Understanding Resistance: Reflections on Race and Privilege Through Service-Learning

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Service-learning has been hailed as an effective means to bridge classroom learning with practical application in the local context. Numerous studies have demonstrated the educational value of service-learning, particularly the potential to build awareness and appreciation for diversity. Students' resistance to even acknowledging issues of oppression, such as racism and classism, has received far less attention. This inquiry explored how 63 undergraduate students responded to issues concerning race and privilege as they participated in a service-learning course and identified sources of resistance (racial/class complicity, racial/class consciousness, and racial/class action) across racial/ethnic and class backgrounds. The study offers new implications for incorporating diversity issues in service-learning programs.

This language barrier, I feel, should be motivation for immigrants to learn English faster because, frankly, when they come to this country, they should have to speak English in all professional, educational, and social settings, no matter what. If an immigrant is resistant to learning the native language, then perhaps they should be restricted to low-income, service-based jobs. (Student in service-learning course)

This reflection was written by a student in a university-wide, service-learning program designed to foster college aspirations among Latino/a middle and high school students through pairing them with mentors. This was not an isolated sentiment among the student mentors. Even though we, the course instructors, were women of color, we found that students of all racial backgrounds candidly shared their views on race, social class, and privilege in ways that would be interpreted as politically incorrect or racist if expressed in a public forum. Such honest sharing became a key starting point for confronting educational inequities in our society and creating an environment where transformative learning could occur (hooks, 1993). Through their participation in this elective service-learning course, many students encountered social injustices for the first time and, through their reflective processes, underwent potentially transformative educational journeys.

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As a result of our interactions and observations in this course, we were prompted to investigate the ways that students reflected about social injustices within a service-learning context. Although studies have demonstrated the benefits of racial/ethnic diversity within the college classroom and the positive learning outcomes associated with service-learning programs, there is limited research on how students make meaning of race, class, and race/class inequities during their involvement in a service-learning program. In this article we draw particular attention to the extent to which college students, who had the potential to create social change in secondary schools, synthesized their classroom knowledge about educational inequities with their service experience as mentors. We offer three types of responses from students' perspectives on their service-learning experiences: maintaining the status quo, gaining awareness, and taking action.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Service-learning, defined as reflective learning combined with service participation (Schwartzman, 2001), has documented benefits that extend beyond traditional classroom learning. Among those cited in national studies are gains in personal development, interpersonal skills, leadership skills, academic abilities, and commitment to citizenship (Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, & Yee, 2000; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Hayes & Cuban, 1997). In addition, service-learning can provide a powerful vehicle for students to engage directly with diversity by connecting their learning in the classroom with life outside of the university. Well-constructed and socially responsible service-learning opportunities can become a means to "redress power imbalances, to legitimate marginalized communities . . . and to harness institutional resources for social change" (Butin, 2005b, p. 91). An essential aspect of service-learning is reciprocity: both parties in the relationship co-construct the outcomes of the service, learning from and teaching each other (Rhoads, 1997). By establishing relationships with community members through service-learning, college students can gain an understanding of themselves in relation to the Other and can confront their assumptions about communities in need, particularly those with whom they do not personally identify.

For students who feel marginalized on the college campus, service-learning opportunities can validate their personal backgrounds and help them find a sense of "home" (Lee, 2005). They may also experience intrinsic rewards when they help individuals like themselves and "give back." Students of low socioeconomic status and students of color may be familiar with the communities being served, giving them a particular advantage in their access and outreach effectiveness (Lee, 2005).

Students from other cultural backgrounds, including more privileged students, who are unfamiliar with the community being served, may have difficulty gaining access to and acceptance by the local community and may confront negative stereotypes (Dunlap, 1998). For these reasons, reciprocity between the students and the community must be integrated within service-learning projects so that the outcomes of the service are jointly determined within a context of mutual respect. Otherwise students, especially white students, "who do not often understand the social dynamics of poverty and racism," may blame the very communities they are serving for the inequities that exist in society (O'Grady, 2000, p. 12). For example, Novek (2000) reported that middle- and upperclass students in a civic journalism class expressed feelings of privilege, fear, guilt, and condescension with regard to working with communities unlike their own. In a study

of white preservice teachers and their interactions with underserved students in an inner-city school, Philipsen (2003) found that the teachers' reflections on their service-learning experiences remained deficit-centered. Jones, Gilbride-Brown, and Gasiorski (2005) identified two profiles for how white students responded when confronted by social justice[1] issues: "Politely Frustrated Volunteers" quietly expressed feelings of hurt and guilt through their written work and class evaluations, whereas "Active Resisters" openly challenged the course goals and were hostile and disruptive throughout the service-learning experience.

