. For the jocks, or students who value education, a desire to contribute to the school resonates, and so they actively participate in academics and extra curricular activities. The burnouts, on the other hand, tend to slack off, frequently miss school, as well as carry themselves with a defiant attitude. Students are very easily categorized as a burnout, because so few students correlate perfectly with the ideal student model that is set by schools. In reality, high school solely opens up opportunities for college bound students. But most burnouts do not see themselves as college material, and they will more than likely partake in a blue collar vocational job—so high school loses practicality for many students. It is very unlikely for burnouts and students like John to better fit the conventional model of school, so schools should consider better adapting to these students who need a push.

All of our book clubs and class discussions have raised compelling arguments and problems with conventional schools. Some students believe that schools like the Performance Learning Center is a successful answer to our problems, and others see it as a way out for kids who refuse to cooperate with conventional schools. I believe the PLC is a magnificent thing and I am absolutely blown away by this transformation. Students are given a chance to prove themselves and are treated with respect, as their slates are wiped clean when they enroll at the school. John is a PLC success story and with his pending high school diploma, he is ready to continue his success in college. I believe the one key to inspiring the unmotivated student lies in respect. If a teacher is flexible, encouraging, and respectful—he or she is bound for success in the classroom. I hate that the burnout students have such a stigma placed with them and that the bad reputation follows them throughout high school. With each passing year, semester, or even within the separate classes—each child should be given the opportunity to succeed, a fair chance for a clean slate. I could almost guarantee a student is more likely to fulfill a teacher's expectations if they are given the chance. I am positive that there are more students like John than there are like me in public schools,

and sometimes a second, third, or even a fourth chance is all that those kids need to regain the self-confidence that is required to succeed.

As this student's reflection shows, the course allowed the students to construct their own understanding of their school experiences, their readings, and their book club discussions. They were able to customize the book clubs to match the issues they faced in teaching and mentoring at the PLC. In leading a class discussion, each group had an opportunity to share and develop its insights with their classmates. As one of the longitudinal study's participants said in an interview, the opportunity to discuss a total of 12 books across the whole of the book clubs' selections provided diverse perspectives on a range of key issues in education. The following remarks on an end-of-course evaluation are representative of how many students responded to the class:

I believe this class has helped me more for my career as an educator than any other education class I've taken at the university. Most of the classes have a service component, but it's not very long nor gets much attention in the classroom. Since the service portion is the largest part of the class and dominates the classroom discussion of how to operate a classroom, what to expect from students, as well as how to motivate a student—I was encouraged and learned more about my future classroom than any other class.

I do risk the accusation of self-aggrandizement in reporting this flattering impression, but should state that student satisfaction, I believe, followed from the control that they were given over the success of the class. The course provides a structure within which they operate and make choices: how to manage their PLC experience, which books to read, which perspective they develop, whom they work with, how they lead their discussions, and which project they undertake to render their experiences into text. I read their positive response to the course as an indication, more than anything, of the investment they make in the class when given the opportunity to take ownership over their own learning through providing service to students who greatly appreciate it, and through reading and discussing books that raise issues that provoke them to new levels of understanding.

## CONCLUSION

The service-learning class I have designed and taught helps to integrate the three major strands of professional conduct expected of faculty at universities with both research and outreach missions: It is a very satisfying class to teach in and of itself, it provides a research site that allows for a

robust data collection, and it provides critical service to the local community through the outreach dimension of the tutoring and mentoring. My own role in the class is pretty minimalist: I design the structure and then eavesdrop on how the students make sense of their experiences. Most university faculty I know at research universities shy away from teaching undergraduates, but this class, which primarily enrolls sophomores, has become one of the most uplifting classes I have ever taught because of the profound realizations my students come to through their engagement with the people of the PLC and the university class, and the texts that help to give formal meaning to their lived experiences.

### **APPENDIX: SERVICE-LEARNING GRANT PROPOSAL**

#### ***TAPPP Into the Community: A Partnership Between the Program in English Education at UGA and the Pinewood Estates Community in North Athens***

The UGA Service-Learning Fellows program would greatly enhance the development of the *TAPPP Into the Community* program, an outreach effort in the program in English Education now in its third year of service. *TAPPP Into the Community* is part of a larger project that, in recent years, has engaged UGA students with local communities in poverty. The project now involves a commitment from each English Education major in the Teaching as Principled Practice Project (TAPPP) to tutor young children in the Pinewood Estates community after school. The residents of this community are immigrants from two of Mexico's most impoverished states and are direly in need of support. TAPPP students, after establishing relationships with children and other community residents, typically develop additional initiatives to benefit the Pinewood residents. The project is expected to evolve each year to adapt to new conditions either within the program in English Education or in the Pinewood Estates community and extended local environment. As the coordinator of this effort, I would learn more about how to make this program work more effectively to serve both the residents of Pinewood Estates and UGA students preparing for careers as secondary school English teachers (i.e., teachers of language, literature, and writing; not ESOL teachers).

