

# Developing Social Justice Through Service-Learning: The Potential of University-School Partnerships for Fostering Justice-Oriented Dispositions Among Students of Color and Males Through Service-Learning Opportunities in Urban Schools

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## Abstract

This article explores the impact that a liberal studies education course with an embedded service-learning component had on preparing pre-service teachers to teach in urban schools. Using a combination of descriptive and narrative analysis, college students' reflection journal entries and class discussion notes were examined to determine whether deficit perceptions about urban schooling and students could be transformed over the duration of the course. Findings suggest that students of color and males, primarily those with non-urban schooling experiences, exhibited the greatest transformation in justice-oriented dispositions toward culturally and socioeconomically diverse students. Given this new insight, curriculum recommendations for teacher education programs are offered to help better prepare educators to teach in increasingly diverse school settings.

**Keywords:** critical service-learning, social justice, urban education, service-learning

Over the past two years our country has been increasingly divided by a number of social justice issues, including immigration, race, gender, sexuality, and socioeconomic status. The rhetoric has not only become more divisive, but also more vitriolic. As justice-oriented academics working in a college of education, we have opportunities to infuse our courses with activities and conversations that encourage and challenge university students to think deeply about issues of social justice and to engage them in experiences and difficult conversations that provide moments to examine their own perspectives. Even more importantly, we strive to encourage behaviors and dispositions in our undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral courses that facilitate a justice-oriented approach to education, and specifically, education in urban contexts (Coffey, Webster, and Heafner, 2016).

Social justice education promotes a fair and just society while empowering students to examine critically social structures with the goal of a trans-

formative shift in student perspectives (Harrell-Levy, Kerpelman, and Henry, 2016). Essentially, our mission is to help those hoping to work in educational settings and urban community organizations to gain a better understanding of the inequitable structures of urban education and to evaluate how their actions are reflective of their perspectives. We are in good company (e.g., Cochran-Smith, 1991, 1999, 2009; Cochran-Smith, Gleeson, & Mitchell, 2010; Harrell-Levy, Kerpelman, & Henry, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Sleeter & McLaren, 1999; Villegas, 2007; Villegas & Lucas, 2002) as we propose a framework for how teacher educators might facilitate the development of social justice dispositions among university students enrolled in teacher education and other majors related to civic engagement such as counseling, social work, criminal justice, pre-medicine.

We contend that engendering a social justice approach to pre-service teacher education is dispositional; it demands a transformative understanding of

students, schooling, and communities. We also contend that social justice can be accomplished through intentional service-learning partnerships with education-based community partners. In the present study, we used descriptive and narrative analysis to determine the impact that a liberal studies course with an embedded service-learning component had on pre-service teachers' perceptions about teaching in urban schools.

This article provides a brief overview of the literature on service-learning and justice-oriented teacher education. Next, we analyze participant journals and instructor fieldnotes to determine whether perceptions about urban schools and students could be shifted from negative to positive among service-learning participants (SLPs) in our study. Upon analyzing these findings, this article concludes with recommendations on how teacher education programs can better prepare pre-service teachers to teach in increasingly diverse schools.

## **Review of Related Literature**

### **Service-Learning to Promote Social Justice**

According to The National and Community Service Trust Act (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2003), service-learning is a method of engaging participants in learning and development through active participation in thoughtfully organized service that is conducted around the needs of a community partner. Often, service-learning develops out of a partnership between P-12 schools and institutions of higher learning with the community. The overarching goal of service-learning is to facilitate the development of civic responsibility, while integrating service into the academic curriculum (Boyle-Baise and Langford, 2004).

Over the past 50 years, service-learning has become increasingly popular in colleges and universities in the United States and worldwide as an experiential learning pedagogy that engages students in authentic ways to understand curriculum and to develop a more in-depth understanding of the communities where they live (Shumer, 2017). Coffey, Harden, Brown, and Williams (2017) found that students earning a minor in urban youth and communities at a large public university in the Southeastern United States were learning more about the community in which public-school partners were located. Through

these visits and discussions the university students demonstrated justice-oriented dispositions that could potentially lead to the creation of inclusive classrooms for those who enter the teaching profession. Similarly, for those students who do not choose to enter the teaching profession, data from this program evaluation suggests that they still gain a sense of responsiveness to the needs and experiences of poor, urban, and often marginalized student populations with whom they work (Coffey, Harden, Brown, and Williams, 2017). Service-learning as a pedagogical approach has the potential to help university students to examine underlying social inequities and to seek ways to actively advocate for underserved populations (Mitchell, 2008).

