Article

Reflect, Analyze, Act, Repeat: Creating Critical Consciousness through Critical Service-Learning at a Professional Development School

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Abstract: Universities engage students in traditional service-learning projects that often yield "good feelings", even a savior mentality, but typically leave the root causes of social justice issues unexamined and untouched. In contrast to traditional service-learning, critical service-learning bridges this gap with an explicit focus on justice and equity, situating scholars' work with the community rather than for it. A public university in the southeast offered a doctoral course that focused on critical service-learning in the context of a professional development school partnership. Designed as an ethnographic multi-case study, each graduate student in the on-site course represents a case. Data collection included interviews, observations, written reflections, and artefacts. The analysis revealed that developing critical service-learning projects with educators—rather than for them—supported participants' critical consciousness. Findings and discussion highlight that facilitating community-engaged scholarship through critical service-learning impacts graduate students and middle-grades educators' research interests, work, and future directions.

1. Introduction

This article describes a qualitative study designed to use Dewey's [1] theories about the educational nature of experience, Freire's [2] theory of critical consciousness, and Boyer's [3] conceptualization of community-engaged scholarship to understand how engagement in a professional development school impacts middle-grades educators. Middle-grades educators are defined as those individuals whose work connects to middle-grades schooling, i.e., schooling offered to children in grades 4 through 9.

Community-engaged scholarship (CES), another term for what Boyer [3] called the scholarship of engagement, centers on reflective practitioners who prioritize the following:

(1) discovery to increase knowledge;
(2) integration of diverse disciplines;
(3) sharing knowledge through communication with peers and future scholars;
(4) application of knowledge to ensure relevance in their scholarship.

Community-engaged scholarship moves intentionally from theory to practice and from practice back to theory, which, in fact, makes theory more authentic [3]. Boyer [3] believed that "the academy must become a more vigorous partner in the search for answers to our most pressing social, civic, economic, and moral problems, and must reaffirm its historic commitment to what (he called) the

scholarship of engagement" [3] (p. 15). The relationships that are fundamental to community-engaged scholarship may occur through partnerships between universities and local schools. As Hartley and Hollander [4] argue, an "engaged campus" embodies the idea that "colleges and universities have a responsibility to both educate students for citizenship and to act as good institutional citizens in their own communities" [4] (p. 261). Those relationships can be maintained effectively through teaching and learning in community spaces, including local schools. Faculty may use the context to build service-learning into courses, which "provides the opportunity for students to sample community-based settings, professions, and occupations, as well as establish meaningful contacts and connections in the community" [5] (p. 18). Faculty may also bring in community experts as guests to the classroom [5]. CES intentionally plans for critical reflection, analysis, and action.

1.1. Critical Service-Learning

Incorporating service-learning into a graduate program curriculum is a way for universities to incorporate civic education and provide graduate students a gateway to understanding more complex problems within society by broadening perspectives and increasing awareness of others' perspectives [4,6]. O'Meara and Jaeger [7] strongly recommend service-learning in graduate coursework as a promising approach to preparing doctoral students as community-engaged scholars.

Critical reflection, a key part of the traditional service-learning approach that O'Meara and Jaeger describe, must be accompanied by the CES conception of critical action to position students to build efficacy as community-engaged scholars. As such, in order to incorporate critical action, critical service-learning goes beyond traditional service-learning to focus explicitly on justice and enacting change on the current injustice within the society. Mitchell [8] describes the distinction between traditional service-learning and critical service-learning: "Whereas service-learning forefronts student learning and service to the community ... critical service-learning balances student learning and service with the community" [8] (p. 151).

Critics claim that service-learning done with a traditional approach leads to students positioning themselves as doing charity work for others rather than with them, and thus, encouraging and reinforcing the savior mentality that students can often take when engaging in work that relates to providing service [6,8,9]. Mitchell [8] asserts that "without the exercise of care and consciousness, drawing attention to root causes of social problems, and involving students in actions and initiatives addressing root causes, service-learning may have no impact beyond students' good feelings" [8] (p. 51). Mitchell [8] outlines three key distinctions between traditional service-learning and critical service-learning (CSL): CSL works to redistribute power among all participants in the service-learning relationship; CSL develops authentic relationships in the classroom and in the community; and CSL works from a social change perspective.