*TAPPP Into the Community* is not simply outreach. We anticipate that the experience of working with young people from immigrant and linguistic/racial minorities will help them understand how to teach in culturally responsive ways. Luis Moll, whose research has influenced the design of the program, has argued that

“existing classroom practices underestimate and constrain what Latino and other children are able to display intellectually.” He believes the secret to literacy instruction is for schools to investigate and tap into the “hidden” home and community resources of their students. And he points out that his research calls the “deficit model” of student assessment into serious question. The home investigations revealed that many families had abundant knowledge that the schools did not know about—and therefore did not use in order to teach academic skills. ([http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/cityschl/city1\\_1c.htm](http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/cityschl/city1_1c.htm))

We believe, then, that the *TAPPP Into The Community* project will not only serve the Pinewood residents well, but will also enrich UGA’s English Education majors’ understanding of the resources and knowledge that “Other People’s Children” (Delpit, 1995) bring with them to school. This understanding includes recognizing the attributes of students from marginalized cultures that skillful teachers can draw on to expand all students’ knowledge, rather than viewing their cultural ways of knowing as deficits that stand in the way of their educational progress.

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1995 to refs.

We anticipate that UGA English education majors who engage with the Pinewood community will emerge as better educated about a segment of their student populations who have not experienced success in U.S. schools and often drop out well before their scheduled graduations. Our prospective English teachers will develop the foundation for providing culturally relevant instruction that draws on “hidden” abilities and knowledge so that students of Mexican origin may exhibit better performance and retention rates and become better integrated into mainstream U.S. society and contributing members of the U.S. economy—and thus have greater access to the American Dream.

As both a land-grant and sea-grant institution, UGA has a fundamental mission to serve the people of the State of Georgia. As the *UGA Strategic Plan* states,

In each of its programs, in each area of teaching, research and service, and in every dimension of its thinking, the University has as its first and foremost goal the high calling of “Serving Georgia.” ... UGA will accelerate its work on cooperative projects with the Athens/Clarke community, and will develop new programs to bridge the University and its neighbors.

This sort of outreach is well-realized by the *TAPPP Into the Community* project, with a specific emphasis on some of the state’s most impoverished residents.

The College of Education’s Strategic Plan for 2000-2010 includes *Goal #3*, to “Increase the COE’s Active Engagement with Constituents.” This goal is elaborated as follows:

The COE is committed to developing more responsive, collegial, and effective models of interaction called for by the complex challenges faced by today's communities. The COE seeks to become an engaged college whose faculty, students, and staff anticipate and respond to societal challenges through direct involvement with constituents in its programmatic efforts in research, teaching, and outreach.

The strategic plan includes the actions of "Develop[ing] responsive partnerships with schools, community agencies, businesses, corporations, and other universities" and "Establish[ing] resources and a reward structure encouraging faculty and student participation in engagement efforts." As a formal partnership, *TAPPP Into The Community* brings UGA students and faculty into the kind of active engagement with community constituents that the College of Education seeks to achieve.

National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, the agency whose standards the UGA College of Education must meet, requires that "Candidates are expected to study and practice in a variety of settings that include diverse populations, students with exceptionalities, and students of different ages." The *TAPPP Into the Community* project helps the program in English Education to satisfy this standard by diversifying the setting of field experiences, placing field experiences in a community setting, involving prospective teachers with students of different age groups (e.g., elementary school children), and engaging them with diverse populations. Further,

Curriculum and accompanying field experiences are designed to help candidates understand the importance of diversity in teaching and learning. Candidates learn to develop and teach lessons that incorporate diversity and develop a classroom and school climate that values diversity. Candidates become aware of different teaching and learning styles shaped by cultural influences and are able to adapt instruction and services appropriately for all students.

A UGA Service-Learning Fellowship would greatly enhance the program in English Education to implement this project with greater knowledge, skill, and coordination with other community stakeholders.

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