### **Considerations for Appropriate Community Partnerships**

It has become widely accepted that although there are possible benefits in using a service-learning pedagogy, instructors facilitating these partnerships with community organizations and schools must exercise caution and be intentional about activities that require service providers (i.e., service-learning students) to reflect on their ideological, political, and social positionalities (Butin, 2003, 2005, 2007; Eby, 1998; Kahne & Westheimer, 1996). According to Kahne and Westheimer (1996), engaging students in service-learning experiences with P-12 partners requires careful selection of a community partners and a focus on examination of both social structures and schooling experiences.

### **Moments to Develop Socially Conscious Teachers**

Service-learning has valuable potential for improving the understandings and experiences of novice teachers (Coffey, 2010). Wade (1995) surveyed a group of teachers-in-training and found several outcomes produced by service-learning. The majority of participants (82%) reported increased self-efficacy and almost 50% reported increased self-esteem. Among the service outcomes, the study revealed 67% of the candidates increased their knowledge of others (usually not like them). These findings are encouraging and would be considered worthwhile in most educational circles. Other research echoes Wade's (1995) call to implement service in teacher

training courses (Coffey, 2010; Cohen & Kinsey, 1994; Vadeboncoeur, Rahm, Aguilera, & LeCompte, 1996).

Throughout the literature, there are references to support the call for service in education programs. Swick (1999) points out that for both teacher education candidates and experienced teachers, service-learning provides a structure for several important realizations:

1. Supports professional growth in teacher education candidates as they gain a more comprehensive understanding of the “persona” of being a teacher, including the significant influence of teachers in the lives of children and families (Erickson & Anderson, 1997).
2. Allows interaction with professional role models, such as community leaders and teacher leaders (Waterman, 1997), which fosters leadership skill development.
3. Engages teachers in roles that encourage them to re-think how they respond to the totality of the lives of children and families (Alt, 1997).
4. Helps teachers reflect on the importance of serving all children (Erickson & Anderson, 1997). Swick (1999) further argues that candidate teachers learn meaningful approaches through the experiential and reflective service-learning activities in which they participate.

Furthermore, Tinkler, Hannah, Tinkler, and Miller (2015) suggest that service-learning in teacher education provides opportunities for candidates to analyze critically the oppressive structures embedded into our education system. Service-learning experiences can increase “preservice teachers’ exposure to diversity, to help re-focus attention on the needs of individual learners, and to assist candidates in understanding and questioning existing school structures” (Tinkler, Hannah, Tinkler, & Miller, 2015, p. 26), thus fostering the development of social justice goals.

### **Teaching for Social Justice**

Villegas (2007) proposes that teacher dispositions are “tendencies for individuals to act in a particular manner under particular circumstances, based on

their beliefs” (p. 73). Additionally, research suggests that dispositions closely align with one’s personal beliefs and value systems (Burant, Chubbuck, & Whipp, 2007; Villegas, 2007) and certain beliefs about specific knowledge (Welch, Pitts, Tenini, Kuenlen, & Wood, 2010). Borko, Liston, & Whitcomb, (2007) explain that dispositions can be simply described as “an individual’s tendencies to act in a particular manner” (p. 361) and thus can be manifested as patterns of observable behaviors that become predictable. Schussler (2006) proposes that dispositions are not simply important constructs to possess, but are at the very core of “teachers’ decisions to think and act” (p. 252).

Multiple studies suggest service-learning experiences that engage pre-service teachers in working with diverse populations have the potential to help future educators develop a sense of cultural competence that does not always emerge with regular student teaching experiences (Banks & Diem, 2008; Coffey, 2010; Mitchell, 2008). Hill-Jackson and Lewis (2011) recommend that teachers must learn to ask critical questions about the population they are teaching and understand how to better value their lived experiences within the classroom. Additionally, a report from the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality and Public Agenda (Rochkind, Ott, Immerwahr, Doble, & Johnson, 2008) found that new teachers feel overwhelmingly underprepared for teaching students from diverse ethnic and racial groups. This research strengthens the connections between service-learning and developing justice-oriented dispositions in teacher education. Engaging in service-learning opportunities with diverse populations and including time for discussion and reflection might have the potential to prepare pre-service teachers for working with students from diverse ethnic, racial, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds (Coffey, 2010; Webster & Coffey, 2010).