Critical service-learning aligns with community-engaged scholarship given the CES emphasis on critical reflection, analysis, and action. Incorporating critical reflection into service-learning projects constantly encourages students to "move from theory to practice and from practice back to theory" [8] (p. 23). Students evaluate their own thinking and consider their role in the project as that of a learner rather than a role and position of power and authority. Furthermore, critical reflection embedded within community-engaged scholarship creates "knowledge informed by analyses of how one's own social location could influence assumptions about how societal power structures or dominant cultural assumptions create and sustain structural inequity" [10] (p. 372).

One issue that arises with critical service-learning is that "programs that might put more emphasis on social change may be characterized or dismissed as activism or deemed inappropriate or too political for classroom learning" [8] (p. 52). However, the classroom is a political space whether or not teachers choose to acknowledge it. According to Gorski and Swalwell, "Teaching for equity literacy is a political act—but not more so than not teaching for equity literacy" [11] (p. 39). Additionally, failing to incorporate an explicit focus on justice in CES jeopardizes its transformative possibilities [10].

1.2. Transformation through Critical Consciousness

Conscientizacao, or critical consciousness, first appeared in Paulo Freire's [2] *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and has since been taken up and defined in various ways. All share the common components of reflection on and analysis of an issue and then taking action to change it [12–17]. Reflection is well established as a necessary component of teacher development, but it is unclear whether educators are trained to critically reflect on their own practice, which is vital to their professional development [18]. Critical reflection is an important component of critical consciousness because it has a positive correlation with critical action, which results in intentional acts of social justice. Freire believed that developing a critical literacy of oppressive social conditions was vital to counteracting marginalized people's belief that they are powerless to change those conditions [12]. Gaining the ability to recognize, analyze, and act on those inequalities can be a "gateway to academic motivation and achievement for marginalized students" [13] (p. 18). Freire [2] believed in a transitive relationship between reflection and action. As such, the more educators can critically reflect, the more they can critically act.

Building educators' critical consciousness relies on their ability to see teaching as a highly contextualized process [19]. As students enter graduate school, they are often in danger of climbing the "ivory tower", isolating themselves from those who will be impacted by their research and work [7,20–22]. To combat this problem, universities that have partnerships with local schools can offer graduate students opportunities to situate their work within the community and engage in service-learning by locating courses on-site at the schools.

2. Methodology

2.1. Participants and Setting

This study involved eight graduate students enrolled in a doctoral course at a land-grant, flagship, public research university in the southeastern United States and ten educators—including the principal, assistant principal, library media specialist, school counselor, social worker, and six general education teachers—at an urban middle school in a small city.

Riverside Middle School (RMS) (pseudonym) is a Title I school with 80% of the students identified as economically disadvantaged, i.e., eligible for free or reduced-price meals, at the time of this study. The Riverside School District chose to make free meals available to 100% of the students in all schools effective in 2016–2017. RMS is highly diverse with 78% of the student body students of color, 17% served through special education, and 23% served through gifted education.

In 2007, the university and the school district entered into a formal professional development school district (PDSD) partnership, and in 2011, RMS became a "Model 4" professional development school (PDS), the highest level of engagement in the PDSD. In addition to participating in professional learning offered by university faculty and staff districtwide (Model 1), hosting teacher candidates for varied field experiences (Model 2), and supporting university courses taught on site (Model 3), as a Model 4 school, RMS also works closely with a university professor-in-residence (PIR), a faculty member who spends upward of 20 h per week on-site teaching courses, supervising teacher candidates, serving on the school improvement team, offering professional learning opportunities based on school needs, etc.

2.2. Data Sources

The data for the study were collected during the fall semester of 2017 in connection to a graduate course. The course fits within the doctoral emphasis on middle-grades education, and the first author, Andrews, taught it on-site at a local middle school involved in a professional development school district (PDSD) partnership with the university. A tiered consent form allowed for qualitative data collection from observations, interviews, and related artefacts connected to the PDSD partnership. On the consent form, study participants could indicate if they were willing to participate in one or more activities from a list of options that included the following:

- Semi-structured interviews;
- Focus group interviews;
- Field notes and audio recordings from observations and interactions related to the professional development school district, which encompassed work associated with the on-site course featured in this article;
- Documents or other artefacts related to professional learning through the PDS, e.g., course assignments, meeting agendas, reflections/postings, and lesson plans.

