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"The Hardest Thing to Turn From": The Effects of Service-Learning on Preparing Urban Educators

Dorinda J. Carter Andrews [a]
[a] Michigan State University,

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"The Hardest Thing to Turn From": The Effects of Service-Learning on Preparing Urban Educators

Dorinda J. Carter Andrews

Michigan State University

In this article, the author describes her use of service-learning as a pedagogical strategy for developing preservice students' dispositions for urban teaching. Twenty-one students were enrolled in a multicultural education course with a service-learning requirement. This was the students' first teacher education course in a two-year, urban-focused strand of the university's larger teacher education program. Students engaged in tutoring in local urban elementary and high schools. They also conducted observations, interviews, and worked in a community center. The author describes how the action-reflection process differed for students from urban home and schooling backgrounds and those from suburban home and schooling backgrounds. She posits that the service-learning experience facilitated the reflection process in students that led them to be more social justice-oriented in their thoughts about urban teaching. The author also argues that the experience enhanced their commitment to and motivations for urban teaching. Of particular focus is the effect the service-learning had on preservice students of color who were the racial majority in this cohort. The author also discusses some of the challenges faced as a teacher educator attempting to be more holistic in her teaching through the use of service-learning and implications for urban teacher education courses and program design.

The barriers to academic success faced by students in urban schools are no secret. Problems, such as inadequate funding, racism, sexism, tracking, and low teacher expectations (to name a few), plague urban schools and thwart the personal and academic growth of many marginalized students. The persistence of these challenges is placing continual pressure on teacher education programs to respond by producing teachers who will combat these issues through their pedagogy and practice. The shift toward social justice education in teacher education has made it a political endeavor (Cochran-Smith, 2004). Many believe that in order for teachers to effectively meet the needs of urban students, they must understand and examine the sociopolitical context in which these students learn and be willing to challenge the structural barriers that prohibit student success. Research indicates that a commitment to this "new multiculturalism" and conceptualization of teacher education as an enterprise committed to social justice has been adopted by several theorists, teacher education researchers, and practitioners (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Gay, 2000; King & Castenell, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Murrell, 2001; Sleeter, 1995, 1996). Many believe that future teachers need to have a critical understanding of how race, class, gender, and culture

Address correspondence to Dorinda J. Carter Andrews, Michigan State University, Department of Teacher Education, 358 Erickson Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824. E-mail: dcarter@msu.edu

structure the school experiences and life outcomes of individual children and cultural groups who have historically been marginalized in schools and society. Hence, scholars have called for teacher education to be grounded in social justice by preparing culturally responsive teachers who can address the educational needs of youth living in underserved and under-resourced communities (Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

We know that the current population of teaching candidates is primarily White,[1] middle-class, and female (Swartz, 2003), and teacher education programs have struggled to effectively educate these students to become teachers in urban schools (Barnes, 2006; Cruz-Janzen & Taylor, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Sleeter, 2001). Collectively White preservice students have very limited background knowledge of—and experiences with—people who are culturally different from them. Research indicates that White preservice students have fairly stereotypic beliefs about urban schools, communities, and children (Schultz, Neyhart, & Reck, 1996; Su, 1996, 1997) and possess very limited knowledge of racism and White privilege (Cochran-Smith, 1995; King, 1991). Those preparation programs with a specific focus on developing social justice educators for urban contexts are attracting more students of color and White students with a commitment to be change agents in urban schools. Scholars suggest that it is these students that are needed in teacher education, because they are generally more committed to multicultural teaching, social justice, and holding all students to high academic standards (Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1991; Sleeter, 2001; Su, 1996, 1997).

Teacher education programs have typically responded to the growing diversity among K-12 students by adding one or two courses on multiculturalism or urban education to their curriculum (Goodwin, 1997; Grant & Secada, 1990; Zeichner, 1992). Much of the research on single multicultural education courses discusses whether and how they change the ways in which White preservice students think about culturally diverse youth (Ahlquist, 1991; Bennett, Niggle, & Stage, 1990; Lawrence, 1997; Martin & Koppelman, 1991; Milner, 2006; Xu, 2000). We know very little about the impact these courses may have on preservice students' of color dispositions[2] for urban teaching (Cruz-Janzen & Taylor, 2004). Attempting to integrate "the new multiculturalism" into a program by using the stand-alone diversity course model has not proven effective for impacting teachers' practice once they leave their teacher education program and begin teaching (Ladson-Billings, 2000; Sleeter, 2001). Scholars believe that unless the concepts introduced in these types of courses are integrated across a teacher preparation program, prospective teachers are not likely to infuse them into their pedagogy and practice (Grant, 1994; Murrell, 2001; Zeichner & Hoeft, 1996). Programs that focus on preparing teachers to work in urban centers place critical multiculturalism and social justice at the center of their curriculum and ensure that students critically examine how cultural difference, power, privilege, and oppression shape not only their thinking about becoming urban educators but also the teaching and learning context for urban students (Ladson-Billings, 2001). This is often done through work that uses autobiography and field experiences that sometimes include direct interaction with expert urban K-12 teachers (Ladson-Billings, 2000). In this manner, social justice concepts are examined throughout a teacher candidates' entire experience in a preparation program.[3]