### **Acquiring an Asset-Based Perspective in Teaching**

In the field of teacher preparation, multicultural teacher educators (Grant & Sleeter, 2006; Gorski, 2006) advise that the effort to engage pre-service teachers in the development of dispositions appropriate for teaching occasionally results in deficit-model of thinking. An example of this mindset is Payne’s

(2003) *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*, in which she provides a method for teachers, most of whom are White females from middle class backgrounds, to "fix" impoverished students' behavior, underperformance on standardized tests, and lack of understanding of the "hidden rules" (p. 11) of school. This type of deficit model of thinking places the responsibility for change on the students, while other models (Grant & Sleeter, 2006; Gorski, 2006; Sato & Lensmire, 2009) require pre-service teachers to examine how society often blames poor and minority families instead of viewing their "funds of knowledge" (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) and abilities as beneficial. The alternative to the deficit model of thinking requires that teachers observe and reflect on students living in poverty in order to break the cycle of judgment and lowered expectations.

Pre- and in-service teachers who develop an asset-based mindset understand how students come to school with "funds of knowledge" from their communities and homes (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992). When we encourage asset-based dispositions and practices, pre-service teachers recognize assets their students bring, and they validate and use their students' assets in teaching. (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004). Providing pre-service teachers opportunities to observe in classrooms where the teacher connects these "funds" to the learning, they are more likely to develop an asset-based perspective of the diverse classroom (Hollar, 2015).

More importantly, "pre-service teachers learn how to focus on children's competence as cultural and intellectual people" (Sato & Lensmire, 2009, p. 366), while embracing a new and different set of cultural norms that might benefit these students. This focus on the use of students' culture often results in the implementation of culturally responsive teaching methods (Gay, 2000), which places an emphasis on understandings, skills, and realities of students. If done properly, service-learning provides the opportunity for teacher candidates to learn more about the community in which students and families live and to develop a more socially just and responsible approach to teaching (Wade, 2008; Whipp, 2013).

## **Addressing Diversity in Teacher Education Programs**

Research suggests that pre-service educators can make a difference in the world (Conklin, 2008), but without contextual understanding of the students they will teach one day, pre-service educators cannot develop the types of dispositions necessary to be justice-oriented teachers of urban youth. The Interstate Teach Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) offers standards for teacher education, which include standards that recognize the importance of critical dispositions (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2011). The InTASC standards also have been adopted by the Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), the accrediting body for teacher preparation programs in the United States. According to InTASC Standard 2, pre-service teacher candidates must use "understanding of individual differences and diverse cultures and communities to ensure inclusive learning environments that enable each learner to meet high standards" (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2011, p. 11). This means that teacher candidates must demonstrate the types of dispositions that ensure they (a) believe all children can learn and be successful in school; (b) appreciate and respect the diversity of backgrounds and experience from which their students come, and (c) value the language and culture of students seeking to integrate these skills, talents, and abilities into student learning activities.

InTASC Standard 8 also attends to utilizing students' funds of knowledge (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) when planning for instruction. This standard supports a deepened awareness and understanding of the strengths of diverse learners, while requiring teacher preparation around value and commitment to accommodating students' learning needs in the area of multiple forms of communication.

Teacher preparation standards in the United States require multiple and varied clinical experiences in order for teacher candidates to be highly prepared for working with diverse populations of students. There is an expectation that exposure through experience will help to cultivate teachers' dispositions, their behaviors, and values, which many argue will result in the development of practices and beliefs that facilitate learning for all students (Borko, Liston, & Whitcomb, 2007; Burant, Chubbuck, & Whipp,



2007; Schussler 2006; Villegas 2007). This study seeks to engage first-year university students in a service-learning opportunity at a high-poverty urban middle school in hopes that this experience might facilitate the development of some of the characteristics highlighted by Villegas (2007) and encourage a desire to do work with high needs populations in the future.

## **Context of the Study**

### **University-School Partnership**

The current study was conducted at Golden University (a pseudonym), a large public university located in a large city in the southeastern United States. Over the past three decades, this urban area has emerged as the southern hub of the banking industry. This economic shift significantly diversified the population, making it one of few cities in the US with a majority non-White population, with African American, Hispanic, and Asian residents combining for more than 50% of the total population (US Census, 2010). This overall change in the city's population subsequently altered the demographics of the public-school system; currently, non-White groups combine for a 66% majority.

Given the increasing diversity of the city's population and local schools, the College of Education at Golden University established a professional development partnership with one of the largest Title I middle schools in the state, Governor's Middle School (GMS) (a pseudonym). This university-school partnership, already in the second year of implementation, was co-constructed between the university and the middle school and had two goals: (a) to offer partnering teachers professional development workshops on best practices for teaching and learning, and (b) to provide university students who demonstrate an interest in teaching, early exposure to diverse learning environments.