Observation data were collected and documented in Andrews's researcher journal in every face-to-face class session, eight whole-class sessions in the university's designated classroom, which is located within Riverside Middle School's media center. Each class session lasted at least two hours and 45 min. The class meetings were also audiotaped. Along with observation field notes documented when RMS educators came into a face-to-face class meeting to interact with the graduate students, the lead researcher collected observation data in field notes connected to informal interactions with RMS educators. For example, over the course of the 15-week semester, Andrews engaged in and facilitated multiple informal conversations involving the media specialist and one or more graduate students. Most of those interactions took place within the RMS media center.

Each graduate student in the class participated in two extensive audiotaped interviews/ consultations related to their service-learning projects, one early in the semester as ideas for their projects were beginning to coalesce and another interview about a month later, when the projects were well underway. In addition to field notes from observations and interviews, Andrews's researcher journal also captured ongoing reflections on the research including questions and emerging themes, plans for upcoming class sessions, and potential opportunities for relationship building and collaboration between and among the graduate students, RMS faculty and students, community-based organizations, and university faculty.

In addition to observational and interview data and the researcher journal, several different types of artefacts were also collected and examined, including but not limited to the following:

- Lesson plans for the class meetings and related handouts and activities;
- Graduate students' regular reflection posts (nine posts per student over the course of the semester) in response to readings, experiences, and discussions associated with the course;
- Documents students generated for the course, e.g., flip charts that captured key points of small group discussion and completed graphic organizers;
- Service-learning project proposals;
- Service-learning project action plans;
- Service-learning project portfolios;
- Service-learning project presentations.

2.3. Data Analysis

This qualitative design used Creswell and Poth's data analysis spiral [23], a synergistic process that moves "in analytic circles rather than using a fixed linear approach" [23] (p. 185). With each step of data analysis, we had the opportunity to circle back to earlier steps, adding layers of depth and complexity to the study's findings while allowing for the "unusual and serendipitous" [23] (p. 185) to emerge. The data analysis spiral includes the following elements: (1) collecting data, (2) managing and organizing the data, (3) reflecting on emergent ideas, (4) describing and classifying codes into themes, (5) developing and assessing interpretations, (6) representing and visualizing the data, and (7) an account of the findings [23] (p. 186).

For the within-case analysis featured in this article, graduate student, co-researcher, and second author. Leonard, worked closely with Andrews to engage in the data analysis spiral focused on her individual experience as participant researcher in the graduate course. Within the data analysis spiral, Andrews had the lead responsibility for Step 1, collecting data, and Step 2, managing and organizing

the data. Step 3, reflecting on emergent ideas, took place throughout the formal data collection period of fall semester 2017 and continues as both Andrews and Leonard revisit the data, identifying themes like those explored in this article: the development of critical consciousness and the implementation of critical service-learning in the context of a professional development school partnership. Similar to the ongoing reflection on emergent themes, the description and classification of codes in Step 4 began during Step 1 with data collection. For example, the emergent theme around critical service-learning led to coding the first set of interviews with codes that reflected Mitchell's [8] description of the distinguishing characteristics of critical service-learning as opposed to traditional service-learning. For example, critical service-learning calls for redistributing power, which Andrews coded as RP. For instance, the redistributing power code applied when participants shared their concerns regarding how their projects could involve their project partners in authentic ways—e.g., RMS teachers and students—so that they were working with and not for the community. The RP coding on the first interviews influenced the prompts for the second semi-structured interview with the graduate student participants, e.g., a specific prompt for the interview and the related service-learning action plan about "Partner Voice and Choice" that required the graduate students to consider and describe how they would involve project partners in decision making related to the project. Steps 5 and 6, developing and assessing interpretations drawn from the themes and codes and representing the data, were ongoing and collaborative. This article represents Step 7, an account of the findings from the within-case analysis focused on Leonard's experiences and related data. The findings associated with Leonard's case were confirmed through triangulation with observations, interviews, and artefacts associated with the course.

3. Findings and Discussion

The findings describe both how the graduate course was structured to support critical service-learning in the context of a university–school partnership and the case of one graduate student's experience of the course (second author, Leonard), including how involvement in the PDS-based course impacted her as a middle-grades educator.