As these findings demonstrate, college students who participate in service-learning opportunities may confront their own privilege for the first time and tackle "information and experiences that may directly contrast the education, beliefs, and values with which [they] are comfortable" (Cooks, Scharrer, & Paredes, 2004, p. 48). This cognitive dissonance can cause them to resist connecting the service with a course's learning outcomes (Rhoads, 1997; Rosenberger, 2000). An additional consideration is that service-learning can serve to promote social change or social reproduction (i.e., the status quo; Butin, 2005a). Therefore, we can reframe service-learning experiences as "culturally saturated, socially consequential, politically contested, and existentially defining" (Butin, 2005a, p. xi). Powerful service-learning opportunities help to trigger cognitive and affective "disequilibrium," while providing a supportive environment in which to reflect on and "accommodate" new understandings about inequity (Dunlap, Scoggin, Green, & Davi, 2007, p. 20). The challenge in helping students develop critical consciousness through service-learning is to allow disequilibrium to occur and to acknowledge that such cognitive dissonance is a "process of struggle, negotiation, and meaning-making" (Jones et al., 2005, p. 7). The educator's role in this process is to facilitate honest reflection and, when injustices are observed, to inspire students to advocate for action.

Although many studies have focused on the positive outcomes associated with service-learning, the notion of resistance towards social justice intrigued us, especially because efforts to promote diversity through service-learning are not well conceptualized in the literature. The limited discussion of this issue may lead researchers and service-learning instructors to take for granted the positive outcomes associated with diversity and to ignore the potential for hostility, resentment, and perpetuated stereotypes to arise within a service-learning experience.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study explores college students' responses to issues of race and privilege as they participated in a service-learning course, with particular attention to forms of social justice resistance. Although the benefits of racial/ethnic diversity in college classrooms and service-learning programs have been well-established, less is known about how students from different racial/ethnic and social class backgrounds conceptualize race, social class, and racial/class inequities when participating in service-learning. Service-learning experiences can provide opportunities for transformational learning about race and class by helping students better understand themselves as they build relationships with others and connect an intellectual awareness of oppression with emotional awareness (Dunlap et al., 2007; Hayes & Cuban, 1997). Establishing connections among individuals from different backgrounds is an aspect of the philosophy of interculturalism, which "moves beyond the addition of new voices [and] is a process of learning and sharing across difference where no one culture dominates" (Tanaka, 2002, p. 282). Interculturalism focuses on

the interaction between different cultures rather than merely increasing representation. Further, interculturalism emphasizes that higher education has a responsibility to cultivate an exploration of various social identities and how these subjectivities are (dis)associated with power in society. Nurturing "positive subjectivities" within the classroom enables all students to voice their own stories of race, social class, and privilege in productive, thoughtful ways and to grapple with the various emotions they may experience through their interactions with the Other (Dunlap et al., 2007; Tanaka, 2002). Building on this framework, this study addressed two research questions: How do students experience interculturalism within the context of a service-learning course? And what forms of resistance might students experience when confronting issues of race, class, and privilege within an intercultural context?

METHOD

The majority of outcomes-based research on service-learning has been quantitative, but this study employed a qualitative approach in order to fully capture participants' voices and personal stories. We utilized a phenomenological approach to understand students' personal experiences of service-learning and of encountering diverse students. In phenomenological research, the researcher seeks to understand individuals' worlds of experience through in-depth interviews, then searches for commonalities across individuals to explain the given phenomenon, which, in this case, was interculturalism in the context of service-learning (Patton, 2002).

Our data gathering, analysis, and interpretation focused on students' interactions with individuals of different cultures and backgrounds in an intercultural service-learning context and how they made sense of such differences in moving towards a commitment to either social justice or reproducing social inequities. The present study is the second component of an extended longitudinal project exploring the sociocultural context of college access and outreach. The first component identified the qualitative benefits of service-learning across college students' extent of service participation (Lee & Espino, in press).