In a 2001 review of research, Christine Sleeter described several strategies that have been used for preparing teachers for multicultural schools: focused recruiting efforts into teacher preparation programs, community-based cross-cultural immersion experiences, multicultural education coursework (stand-alone and those that include a field experience), and program restructuring. She highlights that much of the research on strategies used in preparation programs discusses the

effects on White preservice students. We know very little about the effect of various strategies on non-White preservice students. In this article, I discuss my use of service-learning as a pedagogical strategy for developing urban teaching dispositions of preservice students in a multicultural course that I teach. The class was primarily comprised of African American students who had expressed a commitment to becoming urban educators. Through implementing what I believed was a well-designed field experience that aligned with the goals and objectives of the multicultural education course, my students increased their understanding and examination of the sociocultural and sociopolitical context in which urban students learn and how they might serve as change agents in schools in their future role as urban teachers. I describe how the action-reflection process differed for students from urban home and schooling backgrounds and those from suburban home and schooling backgrounds. I posit that the service-learning experience facilitated the reflection process in students that led them to be more social justice-oriented in their thoughts about urban teaching. I also argue that the experience enhanced their commitment to and motivations for urban teaching. It is my belief that their ability to make explicit and critical connections among course readings, activities, and their field experience resulted in an enhanced understanding of how issues of power, privilege, and oppression produce and reproduce social inequality in urban schools and how in their future roles as urban educators these students might act as change agents. Lastly, I discuss some of the challenges I faced as a teacher educator attempting to be more holistic in my teaching through the use of service- learning and implications for urban teacher education courses and program design. I begin with an overview of the literature describing how and why service learning has been used as a pedagogical tool in preservice teacher education and what makes it effective.

TEACHER EDUCATION AND THE ROLE OF SERVICE-LEARNING

Service-learning has been suggested as a form of community-based learning that can help prospective teachers gain a more critical understanding of culturally diverse individuals, communities, and schools and strengthen their habits of critical reflection. One way that service-learning is defined is as an approach to teaching and learning in which service and learning are blended in a way that both are enriched by the other. Some principles of service-learning include (a) integrated learning that ties the service activities to classroom knowledge and skills; (b) reflection to help integrate students' service experiences with the academic content; and (c) high-quality service to prepare students to address a recognized school or community need (Anderson, Swick, & Yff, 2001). Service-learning has been adopted as a pedagogy at the program level and in individual classrooms of many teacher educators for various reasons. It is a means to foster deeper sociocultural awareness, civic participation, and social transformation in preservice students. It can make students "aware of issues and problems of equity, equality, power, voice, and resources in education" (Verducci & Pope, 2001, p. 7). Specifically for White preservice students, they gain an increased awareness and understanding of their racial privilege and how it shapes their attitudes and beliefs about teaching culturally diverse students (Boyle-Baise, 2002; Hones, 1997).

In teacher education, service-learning has been used in a variety of ways, ranging from use in introductory and foundation courses (e.g., Karp, Pedras, Heide, & Flottemesch, 2001; Miels, 2001), method courses (e.g., Broadway & Clark-Thomas, 2001; Wade, 2001), and program-wide integration (e.g., Medina, Morrone, & Anderson, 2005; Muscott, 2001; Stowell & McDaniel,

2001). In many cases, authors do not use the term "service-learning" to describe their pedagogical approach in their courses. This pedagogy for helping preservice students engage in a critical analysis of democracy, social inequality, and social justice teaching is supported by a variety of theories, one being Dewey's (1938/1963) concept of experiential learning. Dewey noted that the individual must engage in an experience that produces intellectual and moral growth or results in conditions leading to further growth. Service-learning can be a type of experiential learning for urban teacher preparation in which preservice students engage in experiences in urban schools and communities that lead to their enhanced development of the skills and dispositions for urban teaching. As a pedagogy, service-learning is a form of experiential education that relies heavily on reflection to ensure that learning occurs (Jacoby & Associates, 1996). When students are required to engage in structured and purposeful reflection on their service in connection with what they may be learning in a college classroom, opportunities to dispel obvious stereotypes, gain increased understanding of racial and ethnic minority students, and challenge presumptions about poverty are more likely to occur.