The doctoral course at the center of this study, Young Adolescents and Schools, was offered fall semester 2017 on-site at RMS on Wednesday afternoons from 2:00–4:30 p.m., overlapping with two class periods with middle-school students and 45 min when RMS educators were available to consult with the graduate students after students were dismissed. As a "survey" course in the middle-grades doctoral area of emphasis, the course is appropriate for graduate students whose interests intersect with anything related to middle-grades education (grades 4–9) and/or young adolescents (ages 9–15) in their homes, schools, and communities. Young Adolescents and Schools has three primary goals:

- Inform students about key theories and theorists, issues, and debates related to young adolescents and middle-grades education;
- Build their knowledge of the challenges, opportunities, and strategies for working with and for young adolescents and middle-grades education;
- Develop their capacity to understand, inform, and productively contribute to the experiences of young adolescents in their homes, schools, and communities and to middle-grades education in a variety of contexts.

As Mitchell [8] points out, "The learning in service-learning results from the connections students make between community experiences and course themes" [8] (p. 50) [24]. In keeping with Mitchell's [8] call for critical service-learning that works from a social change perspective, from the start of the semester, the course's themes highlight the reality that we are always, already operating in a network of systems. Drawing on Freire's [2] theory of critical consciousness, this course encourages educators to reflect on their perceptions and decisions, to consider what network of systems influences their ideas about teaching and learning, and to act in ways that push back against practices that marginalize students and sustain inequitable systems in education. The network of systems represents

both the interests of the privileged and the oppression of those who are not privileged. The course themes also emphasized that our perceptions and our decisions are, by definition, grounded in our cultural and historical locations [25] and inextricably intertwined with that network of systems. Questioning who benefits from the network of systems orients our focus in the course toward equity, in line with the distinction that Mitchell [8] draws between traditional service-learning, which typically ignores questions of equity, and critical service-learning, which centers on equity.

After a shared introduction to the historical background and foundational concepts related to middle-grades education and young adolescents, an age group that comprises approximately 35% of the public school students in the United States (US) [26], topics to be addressed were decided based on student interests. The graduate students designed their own service-learning projects to connect their interests in young adolescents and/or middle-grades education to middle-grades improvement efforts within the university–RMS partnership.

To ensure that the graduate students' service-learning efforts were both in line with the school's needs and addressed questions about the roots of the social inequality many of those needs represented [8,27], Andrews, as the course instructor, facilitated several activities and relationships meant to immerse the graduate students in the world of RMS. For example, a small group of RMS students led the graduate students on an extensive tour of the school and surrounding grounds. The student-led tour turned into an ongoing interview-on-the-move, as the graduate students chatted with the middle-school kids about their experiences of life in RMS.

During the tour, Leonard noticed signs hanging outside of the Media Center and on the main hallway of the school. One sign shared that the middle-school students had been polled on their attitudes regarding marriage equality. The sign displayed the results, showing the number of students who did and did not support marriage equality. At the bottom, the sign read in all capital letters, "BE THE CHANGE". Leonard was surprised that teachers were allowed to discuss the topic in school and that the signs were permitted to be displayed in the main hallway. When she shared her surprise, she received the biggest surprise yet: the eighth-grade students had led the charge on the project.

At the time that the course took place, the issue of removing Confederate monuments was at the forefront of the news and it was extremely divisive [28]. It just so happens that the town in which the university is located has a Confederate monument. The monument sits in the center of town, figuratively and literally dividing the university from the main downtown area. Anyone who visits the town is likely to see this monument. In a town where the black population reaches almost 30% [29], Leonard wondered what the students' ideas about the issue were. Her own challenges and goals as a middle-grades history teacher, conversations with friends and colleagues related to the current Confederate monuments issue—and the signs she saw hanging in the hallway of the middle school where her course took place—all converged and would lead her to choose youth activism as the topic of her service-learning project for the doctoral course.