The Service-Learning Course

The sample was drawn from three cohorts of undergraduate college students who participated in three sections of a service-learning course; one cohort was in California, the other two were in Arizona. The second co-author served as the lead instructor, teaching the same course content at both institutions and using similar readings and lecture material designed to inform students about college access issues. Students then applied their classroom knowledge by serving as mentors at local under-resourced middle schools and high schools with support from K-12 administrators who served as on-site coordinators. The course was an elective with enrollment open to all students, regardless of major, level of experience working with children, or previous interactions with diverse communities.

The classroom was intended to serve as a location where students were engaged and challenged to address social inequities, develop a critical consciousness regarding various forms of oppression, and work to eradicate oppressive systems (Baez, 2000; Godinez Ballón, Chávez, Gómez, & Mizumoto Posey, 2006). The course curriculum and critical pedagogical strategies were derived

from numerous articles on service-learning and diversity-centered courses that demonstrated how racially diverse interactions benefited all learners and yielded cognitive and affective outcomes (e.g., Chang, 1999; Gurin et al., 2002; Hurtado, 2001). Course topics included research on college access, personal accounts of K-12 education at under-resourced schools, transformative pedagogies, stereotype deconstruction, resiliency, and public policy efforts to improve the educational system. Classroom assignments included group discussions, presentations, and written personal reflections on the course readings and service experience—activities designed to "transform service experiences into service-learning experiences" (Dunlap et al., 2007, p. 23).

The service component was intended to reinforce and build upon classroom readings and exercises by fostering meaningful interaction with various facets of diversity in the community with the hope that students would develop a greater appreciation of diversity and a commitment to resolving systemic issues of educational inequality. In this field experience, each college student spent one to two hours per week for 13 weeks mentoring, advising, and tutoring between one and three middle- or high school mentees. The college students' schedules were matched with school availability (up to 10 different schools per course term, all within 30 miles of the university). The on-site school coordinators then matched each mentor to one or more secondary students, in most cases through random assignments but occasionally based on common career interests. The on-site coordinators and course instructors met regularly to discuss the college students' interactions with their mentees and to troubleshoot any issues that arose.

Over the course term, students were required to submit at least five reflections on how their service experience related to the course readings. We consciously curbed our expectations with regard to whether the reflections would accomplish reproduction or transformation of social inequities because we understood that "the historical conditions and greater social and educational contexts that shape students' lives, values, and knowledges" (Cooks et al., 2004, p. 45) could lead to either outcome. Nevertheless, we were still surprised by the resistance expressed in some of the written reflections, especially because working with underserved communities was clearly outlined in the course description and syllabus. Although we did not explicitly ask students about their motivations for taking the course, we had expected it to attract students whose values aligned with these goals. In addition, despite our combined 15 years of classroom and diversity training experience, there were no clear solutions on how to process potential conflicts when students encountered "oppositional knowledge" (Cooks et al., 2004, p. 48), that is, values and assumptions that differed from those with which they were comfortable. (For discussions on managing difficult classroom discussions, see Schoem and Hurtado, 2001 and Nash, Bradley, and Chickering, 2008.) Through our classroom observations, grading of reflections and presentations, and interactions with on-site coordinators, we found conflicting expectations among the course enrollees: some acknowledged racial and class privilege and sought opportunities to make positive change, whereas others worked to maintain their privilege and support the status quo. Both types of students were strongly affected by the combination of classroom learning and service participation.

Sample Sites

The data for the study were collected at two public, Research I institutions, one in California and one in Arizona, that had instituted service-learning courses promoting college access and outreach.

West Coast University[2] is situated in a middle-income neighborhood, approximately 15 miles from the California Unified School District (CUSD), which has some of the most under-resourced and low-achieving schools in the country. Although the median household income for the district is $42,349, 74.8% of the district's student population is classified as economically disadvantaged (CUSD, 2006; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2005a). Forty-five percent of undergraduates enrolled at West Coast receive some form of need-based financial aid (West Coast University, 2009). The CUSD student mentees were primarily Latino/a and African American, reflecting the district's enrollment of 73.3% and 11.3%, respectively (California Unified School District, 2006).

The Arizona site, Southwest University, is located in a low- to middle-income, primarily Latino/a neighborhood, and 63.9% of undergraduates receive some form of need-based financial aid (Southwest University, 2009). Southwest University students were paired with secondary students in the Arizona Unified School District, which has 53.4% Latino/a enrollment (Arizona Unified School District, 2006). The average household income in the district is $38,000, and 62% of the student population is classified as economically disadvantaged (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005b).