GMS was an ideal test case considering its designation as a high-minority, high-needs school. The total sixth - eighth grade GMS enrollment was approximately 1,076 students. African Americans constituted an overwhelming majority of the student body with 729 students, and Latin Americans with 222 students made up 18% of the total student enrollment. White students were underrepresented with 48 students, accounting for less than 5% of the student population.

More than three-quarters (80%) of GMS students received free or reduced lunch. Consistent with high poverty schools, the teacher turnover rate was 28%, which was nine points higher than the district average of 19%, and 12 points higher than the state rate of 16%. Fewer than 40% of GMS students met proficiency requirements on the end-of-grade tests for reading (24%) and math (15.1%) during the school year under investigation. Interestingly, at the same time, the Office For Civil Rights via the National Center for Education Statistics (2012) reported that nearly 5 in every 10 students attending GMS were excluded from classroom instruction as a result of in-school (17%) and out-of-school suspensions (34.7%).

### **Service-Learning Component**

Context-specific training, in high-minority, high needs urban schools like GMS, has proven effective in the development of justice-oriented teachers. Deering and Stanutz (1995), suggest that "attitudes formed through experience tend to be more stable than those arrived at in other ways" (p. 390). Providing early exposure to diverse educational settings is critical for pre-service teachers.

Building on this idea, undergraduate students at Golden University participated in an urban education-focused liberal studies course entitled Citizenship and Education. This course was offered over the span of 17 weeks in the spring semester and was designed to introduce students to the profession of education using critical service-learning as a pedagogical tool. The overall goal of the course was to promote engagement among each enrolled student, also referred to as service-learning participants (SLPs), in support of achieving a more meaningful and purposeful learning experience that would help them better understand the facets of urban education and the concept of social justice.

Central to the service-learning component of the course, SLPs were required to complete a minimum of 25 volunteer hours at GMS for 12 of the 17 scheduled weekly meetings. They met with a team of 90 sixth graders for a minimum of two hours once a week. The course instructor (one of the researchers), along with the GMS principal and two sixth-grade teachers, agreed that SLPs would take sixth graders to either the cafeteria or media center for the first hour of school each Friday morning. SLPs tutored,

mentored, and planned community-building activities with GMS students during this time. SLPs also engaged the sixth graders in conversations about issues of concern to them (such as bullying or poverty), and they discussed their future college and career plans.

### **Course Instruction**

To cultivate a deeper understanding of justice-oriented teaching dispositions, alongside their service-learning experience, SLPs received 27 hours of course instruction. The instructor assigned SLPs selected readings that focused on the following themes: (a) social justice, (b) characteristics of urban schools, (c) successful practices for engaging urban students, and (d) the role of volunteerism and its importance in providing services to underserved populations of school-aged children. To bridge the gap between theory and practice through service-learning, each week SLPs read scholarship related to urban schooling by Ayers and Alexander (2000), Compton-Lilly (2004), Dimitriadis (2007), and Kozol (2007) prior to engaging with the middle-school students. SLPs were encouraged to draw connections between what they had read on urban education, as presented in the writings of these authors, with what they were seeing during their service-learning experiences at GMS. On selected weeks, after participating in activities with the sixth graders, the course instructor facilitated discussions with the SLPs as a form of debriefing to monitor whether SLPs were effectively making connections between the readings and their experiences. Immediately following, SLPs wrote prompted reflections in their individual journals to work through their personal thoughts and to pose additional questions to the instructor pertaining to their observations and experiences. When applicable, the instructor answered these questions in the margins of the SLPs papers and, if necessary, probed them to deepen their analysis of their experience. These weekly reflections became the primary source of data used to explore whether service-learning partnerships with urban schools could engen-

der justice-oriented teacher dispositions among pre-service teachers.

### **Method**

This study uses a qualitative descriptive methodology to analyze whether justice-oriented dispositions could be developed through participation in a service-learning project to better prepare pre-service teachers to teach in urban schools. By designing the study in this manner, it was possible to explore if deficit perceptions about urban schooling and students could be transformed in a liberal studies education course that had an embedded service-learning component integrated into the curriculum.

### **Participants**

Study participants included a convenience sample of a single cohort of sixteen SLPs, registered in the Citizenship and Education undergraduate class (see Appendix A, Table 1 for a detailed profile chart of SLPs). Each SLP was actively enrolled in the course for 17 consecutive weeks. The majority of the participants were first-year, second-semester freshman ( $n=14$ ), with a mean self-reported age of 19.4 ( $SD=1.93$ ). There was an even distribution of African American ( $n=7$ ) and White ( $n=7$ ) SLPs; two students were of Latin American descent. Female students accounted for a total of 56% ( $n=9$ ) of the participants, while 44% ( $n=7$ ) were male. Among the SLPs 75% ( $n=12$ ) had declared majors while 25% ( $n=4$ ) remained undecided. Of the twelve students with declared majors, the majority were from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences ( $n=9$ ), and the rest were from the College of Business ( $n=2$ ) and the College of Education ( $n=1$ ). It is important to note that although this class is not part of a teacher preparation program, each year several SLPs change their major to education after taking this course in the spring.