Through reflecting on her personal beliefs and experiences in the classroom, Leonard chose a topic that would ultimately build her own critical consciousness. The service-learning project tasked her to delve into the issue and enter new conversations about the monuments. She investigated cultural, historical, and social locations of the Confederate monuments issue as a whole—and discovered the different ways the monuments explicitly and implicitly support and maintain white supremacy. Learning these locations enabled her to push back against narratives in support of Confederate monuments because she could unveil the ways in which they are inherently oppressive through discussion with her peers in the course. As the project continued, she built efficacy that transferred this same resistance to contexts outside of the course, engaging in "courageous conversations" [30] from which she might have previously shied away.

More importantly, Leonard felt an increased urgency and responsibility to provide similar learning experiences for middle-grades students to build critical consciousness by pushing them to question, analyze, and act in response to issues that affect their lives and the ways they experience the world. Building a critical literacy to read oppressive conditions and strengthening the ability to change those

conditions can serve as a gateway to increasing youth motivation and encouraging them to engage in an ongoing cycle of reflection and action [2,12,13]. Leonard's experience in the project inspired her to spotlight critical consciousness as a course goal for an undergraduate preservice teacher education course for which she is an instructor of record. Preservice teachers who integrate critical consciousness into their pedagogy can engage in intentional acts of social justice that may positively impact the ways that middle-grades students experience a standardized curriculum.

In the first consultation/interview with the course instructor, she described the thought process that led to her project focus.

> Leonard: I'm influenced by the signs they hung in RMS about "be the change" and the signs with statistics from a student survey about support for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ) students and a bunch of other issues. The kids are getting involved and having an actual voice in things that generally only adults talk about, contributing as if they were adults. It could result in a ripple effect. I'd like for the students to see monuments, see the area, and feel like teachers. Ultimately, the impact would be students who are active participants, using their voices to make everybody around them aware, to make their fellow students aware of this and how they feel about it, have parents know that those are things they are talking about at school. They can feel comfortable telling fellow students, telling parents, whether the monument should or should not be taken down, how choice contributes to social justice. I can see the way kids get involved is through comments on social media. They would be having that experience of tackling an issue, contributing, too, with the greater good in mind—not just my personal benefit but how I am helping my community. That is something that students typically do not do. (Leonard, Interview/Consultation #1)

In addition to the graduate students' interactions with RMS students, the principal of the school spent significant time with the graduate students over the course of the entire semester, starting with an informal and wide-ranging conversation about the school with the entire class that included not just the typical highlights around points of pride, but also frank descriptions of ongoing struggles in several arenas (Observation Notes, Class Session #2). The RMS principal also met one-on-one with each graduate student in the class at least once and sometimes multiple times, and he assisted in connecting the students to other educators at the school and to key members of the community (Andrews, Interviews/Consultations #1 and #2; Researcher Journal).

The principal was forthright and transparent in responding to the graduate students' questions about the challenges at RMS and the underlying issues and tensions those challenges represented, e.g., the ongoing impact of generational poverty, institutional racism (e.g., discipline disproportionality data), and cultural tensions between a largely white and middle-class teaching force and a majority minority community (Andrews, Observation Notes; Researcher Journal). The principal's comments in the opening conversation and throughout the semester demonstrated his willingness to support students in developing the "social awareness" of the roots of the school's needs that Mitchell [8] describes as crucial to critical reflection, analysis, and action. Like the principal, the RMS library media specialist also served as a sounding board for the graduate students' service-learning project ideas and she acted as a broker of sorts, identifying key contacts and suggesting strategies for communicating and collaborating with RMS faculty and staff.

Andrews implemented several steps intended to ensure that the students' projects embodied critical service-learning in line with RMS needs and in keeping with a complex understanding of the school and community context. For example, the RMS formal school improvement plan (SIP) served as a central text for the graduate students, one that they painstakingly deconstructed in individual reflections and small group discussions. The SIP's stated goals, objectives, and action plans offered the public blueprint for the school's improvement efforts. Analyzing that blueprint was central to making the service-learning critical in an authentic sense: focusing on working with the community in light of their stated goals, examining the goals and action steps through a lens of critical consciousness [2],

and orienting projects toward critical action [8,31]. As one of the strategies for deconstructing the SIP, the graduate students examined the SIP using the "Making Meaning" protocol [32]:

- Describing the text: What do you see? Group members provided answers without making judgments about the quality of the text or their personal preferences.
- Asking questions about the text: What questions does this text raise for you?
- Speculating about the meaning and significance of the text: What is significant about this text? How do you construct meaning about the insights, problems, and issues that the text highlights?
- Discussing implications for our work: How might this text influence your work as educators and in this course? (Artefact: Lesson Plan #2).