Data Collection

At the end of the class terms we conducted one-hour interviews with 63 volunteer participants, accounting for 37% of the total enrollment (170 students) from all classes. The interview protocol concentrated on connections students made between classroom learning and service-learning experiences, with particular attention to their perceptions of their mentees and the schools they served, and how these views changed over the class term. Our sample had a majority of women (75%), white/Caucasian students (49%), and upperclassmen (22.2% juniors and 25.4% seniors). Thirteen participants enrolled in the service-learning course offered at West Coast University, and 50 participants enrolled in the courses offered at Southwest University.

Data Analysis

Once the data were transcribed, the interview transcripts were coded for emerging themes based on an initial reading of the texts. The first set of codes was based on themes that emerged from the literature review, including our theoretical framework of interculturalism and resistance. The themes were then shifted and modified through rereading and rethinking the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). The data were then reanalyzed by summarizing the themes that emerged. Given the nature of this qualitative study, we did not attempt to control for students' predisposition to social change, but we did recognize that this factor would influence the mentors' opinions about the students, schools, and social inequalities.

FINDINGS

Although one of the goals of the service-learning course was to build greater understanding of diversity and social justice by connecting college students with middle- and high school students in under-resourced schools, we identified instances of resistance building across racial/ethnic and

class identities. Our findings indicated that some participants resisted the opportunity to confront the social inequities, systems, and structures that limit access to higher education for students of color and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. In addition, some participants did not want to acknowledge that their racial/ethnic or class privileges played a role in their access to college. In contrast, other participants did raise their consciousness of educational inequities, and some took committed action to combat racism and classism. There were no clear patterns in students' responses by gender or institution, although race/ethnicity was a differentiating factor, as described later. Our findings fell along three primary themes: Racial/Class Complicity, Racial/Class Consciousness, and Racial/Class Action.

Racial/Class Complicity

Not all mentors readily agreed with the course readings or the social justice goals of the outreach, despite their having opted to take the elective course. For example, some mentors from privileged racial or class backgrounds seemed complicit with the status quo, as they offered justifications for their negative personal reactions, ranging from feeling pity for the mentees and reproducing deficit models to feeling defensive. In addition, many were uncomfortable about the connection between racial identity and inequality brought out in the course literature; particularly challenged were students of color for whom race was not a key identity or who came from a different socioeconomic background than the students they mentored.

Feeling Pity

Through the service experience, many of the mentors encountered students from backgrounds unlike their own for the first time and, although they recognized educational disparities, they often expressed feeling sorry for those they served:

> These parents aren't CPAs and . . . presidents of companies. These people are out there doing the jobs that nobody wants to do, and they don't have time to be with their kids. . . . They have to . . . put food on the table and they don't have the luxuries of not having to work or being able to hang out with their kids or being able to attend the school meetings. . . . It is kind of sad. . . . I just feel so bad for some of those kids because I am not used to that. (Cassie, Caucasian)

Mentors who expressed pity often contrasted their mentees' family experiences with their own families, casting all the differences between their lives as positive for them and negative for the mentees. None mentioned any positive aspects in their students' life experiences, and all expressed feeling "sympathy" toward their mentees. These mentors viewed the service-learning experience as a form of charity directed at those they perceived as less fortunate and hence deserving of compassion.

Reproducing Deficit Models

Although the curriculum focused on asset-based approaches to outreach, several mentors continued to perceive their mentees from a deficit perspective:

What I hope that this course helps me in the long run. . . . it's learning how to approach these students and helping them to live up to their potential. Maybe they won't get here to college, but it will certainly make them successful and wonderful members of society . . . not liabilities. (Carlos, Mexican American)

Greg (Caucasian) shared that he had not been aware of the challenges that students of color faced in accessing college, but had developed a

new understanding for . . . the struggles that a lot of . . . first-generation and second-generation [college students] and families . . . [have in] trying to develop . . . a solid base in the education system, and really advancing past just . . . secondary school into some kind of university.

Like Greg and Carlos, many mentors became acutely aware of the differences in educational opportunities and resources between the students they served and themselves. They empathized with the struggles of immigrant and low-income families and espoused high aspirations for their mentees. Nevertheless, they perceived their mentees as less able to advance to higher education than they were.