### **Data Collection**

Two types of data sources were used to explore the impact of service-learning on student perceptions: participant journals and instructor fieldnotes, with the principal source of data within this study, being the SLPs' reflective journal responses. On se-

Table 1  
Profile of Service Learning Participants (SLPs)

Name	Age	Race/gender	Classification	Major
Aaron	19	AAM	Freshman	Liberal Arts and Science
Amy	19	WF	Freshman	Liberal Arts and Science
Brian	19	AAM	Freshman	Liberal Arts and Science
Eliza	19	WF	Freshman	Liberal Arts and Science
Kyra	26	AAF	Junior	Liberal Arts and Science
Lily	19	WF	Freshman	Undecided
Lisa	19	LF	Freshman	Liberal Arts and Science
Lynn	19	WF	Freshman	Education
Tony	22	AAM	Senior	Liberal Arts and Science
Wade	18	AAM	Freshman	Undecided
Eli	19	AAM	Freshman	Business
Linda	18	WF	Freshman	Liberal Arts and Science
Phoebe	19	LF	Freshman	Undecided
Erica	19	WF	Freshman	Liberal Arts and Science
Braydon	18	AAM	Freshman	Business
Mitchell	18	WM	Freshman	Undecided

*Note.* Age denotes age on the first day of class. AAM=African American Male; WM = White Male; AF=African American Female; WF=White Female; LF= Latina.

lected weeks, SLPs (n=16) wrote a 1-2 page response to a predetermined journal prompt provided by the instructor, related to service-learning experience. Participants accessed these prompts through the university online course management system following their participation in specific service-learning activities. Five separate yet interrelated prompts were designed to structure participant responses in ways that bridged their course readings with their service-learning

experiences (see Appendix A for a detailed description of each prompt and its corresponding reading)[2]. This study focuses specifically on the responses provided for the first and last journal entry.

This study also used instructor fieldnotes as a second source of data. These summaries were written during the in-class debriefing session following each service-learning encounter. The instructor observed both verbal and nonverbal classroom interactions.

Table 2  
Profile of Service Learning Participants (SLPs)

Prompt No.	Prompt	Week	Selected Reading
1	<i>What were your initial impressions of the students and faculty at GMS? Be specific.</i>	2	None
2	<i>What did you learn about the school system as you conducted research using the resources and materials from class?</i>	3	Dimitriadis, G. (2007). <i>Studying urban youth culture</i> . New York: Peter Lang.
3	<i>Thinking about your interactions and observations of the teachers at GMS, address the following questions: 1) Who are the GMS teachers and what do you see as their responsibilities?; What surprised you about the expectations that are placed upon them for performance on a daily basis; and 3) In your discussions with the teachers, what did you learn about their backgrounds and how they came to teaching?</i>	4	Kozol, J. (2007). <i>Letters to a young teacher</i> . New York: Crown. and Ayers, W., & Alexander-Tanner, R. (2000). <i>To teach: The journey, in comics</i> . Chicago: Teachers College Press.
4	<i>What is social justice? Please make sure to fully explain your choices for symbols you have related to the concept. Discuss why you have selected this medium.</i>	5	Compton-Lilly, C. (2004). <i>Confronting racism, poverty, and power: Classroom strategies to change the world</i> . Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
5	<i>Over the past 10 weeks, we have discussed the ways in which educational decision making directly affects students in schools across the nation. Through your readings, class discussions, and interactions with middle school students at GMS, how have your views of education changed? More specifically, have any of your original thoughts about schooling, teachers, poverty, urban settings, children, administration changed during the time you have been in this course. If so, how have they changed and what specific event (reading, discussion, and interaction) prompted that change?</i>	11	None

Note. Selected Readings only apply to the social justice literature that was assigned during the specified week.

The verbal communications included informal discussions about SLPs' prior schooling experience. Through these conversations the instructor was able to categorically record SLPs' schooling background (e.g., urban, suburban, rural) to allow for standard comparisons of schooling experiences between SLPs and GMS students (see Appendix A for a detailed profile chart of SLPs).

### Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using both descriptive and narrative analysis. It is important to note that the descriptive statistics that were collected for the study are not inferential or subject to tests of statistical

significance. Instead, the data simply offers a quantitative summary of the information that was gathered during the data collection process. Particular attention was given to race, gender, and prior schooling experiences; all of which was collected from the instructor's fieldnotes.

Polkinghorne's (1998) method of narrative analysis was used to interpret the SLPs' reflective journal responses (object of the study). In taking this approach, we focused on a total of 29 responses (approximately 14-15 entries, per prompt), to inductively identify whether a shift occurred from deficit- to justice-oriented perceptions of urban schooling



and students. We compared the responses to the first journal prompt with the last journal prompt for each SLP. If an SLP did not provide a response to both the first and fifth prompt, they were excluded from certain parts of the analysis. Each response to the first journal prompt was read in its entirety, line by line, and analyzed for repeated themes connected to either negative or positive perceptions of urban schooling and/or students. Themes were highlighted, labeled and indexed under one of two categories: deficit-oriented perceptions or justice-orientated perceptions. SLPs that showed no evidence of having a negative view of urban schooling and students in the first journal prompt were excluded from the analysis. When analyzing the last journal prompt, only the responses of the SLPs that initially had a deficit perception were assessed. To ensure consistency in coding and interpretation we utilized a standardized method (consensus estimates of the percentage of cross-rater agreement) to establish desired levels of interrater reliability (IRR). The IRR estimate (percent of agreement) produced a score of 85%. A high IRR (80%, or more), like the one generated here, suggests that major themes were coded consistently. This generally means that our interpretations of the research findings are in accord with the data and worthy of serious consideration.

## Findings

The findings revealed that the liberal studies education course had an overall positive impact on SLPs' perceptions about urban schooling and students. Those SLPs that did not enter the class with a justice-oriented mindset, shifted their negative views by the end of the course and adopted a more justice-oriented perspective about culturally and socioeconomically diverse students.

Of the sixteen participants enrolled in the Citizenship and Education undergraduate course, only the perceptions of eight SLPs were analyzed based on the criteria established for the study. All eight of these SLPs initially exhibited a deficit-oriented opinion about GMS. With respect to the intersection of race and gender among the SLPs that were assessed, three female participants were White and one African American, while three males were African American, and one was White. The majority of the SLPs had a prior suburban schooling background, with the

exception of one African American male participant whose schooling experience was situated within a rural educational context (see Appendix A, Table 3 for the descriptive statistics on each SLP that was analyzed).

In analyzing Prompt 1 responses, each of the eight SLPs framed their initial impressions about the students and faculty at GMS from a negative perspective. Common themes derived from the narrative analysis of the first journal entry include: views of GMS *students* as disrespectful, unruly, troublesome, less educated, poor, and/or lacking of parental involvement; and views of GMS *faculty* (and staff) as lazy, mean, and/or unprofessional. When commenting about students, one White female SLP (Amy) stated, “. . . I pictured this school (pseudonyms used for all schools and participants) to be a school with the most troublesome children in it.” A Black male SLP (Braydon) commented, “When the principal pointed out that some of the kids were EC I was expecting to meet kids similar to the students I worked with in high school who were also EC, but to my surprise none of the children I met seemed to be of lower learning abilities.” Another African American male SLP (Arron), made the suggestion that his school was very different than GMS; he stated that he “was never involved in activities of this sort,” further implying that how GMS functioned “would have been unheard of [at his prior school].” Last, a White male SLP (Mitchell) stated that, “The first thing that came to my mind when [I] saw the kids at [GMS] was the famous HBO television show, *The Wire*.” *The Wire* was a crime drama television series that presented a gripping portrayal of life in urban Baltimore, Maryland (Brown & Kraehe, 2011). Episodes often dealt with drug trafficking, poverty, and gang life. Insofar as SLPs' perceptions about GMS faculty (and staff) were concerned, Wade and Braydon, both Black males were surprised at how clean the custodial staff kept the school and how well-structured GMS's administration and faculty appeared. Braydon specifically commented that, “[GMS] seems [to be] a lot more organized [than originally thought] . . .” Apart from the perceptions specific to students and faculty, collectively, each SLP in their initial entry expressed feelings of worry, fear, and nervousness to engage in a service-learning experience at GMS.