Leonard's goal for her service-learning project was fueled by personal, social, and cultural contexts [33] and enacted through her academic work as a researcher and student in support of the middle school's school improvement plan goals.

> Leonard: The school improvement plan expresses a need to "facilitate instruction so that students make connections between prior learning and new learning", as well as to "develop (students) into responsible digital citizens" (RMS). The school improvement plan also includes the goal "to guide and support students in developing open-mindedness and intercultural awareness so that they can help create a better and more peaceful world for themselves and others."

My proposal is to provide an experience in which students can explore the monuments in Riverside (pseudonym for the city), discover the local community's opinion on whether or not they should be removed, engage in discussion with family and friends about the issue, and form their opinion on the issue, which they will share through a digital platform. The outcome is that students will feel empowered to engage in courageous conversations that promote equality in their community. (Artefacts: Leonard's service-learning proposal, RMS SIP).

In keeping with one of the key aims of the doctoral course, Leonard desired for middle-grades students to realize that they are also always, already operating in a network of systems, and that their perceptions and decisions are grounded in their cultural and historical locations that often go unacknowledged or unknown. This ambiguity enables people to buy into beliefs that tie them to allegiances that they may not fully understand. Leonard wanted middle-grades students to feel like they could question their realities and beliefs and be willing to build and express their own, even if it went against their tendencies. She wanted to create opportunities for young adolescents to delve into issues, pull information from various sources, discuss them, and make and advocate for a position.

Andrews scheduled two one-on-one consultations with each graduate student. The first set of consultations took place about three weeks after the start of the semester and the second set of consultations was scheduled about a month later. The consultations, which also served as interviews and were audio recorded, demonstrated a consistent pattern across all of the graduate student participants. In the first consultation, each graduate student expressed optimism about the project's development. The researcher journal notes that the conversations could be best characterized by the phrase, "brimming with possibility". Here is an example from the within-case analysis featured in this article:

> Andrews—If this happened in an ideal world, what would kids demonstrate as their learning at the end?
> Leonard—I am not sure what exactly that would look like; I would expect that students would surprise me. I would love some version of that poster (the ones she had initially seen hanging outside the Media Center) hanging on the wall, where kids informed others about what they know, advocated to others in school, owned what is going on in their community, engaged teachers in conversations in which they held knowledge, and can feel comfortable

telling fellow students, parents, and teachers whether monuments should or should not be removed, and how their ability to do those things contributes to social justice. I love the idea that kids could say: "This is my opinion and I can contribute it without making things worse". They could gain skills that help everyone communicate better. (Leonard, Interview/Consultation #1)

Andrews shared that Leonard's idea reminded her of the concept of courageous conversations (Singleton, 2014), and suggested that Leonard "consider an experience that will offer the same opportunity every year without having a narrow topic, that gives students ongoing opportunities to engage in courageous conversations, setting up a framework" (Andrews, Interview/Consultation #1). Leonard liked this idea and planned to adjust her proposal.

Following the initial proposal and consultation, the graduate students were tasked to view each other's proposals and complete a peer feedback chart. The chart required students to provide "warm" positive comments, "I wonder . . . " suggestions and ideas for strengthening the proposal, and "resources" to share. Classmates were encouraging, building on the possibilities that Leonard saw for her project. Three of the graduate students in the course had served as instructors for undergraduate middle-grades teacher education courses taught on-site at RMS, and they contributed their own insights given their frequent interactions with RMS staff and observations of the school.

Leonard: We shared our project progress and this was very helpful in sharing knowledge. My classmates read through my proposal and helped me think about it through different lenses and perspectives. Many resources across disciplines were shared with me through this proposal consultation, some of which I was familiar with and others that surprised me:

-    Brown bag luncheon recommended by the professor on Confederate monuments hosted by the University of Georgia History Department, which drew leaders from activist organizations of which I then became aware;
-    One graduate student, who also teaches undergraduate courses on site at the same local middle school at this course, shared the names of specific teachers, with whom he collaborates, who incorporate current events into their curriculum;
-    A local organization that does activist work but who I never would have known did so;
-    A local artist involved in activism'
-    A website called TeachingTolerance.com;
-    Middle-Level Education Research Special Interest Group Research Agenda;
-    Media literacy website;
-    Comps section of personal dissertation;
-    NewsELA;
-    TweenTribune.