In some instances, the course material and classroom discussions caused mentors to have negative perceptions of or feel sympathy for students of color and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, which affected the way they worked with their mentees:

I almost feel that, by studying all these negative statistics, some of them begin to manifest in my consciousness. I try to stop it, but I feel almost I'm profiling more, just because now I have all this information in my head. I'm almost more racially conscious because I'm being more careful not to profile and not to think of these things now that I have all these statistics. (Erica, Caucasian)

Onme (African American) also felt that the information she learned in class and the statistical disparities in college access initially resulted in low expectations for the students she mentored. However, her perceptions changed as a result of her service experience:

I was really uncomfortable because . . . I've never experienced a school or an environment like this, where the majority is minorities. I was really hesitant, and a little afraid, not knowing what to expect. [B]ecause of all the statistics that we read, I think I probably had . . . low expectations for them. Not in the sense of what they could achieve, but in the sense of where they were at already, you know? But they're so smart, and a lot of them have great family lives. They have great supportive parents, and they don't have to work, and they don't have to do a lot of the things that is stereotyped of being in a low-income school or underprivileged neighborhood.

From an instructional point of view, the course readings about the unequal racial patterns of college access appeared to be a double-edged sword. On one hand, the empirical evidence made a convincing case for targeted outreach to the population being served in the service-learning component. On the other hand, it did serve to perpetuate stereotypes. Although we devoted considerable discussion to the causal factors for these inequities, many mentors still struggled not to profile the individuals they served. During the interviews, several mentors expressed that they wavered between what they were taught in class and media stereotypes.

Defensiveness

Some white mentors interpreted class discussions and readings about privilege and racism as accusatory. Shelby stated, "Like, I'm sitting there, and I'm not from a low socioeconomic status, and then I'm white, so everything wrong is somehow my fault." As this student expresses, reading about discrimination and unfair treatment toward particular groups made her feel defensive about her white identity. She expressed discomfort over addressing issues pertaining to race and argued that any social inequities in the U.S. were not as challenging as in other countries, "It's hard for me to sympathize when I've seen people who have floors with holes in them and just people who truly are poor, and I've never, ever heard any complaints from them." For Shelby the fact that poverty in the United States was "not as challenging" as in other countries served as a rationalization for the status quo.

Kenna (Caucasian) similarly shared that discussions pertaining to how parental education and income affected college access seemed "harsh" and accusatory against Whites. She felt that the only way she could handle "touchy" issues, such as racial inequity, was to "not say anything at all" during class discussions, which was antithetical to our goal of creating an inclusive, comfortable climate where students could debate these issues and apply their classroom knowledge to their field experience:

> In class [I] felt that, because I am white, and a lot of kids in this class are minority ... and that's who we're helping is the minority, and we're talking about the minority, and how white people are always pushing down the minority ... here I am, I'm just sitting there. Sometimes, if I were to voice my opinion on something, I would be looked down upon even more because I was speaking out. That's something that was a little harder in the class, 'cause I felt like, "Well, I can't defend myself, because look who I'm surrounded by."

Kenna and Shelby felt unfairly accused of being responsible for racial inequalities because of their white identity and opted to disassociate themselves from such class conversations. Although their options were a minority view among the participants, their strong emotional responses demonstrated a significant perspective that deserves attention and further investigation.

Distancing

As demonstrated in the preceding examples, mentors varied in how much they developed an appreciation for racial/ethnic diversity and how quickly they developed a commitment to social change. For several students of color, their emphasis on self-determination distanced them from identifying with the students they mentored and read about in the literature. Carlos (Mexican American), for example, argued that race was not a factor in obtaining a job or being admitted to college. Although he acknowledged that discrimination did exist, Carlos believed that the best solution was for students of color to prove that they were better than the racists: "There's no need to be prejudiced either, but there's also no need to be victims." Similarly, Daniel (African American) expressed, "I always think, regardless of how your life is, always work hard, so I ... never use race, I never use financials or anything like that to be considered in life." For these mentors of color, the responsibility to succeed rests upon the individual, irrespective of his or

her race or class. They largely discounted the societal structures that work either to facilitate or impede success for certain groups of people.