In analyzing the reflective journal entries for prompt 5, all but one SLP (Lynn, White female)

Table 3  
Transformation from deficit- to justice-oriented perceptions by race, gender, and prior schooling experience

Name	Race	Gender	Prior Schooling	Prompt 1	Prompt 5 <sup>a</sup>
Aaron	African American	Male	Suburban	Deficit-Oriented	Justice-Oriented
Amy	White	Female	Suburban	Deficit-Oriented	Justice-Oriented
Kyra	African American	Female	Suburban	Deficit-Oriented	Justice-Oriented
Lily	White	Female	Suburban	Deficit-Oriented	—
Lynn	White	Female	Suburban	Deficit-Oriented	Deficit-Oriented
Wade	African American	Male	Rural	Deficit-Oriented	—
Braydon	African American	Male	Suburban	Deficit-Oriented	Justice-Oriented
Mitchell	White	Male	Suburban	Deficit-Oriented	Justice-Oriented

Note. <sup>a</sup>Missing data denoted with slash (-).

indicated that their views had changed, shifting from a deficit- to a justice-oriented perspective about GMS students and faculty (and staff). Two SLPs (Lily and Wade) were dropped from the study due to an omission of response to prompt 5. Common themes derived from the narratives that were analyzed in the last journal entry include: views of *students* as resilient, intelligent and capable of learning; and views of *faculty* as hardworking and caring. When discussing their experiences with students at GMS, one SLP (Mitchell) replied:

My views on students in urban public schools also changed drastically after working at [GMS]. I have never attended an urban school so I really didn't know what to think when coming into [GMS] for the first time. After the first day however, I was surprised at how motivated and intelligent the kids were. These are the schools that are supposed to be the home of the 'problem children' or kids that aren't as smart, but I found that they were just as motivated and intelligent as any other middle school kids.

Arron, another SLP, shared a similar sentiment. As a result of his experience at GMS, he had this to say about the students:

... I am highly upset that kids at Title 1 are automatically considered underachievers. This [construct] has to be torn down. Not only did the students I talked with show enthusiasm, they are teachable and have as much poten-

tial to be successful as the rest. . . . Although [GMS] is a Title 1 school I see no difference in these kids than any of the others.

When asked about whether their thoughts toward GMS faculty (and staff) had changed over the span of the class, one SLP (Mitchell) responded: “[The teacher] does a great job of knowing each of her students so she knows how to treat them in order to most effectively teach them.”

Taken altogether, one common thread among the SLPs emerged from analyzing their final journal entry; that is, those participants who shifted from a deficit- to a justice-oriented mindset tended also to take a more critical stance about issues of inequity and discrimination that they witnessed after having participated in the service-learning project at GMS. Many expressed feeling of anger and frustration at how students were negatively stereotyped and unfairly labeled. Several of the SLPs that initially had a deficit-oriented disposition toward GMS commented at the conclusion of the course that they wanted to pursue a career in education to help change how urban schools and students are perceived.

## Discussion and Recommendations

This study explored the impact that a liberal studies education course, with an embedded service-learning component, had on preparing pre-service teachers to teach in urban schools. The findings from our analysis reveal that the Citizen and Education undergraduate course had an overall positive

impact on SLPs perceptions about urban schooling and students at GMS. More specifically, those SLPs that did not enter the class with a justice-oriented mindset, over the duration of the course, eventually shifted from a negative to a more positive view about culturally and socioeconomically diverse students.

One of the more provocative findings of this analysis is that students of color and males, primarily those with non-urban schooling backgrounds (i.e., suburban), exhibited the greatest transformation in justice-oriented dispositions. This finding, in and of itself, is intriguing given the lack of racial and gender diversity in the teaching force. From this study we recommend that teacher education programs consider providing opportunities for pre-service teachers to participate in service-learning projects within diverse school settings early in their teacher training. Modeling components of Banks' (2010) typology of multicultural education, we provide specific suggestions on how to incrementally infuse social justice into the curriculum for college students who will likely teach in urban schools.

### **The Additive Approach**

The additive approach is the most basic level of multicultural curriculum integration. This level of integration is best achieved when curriculum decision making is controlled by the teacher educator. With their professional discretion, teacher educators choose to integrate isolated cultural simulation activities into their course using introductory lessons, or units, to expose pre-service teachers to diversity, addressing issues of equity, power, and privilege with exclusive attention to race, class and/or gender. The additive approach, while powerful, requires no true integration of varied multicultural content.