The resources provided were a mixture of academic, instructional, research, local activist, and technological. They crossed disciplines and helped me think about how the real world can be incorporated into the classroom to benefit all stakeholders. (Artefact: Leonard's reflection on peer feedback on her project).

After students had time to review peer feedback, they drafted revised proposals for their service-learning projects. At the next class meeting, they engaged in a "Tuning" protocol [34] that allowed each student to get group support on the project, with group members taking turns in working on one another's project proposals as if it were their own. Building on the revisions that now positioned Leonard's project as a framework for critical conversations, one group member noted, "I know that Dr. Andrews talked about having the project be something that lasts beyond the current issue—maybe this could be about who gets their voices heard/memorialized and who does not?" The course was structured so that it required students to share their information, justify their thinking, and articulate how their ideas would translate into action. Despite the fact that the topic was chosen by individuals,

the community of the classroom took on ownership of each student's project through the protocols that were used, adding a multitude of voices to the service-learning project rather than each project representing a single individual's perspective. With a shared and specific focus on equity, the critical service-learning projects drew attention to the deeper roots of social issues and involved all students in addressing them [8]. Through the protocols, students engaged in conversations that shared their authentic voices and built genuine relationships within the class [8].

Leonard's project continued to shift to an even more explicit focus on justice through opportunities for students to critically reflect on and analyze current events and take action through authentic voice, ultimately building their own critical consciousness. Leonard left the class after the Tuning protocol feeling optimistic about the plan for her service-learning project.

These protocols positioned all members of the course, including the professor, as co-learners and problem solvers rather than passive learners. This type of intentionally collaborative learning is conducive to producing critical consciousness, as it pushes back against a banking education [2] that limits student knowledge to that of the teacher who deposits information into students, silencing the voices of some and privileging others. Instead, the professor and graduate students positioned themselves as collaborators in each other's projects, reflecting on their own ideas and beliefs about each topic in order to contribute to actions that would make each project come to fruition.

Analysis of the second set of consultations, which took place a month after the first, revealed a pattern of more pessimistic comments about the progress of the service-learning projects and the potential impact of those projects. In the second interview with Leonard, for example, the tone took a decided downturn.

> Leonard: Initially, there was a burst of ideas and resources that would serve as potential collaborators on the project. I assumed that local community organizations would be happy to gain the support and connection to schools to support their work and cause. I contacted multiple organizations and almost all of them responded expressing interest in a potential collaboration. But then, I attended a meeting and felt uncomfortable with the rhetoric. There were miscommunications with another group. Another organization said they would get back to me and never did. I reached out to teachers within the school and got zero response. I am not really sure where to go from here. (Leonard, Interview/Consultation #2)

This collaboration turned out to be far more complex than Leonard anticipated and it led to frustrations and concerns about the ability to implement the service-learning project. Like the rest of the graduate students in the course, although the relationships they developed with RMS educators through the on-site course provided opportunities for service-learning, the challenges of designing and implementing a service-learning project also came into play, what Clark and Young call the "micro-politics and day-to-day work of service-learning" [35] (p. 73). Sometimes, educators and community leaders did not respond to emails, and opportunities to talk in person with key contacts often proved elusive. Watts, Diemer, and Voight [17] warn that, in the cycle of building critical consciousness through reflection, analysis, and action, the action component sometimes "fails to yield the desired result, which can lead to frustration and cynicism, rather than a greater awareness of societal inequities" [17] (p. 47). Each graduate student experienced actions that failed to yield desired results. As such, the consultations with the professor were vital to pushing through negative and often unexpected failures and encouraging students to move forward.