Many mentors of color—particularly those who did not have a strong racial identity or who came from middle-class backgrounds—struggled to accept the correlation between race and inequality documented in the course readings:

> I was aware that there were false stereotypes out there and I knew that they were false. Basically, "Minorities are stupid," or whatever. [O]bviously, they're not stupid. It's just strictly how they're brought up, what environment they're brought up in, stuff like that . . . but I was always curious to know exactly . . . the reasons why . . . so, that was cool to learn. (Jessica, Biracial)

Jessica's statement is particularly noteworthy because, in the interview she self-identified as half-Hispanic. When asked if any of the racial issues raised in the readings affected her personally, she replied, "I always thought that [the readings] were more geared toward lower income minorities, so I just didn't really relate to that."

Other mentors of color shared similar disassociations, feeling distanced from the students they served by their social class:

> I never really thought of myself as a minority 'cause . . . I guess I was thinking I was more of, like, the majority. Caucasian. Because that's what I was surrounded by. But I've always been a minority in that sense, but I never saw myself as a minority. I guess it's weird when I think about it now. How could I not? (Kurt, Latino)

> Because I'm black, people assume that I relate to [the mentees] better or that I have a better idea of what it's like—and I don't. I grew up in a middle-class family, a middle-class neighborhood, majority white people, you know . . . I mean, we . . . definitely had minorities, it was mixed, but it was not at all where we lived in a black area, or Latinos and Blacks, or anything like that. (Onme, African American)

Racial/Class Consciousness

The course materials combined with service participation raised students' awareness of social inequities and also produced unanticipated feelings of gratitude and a keener awareness of personal privilege. As students' consciousness about race and social class were raised, they were able to articulate their personal experiences and views in relation to course readings and discussions. This helped to inform their interactions at their service sites and to reduce myths and stereotypes.

Awareness

Prior to enrolling in this course, many of the mentors had recognized potential disparities in college access for certain racial/ethnic and low-income populations, either from firsthand experience or from previous coursework. For many of the middle- and upper-class college students, however, the course directly exposed them to social inequities for the first time, which many described as an "eye-opening" experience. Although they already had an intellectual awareness

of social inequities, the opportunity to interact with individuals unlike themselves made the difficulties of certain populations very real:

> I never went to a public school, so I never really knew the types of . . . disadvantages minorities . . . and lower-income kids have. In a way it seems kind of unfair. It's definitely opened my eyes in that respect. (Christine, Caucasian)

> I just thought if you work [hard], you could try to move forward. So if you were lower class you could make it to middle class or lower-middle class or something. And that's why I didn't understand why all these people who are lower class didn't do anything to try and do better. But after this class I can see the factors. (César, Latino)

Gratitude

Self-reflections of being "lucky," having "more appreciation" for their life situations, and being "grateful" were common among middle- and upper-class mentors, irrespective of race. Some reflected on the advantages of having more direct parental encouragement and support than the students they read about or served:

> [This course] helped me to see the different experiences that people go through . . . and not everyone has the same high school environment that I went to. I was really lucky and so I think that it's good that we're working with these kids to get them ready for college, get them thinking about it ahead of time. (Julie, Caucasian)

> [This course] allowed me to feel grateful [that] from a young age my parents were like, "You're going to college; that's all there is to it," and they pushed me to get there . . . and it made me realize that some people, it's not like that. . . . Their parents aren't college educated and they don't push you . . . telling you that you're going to be at a university one day. So, it changed me in that respect that I have more of an appreciation for where I am and how I got here. (Ben, Caucasian)

As these quotations illustrate, these mentors felt a greater appreciation for their parents and their educational opportunities as a result of taking the service-learning course. Many participants expressed that they had previously taken their privileges for granted until they met students with fewer educational resources. However, as evidenced in the second quotation, most of these mentors offered negative generalizations of their mentees' parents in relation to their own fortune in having familial support.

Articulation of Concepts

Some participants appreciated the new lexicon they gained through the coursework because it helped them to articulate their experiences and the varied experiences of diverse students. Most of the participants felt their educational views and experiences were validated or made clear through various theoretical frameworks that were introduced in class:

> I think [this class is] worth it because a lot of college students are going to be able to learn statistics and new things about racism and socioeconomic status. Like, I knew about . . . stereotype threat but

I didn't know that [there] was the word for it, so now that you have words for these it just helps build . . . your thought process. (Miguel, Mexican American)