A common example of the additive approach would be the "Privilege Walk" (McIntyre, Hulan, & Maher, 2010). Teacher educators often use this brief activity on the first day of class, or at the beginning of the semester, to encourage students to examine their own privilege and position in analyzing racial, socioeconomic, and/or gendered stratification. During the Privilege Walk the teacher educator, or instructor designee, will ask the students to stand and form a single straight line, arm's length apart, across the classroom with a generous amount of space devoted to walking forward and backward. Once

students have aligned themselves accordingly, the class moderator (teacher educator/instructor designee) will pose a question and ask students to respond by stepping forwards or backwards. For instance, the moderator might state, "If you are a White male, take five steps forward." Additionally, the moderator might further state, "If you have previously attended an urban school, take two steps backward." After the last question is posed, the moderator then instructs the students to make note of their position from two points of view. First, students are asked to observe where they stand, at the conclusion of the activity, in relation to where they originally began (the straight line). Second, students are also asked at the end of the activity to observe where they stand in comparison to their classmates. At the discretion of the moderator, students- either aloud or privately- deconstruct their thoughts and feelings about what they noticed, with respect to notions of privilege, and what this means for them personally after having participated in the Privilege Walk. More information about this activity can be located at [www.whatsrace.org/images/privwalk-short.pdf](http://www.whatsrace.org/images/privwalk-short.pdf) (California Newsreel, 2006).

### **The Transformation Approach**

The transformation approach is the next level of multicultural curriculum integration. This level of integration is achieved when curriculum decision making is controlled by both the teacher educator and the teacher education program. With professional discretion, coupled with program adoption, the decision is made to fully integrate literature on cultural diversity through incorporating social justice readings into multiple courses in a fundamental and unified manner. The transformation approach requires complete/holistic and sustained integration of varied multicultural content.

An example of the transformation approach would include the addition of a wide range of topics related to diversity to the core curricula. This approach enables pre-service teachers to view common pedagogical ideologies from many different cultural perspectives and vantage points. The goal is not assimilation, but acculturation. Education is not discussed solely from a Eurocentric framework, nor is it discussed from the standpoint of every possible racial/ethnic group; instead, prospective teachers are given an opportunity to use the most appropriate

cultural, racial, or ethnic lens to understand and engage concepts and themes cogently attributed to the specific phenomenon or issue being studied (Banks, 2010, p. 233-258). In implementing the transformation approach, teacher education programs not only require that its diversity-focused courses intentionally and purposely integrate social justice readings, but also that all courses in a degree plan infuse multicultural content and integrate diverse cultural and global perspectives. Teacher educators using content expertise then exercise their discretion in selecting the literature most suitable for the course when designing their curriculum. In taking the transformation approach, advocating for the integration of varied multicultural content into every course each semester becomes a sustained effort with ongoing opportunities to render feedback and input for improvement.

### **The Social Action Approach**

The social action approach is the advanced, most ideal level of multicultural curriculum integration. This level of integration is achieved when curriculum decision making lies with the teacher educator, the teacher education program, and community partners. Professional discretion, program adoption, and community involvement are exercised, respectively, to infuse multicultural content into the curriculum at the highest levels and to assist pre-service teachers in applying this knowledge in ways that better the larger community. The social action approach requires the integration of multicultural knowledge beyond the boundaries of the school building.

An example of the social action approach would be the embedding of a series of early critical service-learning experiences into teacher education programs. Within the first two years of coursework (and later revisited through clinical experiences and student teaching assignments), teacher educators provide pre-service teachers exposure to culturally diverse literature and offer them opportunities to apply what they have read in meaningful and tangible ways. This method is intended to increase prospective teachers' awareness of and sensitivity to diversity. The social action approach not only prepares pre-service teachers to teach in increasingly diverse educational contexts, but also provides them with a blueprint of how to advocate effectively for their students in the classroom and beyond. To implement

this approach, teacher educators and teacher education programs must engage and form relationships with community members and stakeholders, such as, but not limited to, school administrators, teachers, local business entrepreneurs, and/or elected officials. Forming these relationships helps to build trust and facilitate partnerships with leaders within the community. The nature of these partnerships should be dual-purposed with a natural inclination toward reciprocity. In exchange for providing pre-service teachers access to multiethnic spaces, teacher educators promise to share resources and best practices for instruction with those who have a vested interest in the academic success of students within the community. Teacher education programs make a commitment to produce a teaching force that is both responsive to and respectful of the diverse needs that students, from within the community, bring with them into the classroom.

Although the above approaches have been presented in ranked order, we believe that any attempt—whether additive, transformation, or social action—to integrate multicultural and global perspectives into teacher education programs is far better than none. In the current study we have presented evidence to suggest that implementing a social action approach provides the greatest transformation in the development of justice-oriented teaching dispositions, but we would be remiss if we did not acknowledge the value in the other forms of multicultural curriculum integration. We conclude that the selected level of integration, by cultural simulation activities (unit/lesson), exposure to social justice readings (full immersion), and/or through early critical service-learning experiences (beyond the classroom) be implemented in accordance with the policies and practices of one's institution, just so long as it is applied correctly and with the utmost care.

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