All of that said, Andrews's long-standing work in the university–PDS partnership, dating back to 2007, yielded benefits that contributed to the service-learning efforts. In her work on making political science real through service-learning in a higher education course, Dicklitch [36] notes, "One of the most important factors (in a successful service-learning experience) is a strong working relationship between the faculty member and the community partner" [36] (p. 134). As an example, Andrews presented with the principal of RMS on a couple of occasions at national conferences about the PDS work, worked with him on placements for teacher candidates, negotiated teaching courses on site

at RMS for herself, graduate teaching assistants, and other university faculty, brokered connections to other university faculty and resources, etc. In each instance, their interactions were grounded in a mutual commitment to considering the complexities of context and relationships as the heart of the partnership work [37]. The principal's perseverance in figuring out how to facilitate meaningful service-learning projects during the semester of the on-site doctoral course reflected his trust in the value of the partnership work for the school and the community.

4. Conclusions

Acknowledging that we are always, already participating in a network of systems involves recognizing that an investigation of those systems is necessary to resist systems that marginalize or oppress any groups. To further strengthen critical service-learning efforts in a PDS, university faculty could incorporate readings into on-site courses that highlight how critical service-learning is taken up in other environments and the ways in which critical theory informs the work of service-learning. Related research literature could support students as they navigate the challenges of service-learning projects and potentially prevent a nose-dive from hope to frustration when plans are enacted and fall short of expectations. Watts et al. [17] state that "People with greater levels of critical reflection make more structural attributions for social problems and group disparities" [17] (p. 48), which has implications for the ways in which students avoid the savior mentality that can accompany traditional service-learning [8].

Based on findings and discussion, relationships and trust come to the forefront for implications in engaging in critical service-learning as part of a university–school partnership. Watson-Thompson [5] claims that it is "critical to develop genuine and maintained relationships with community partners based on a shared agenda that is mutually beneficial" and "that academic institutions support conditions to sustain academic engagement and commitment in a place, over time, and across people" [5] (p. 24). A course that occurs once a week for a semester is likely to face significant challenges in building the relationships necessary to plan for and enact change. As one strategy for addressing the challenge of semester and course time limitations, perhaps the university and faculty could focus on a single project that involved various stakeholders within the community and the school, with university students who take the course rotating into the project and building on the progress made by former students. While building on a single project could address the time and semester constraints on relationship building, the graduate students benefited from individually planning and creating their own service-learning projects. For example, the individual projects allowed the students to look for intentional intersections between their own interests and the school's goals, drawing from their identities as teachers, students, and researchers.

Critical service-learning in a professional development school offers the opening for practicing educators, university students, and university faculty to develop critical consciousness, tackle authentic issues in light of social awareness of the root causes of those issues, and engage in professional learning as teacher-researchers that encompasses critical reflection, analysis, and action. Through a PDS partnership, all of those stakeholders do not have to choose a single role—as university student or educator or researcher—but, instead, can situate themselves as all of those roles simultaneously.

For Leonard, the experience of planning a service-learning project impacted her thinking about change efforts, professional development, and social justice—and the complex web of systems involved in making goals come to fruition. Through investigating how teachers can incorporate a framework of critical consciousness into their curriculum, Leonard learned of new ways to think about civic engagement, which she then incorporated into her thinking about the project. Being confronted with new ways of thinking about people, groups, topics, and ideas was challenging and forced her to confront how her beliefs and perspectives were different from others, even if the larger goals of equity were shared. In collaboration with teachers within the building, Leonard's service-learning project provided a plan for professional development that shares ideas for incorporating issues of social justice and responsible digital advocacy that middle-grades teachers could draw from, adapt, and potentially

implement in their own classrooms. This focus on critical professional development and increased critical consciousness was of great interest to Leonard and influenced her writing for a book chapter, her plans as an instructor of record for a middle-grades undergraduate course, and a potential research topic for her dissertation.

In his call for community-engaged scholarship, Boyer (1996) urges researchers to increase, integrate, share, and apply knowledge in ways that are more inclusive and contextualized. Drawing on Freire's [2] theory of critical consciousness, scholars must also engage in an ongoing cycle of critical reflection, analysis, and action in order to build efficacy to serve as change agents with their community. In our experiences in a PDS-based graduate course, critical service-learning increased critical consciousness, as highlighted in the experiences of Leonard in the within-case analysis. Weaving critical consciousness into and throughout critical service-learning in a single graduate course supported the preparation of community-engaged scholars, influenced the research interests and work of graduate student participants, and potentially sketched a framework for doctoral preparation in the context of university–school partnerships.

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