Weakening Stereotypes

Because the courses were publicized across campus, students came from various majors, ethnic/racial identities, and socioeconomic backgrounds, which helped to generate lively debates as students shared their perspectives on the reading assignments and how they applied these perspectives to their service. During the interviews, most of the participants stated that having diverse classmates was enjoyable and helped in their learning process. They also appreciated the unique opportunities they had to mentor students from different backgrounds and find common ground with them. Most participants revised their stereotypes and recognized that even individuals from similar backgrounds held divergent beliefs, rather than simply dichotomizing the beliefs of students of color and white students:

The debates that we had in class, that really makes me aware of what my fellow students think . . . and the diversity of opinions 'cause there's some opinions that I have [and] just assumed that most people have . . . 'cause it just makes sense, but . . . to somebody else it doesn't make sense . . . I also found it interesting." (Michelle, Caucasian)

Participants shared their diverse personal experiences, providing empirical examples that enriched the classroom discussions and service experiences:

Reading [about parents' lack of college knowledge] on paper is a lot different . . . than when you read it, and there's people in the class that say, "Yeah, those are my parents because they couldn't help me through anything. I didn't have the resources like you have." And actually seeing that physically, knowing that's true, made such a big difference. (Candiece, Biracial)

Strengthening Stereotypes

Although a weakening of stereotypes was the more common experience, a few students transferred some negative assumptions onto themselves. Cassie (Caucasian), for instance, contrasted her experiences with the experiences of her mentees, describing her upbringing as "fake":

You can't choose where you are from, but it shows. Like the area I was brought up in is very, in a way, fake, and the parents are very showy with their children, and their kids are taking golf lessons and taking etiquette classes. This [community where I serve] is the real world . . . [This experience] has just really opened up my eyes as to how this perfect little world I am from at home isn't real, it really isn't.

These college students often remarked that becoming aware of their privilege made them more committed to action, as evidenced by Cassie's concluding words, "I really appreciated that experience and I really want to try to help."

Racial/Class Action

Some college students translated their experience into a commitment to confront racism and classism. At least half of the sample reported they planned to continue their service involvement after the class term and described increased feelings of solidarity with those they served.

Behavioral Changes

Forging personal connections with diverse peers and mentees positively influenced several participants to become more involved in service-learning or to change the ways they interacted with others:

> These kids have the energy and the motivation . . . So, to see their motivation and drive, just pushes [me] even further, and really seeing their response to me being there definitely enhanced my motivation to work with kids or within education and outreach forever. I mean, because of them, because I did work with them; that motivated me. (Nicole, Caucasian)

> No longer am I walking to a classroom, thinking, "I'm a teacher. I can help you. I can give you the resources. I'm here and you can look up to me." No longer do I do that because that's not always true and someone else in the classroom can come back and say, "Hey, well, I lived here and . . . this is how I did it." And I'd say, "Okay, well that's great and now I can learn from you," instead of me thinking, "You can learn from me." And that was actually pretty life-changing to be honest. (Candiece, Biracial)

Not only were racial stereotypes reduced, but their classmates' stories motivated some participants to continue their service. Communities of trust and friendship were built among diverse classmates, which extended to bonds of trust between the mentors and mentees.

Reaching Out

Although some students of color felt distanced from their mentees and the course materials, a majority of students of color discussed how they motivated their mentees through personal testimony and served as role models who had experienced similar struggles. They likewise focused on self-determination, but instead of feeling this was a wedge between them and their mentees, they used it as a tool to draw closer to the students they mentored:

> Because of the similarities in background: the socioeconomic status of my parents, and me having attended inner-city schools . . . [the students see] somebody who's done it . . . so to speak, and so they know that they can do it. If I can do it, they can do it. (Monique, African American)

Even mentors who did not share common backgrounds with their mentees still found ways to relate:

> I find that [the mentees] share the same . . . dreams or . . . hopes that I may have had. Like . . . race and things like that shouldn't come in the way of . . . friendships. (Mimi, Asian American)

> Just working with those kids and getting to know them as people, not just as high school students [with] low socioeconomic background[s] ... It's really knowing what their goals are and ... it did change [for me] because ... in a way ... the class could be presented as ... one that's, "Oh, these poor kids, let's go help them," but it's definitely not like that. (Nicole, Caucasian)

Overall, the vast majority of mentors found various ways to relate to their mentees, whether through similar cultural backgrounds, experiences, or interests. As they came to identify with their mentees, they also became convinced that college was a viable option for them because, as Monique succinctly explained, "If I can do it, they can do it."

LIMITATIONS

Our sample consisted of about a third of the total enrollment of the three service-learning courses, which may not be representative of all students' attitudes. It is possible that the students who agreed to be interviewed had different characteristics and motivations for participating in the course than those who did not agree to be interviewed. We contend, however, that possible selection bias does not invalidate our findings because our intent was not to generalize the findings to all students in the class, but rather, to explore how participants made meaning of their service-learning experiences. In addition, although we gathered demographic information from a majority of the course enrollees and had a standard interview protocol for all interviews, we were not able to capture complete demographics for all 170 enrollees (although there were students of color represented in all of the cohorts). Thus, we cannot claim the generalization that all students experienced transformative learning through our use of an interculturalism framework. We do maintain, however, that at least a notable proportion of students experienced transformative learning as a result of their participation in service-learning.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Making space for students to voice their experiences, perspectives, and "shifting subjectivities and historical contexts" (Tanaka, 2002, p. 288) through service-learning is essential to understanding how they respond to existing social inequities. We recognize that the complexity inherent in the intersections of race and class produced findings that were not consistently delineated along racial or class lines. Based on our research, we identified three categories of resistance: Racial/Class Complicity, Racial/Class Consciousness, and Racial/Class Action. These multiple locations of cultural reflection and resistance-building were not linear and inevitable processes leading to a greater understanding of race and privilege. Rather, we demonstrated that resistance can take multiple forms, with some students experiencing several forms simultaneously and others never experiencing any.

Many interviewees struggled with their social positionalities. For some white and upper-middle-class participants (including students of color), the service-learning experience was the first time they confronted their membership in privileged groups. Many responded with feelings of defensiveness and distanced themselves from their mentees and the course material. Others responded with feelings of pity, further reinforcing their privileged positionalities. On the other

hand, realizations about the intersection of race and social class led many middle- and upper-class students of color to reflect on their own social advantages as well as to argue against the racial stereotypes that arose in class discussion or were described in the course readings.

We present these findings in an attempt to provide a fuller discussion of incorporating difficult discussions about social inequities in the classroom and through service opportunities. As proponents of service-learning, we believe that merely raising students' awareness through talking and reading about diversity issues in the classroom may not alter their attitudes, whereas incorporating service acts can build students' commitment to social justice. It is vital to recognize where students are coming from and how they make sense of their positionalities relative to the populations they are serving, in order to anticipate possible resistance. To simply assume all students are empty depositories of knowledge deprives them of their potential for transformative engagement with societal issues such as racism and classism.

With this in mind, future research could analyze the extent to which service-learning fosters the development of students' social identities. What can we do to move students from race/class complicity to race/class consciousness? We recommend that further research should explore ways that some students may resist classroom discussions and literature on social justice and, especially, identify a range of ways to critically engage all students. Because we conducted the interviews after the courses were completed, we could not capture the full range of responses that likely change throughout the course term. Perhaps future studies could include mid-term or more frequent interviews to better gauge the level of resistance occurring in the class and offer immediate interventions.

Our conceptual framework of interculturalism does not simply advocate for more diverse racial and class representation in classrooms as a band aid solution to social injustice. Instead, interculturalism examines ways that different cultures interact to produce truly transformative learning. Interculturalism does not assume that all cultural exchanges will be without conflict; instead, it recognizes the importance of such conflict as a critical first step towards social justice and change. Based on our research findings, we recommend that diversity-related and service-learning course instructors pay special attention to identifying the full range of possible responses. Our three categories provide one possible way to organize students' reactions and reflections. While these categories are not mutually exclusive and may occur simultaneously or may emerge at different points of the educational process, we do recommend that instructors at least begin to recognize the various ways that students respond to challenging course material and experiences. Rather than assuming all students comply when they are silent, we encourage activities and opportunities that allow students to deeply reflect on how their own self-perceptions and views of others unlike themselves change when entering uncomfortable educational and/or service environments. In order for diversity-related and service-learning courses to have the transformational impact that they seek, open, trusting, and honest sharing are fundamental and necessary as a starting point for addressing current inequalities.

NOTES

1. For the purposes of this paper, we follow Rand (2006) in defining social justice as the "process of remedying oppression . . . marginalization, [and] powerlessness . . . with particular attention to problems involving race, ethnicity, and class conflict" (p. 460).
2. Pseudonyms are used for universities, school districts, and participants.

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