Research indicates that teacher education students have largely positive experiences with and attitudes toward service learning (Anderson & Guest, 1993; Cruz, 1997; Erickson & Anderson, 1997; Siegel, 1994; Wade & Yarbrough, 1997). Several studies have highlighted the benefits and limitations of service-learning activities as part of urban teacher preparation. The most frequent finding of studies of preservice students' service-learning involvement in diverse communities is their increased awareness of youth who are culturally different from themselves (Boyle-Baise, 1998; McKenna & Ward, 1996). Boyle-Baise and Sleeter (2000) posit that service-learning presents opportunities for direct interaction with diverse sociocultural groups, emphasizes critical reflection on the experience, and provides a solid vehicle to teach about issues of culture, privilege, disadvantage, and power. Studies have shown that in comparison to preservice candidates who did not engage in service-learning, service-learning participants developed a greater commitment to teaching than did nonparticipants (Flippo, Hertzel, Gribonski, & Armstrong, 1993; Green, Dalton, & Wilson, 1994). Participation in service-learning facilitates increased sociocultural awareness and a greater capacity to service students from culturally diverse backgrounds (Boyle-Baise, 1997; Tellez, Hlebowitsh, Cohen, & Norwood, 1995). Many studies also cite that preservice students develop a new awareness of themselves and begin to question their prior assumptions and beliefs about urban students resulting from participation in service-learning. These new insights are often an outgrowth of connecting the underachievement of many students of color and poor children to larger societal issues, such as racism, poverty, classism, and homelessness (O'Grady, 1997; Vadeboncoeur, Rahm, Aguilera, & LeCompte, 1996).

Service-learning has been most effective in its use in teacher education when a critical multi-cultural approach is taken. Without this, the experience has the potential to reinforce assumptions about inequality without the theoretical underpinnings provided by a strategic analysis of power and oppression. Without the multicultural context in the coursework, programs may foster an attitude of paternalism on the part of the preservice student (Wade, Boyle-Biase, & O'Grady, 2001). The incorporation of a multicultural perspective into service-learning experiences assists preservice teachers in thinking deeply about the nature of social justice.

While the research dedicated to the effects of service-learning on preservice teachers is growing, we know very little about how prospective teachers of color experience and reflect on service-learning experiences in urban contexts (Boyle-Baise, 2005); nor do we have much information on how White, preservice students, who vocalize a commitment to teaching in urban schools,

experience their service-learning. In this article, I describe how freshman students' participation in a 12-week service-learning experience embedded in a 15-week multicultural education course helped reinforce and enhance their motivations to teach in urban contexts and better understand the lives, identities, and schooling experiences of culturally diverse students. Of particular note is the impact the experience had on African American students from urban backgrounds. Additionally, combining the service-learning with their coursework allowed students to engage in critical reflection around what it means to be an effective urban educator and the importance of examining their social identities as a part of this process. "They need to understand local urban cultures, the urban political economy, the bureaucratic structure of urban schools, and the community and social service support networks serving urban centers" (Oakes, Franke, Quartz, & Rogers, 2002, p. 228). In this quote, Jeannie Oakes and her colleagues illuminate the kinds of knowledge service-learning can help preservice students gain. Using service-learning to help students acquire this knowledge supports goals of a social justice agenda and helps preservice students understand themselves as future change agents in urban schools.

THE HOLISTIC FIELD EXPERIENCE: A FIRST-SEMESTER COMPONENT OF THE URBAN PROGRAM

I teach an undergraduate course entitled, *Human Diversity, Power, and Opportunity in Social Institutions*. This course introduces students to how power, oppression, and privilege inform individuals' access to opportunities, particularly in schools. The course also introduces students to how schooling shapes social inequality and social inequality shapes schooling. In August 2006 I began teaching one of the two sections focused primarily on social inequality in urban schools and communities. Students enrolled in these two sections were all first-semester freshmen and represented the first cohort of The Urban Program.[4] The Urban Program is a two-year, urban-focused strand of the university's five-year teacher preparation program. It is designed for freshman and sophomore students with an interest in becoming urban teachers at the elementary or secondary level. The Urban Program grounds the preparation and commitment of prospective urban teachers by providing early experiences with successful practicing urban educators and guided field experiences with children, youth, and families in urban settings. Upon completion of the program and meeting all necessary requirements, students automatically matriculate into the university's teacher education program. The Urban Program is also designed to provide a pipeline of teachers of color for urban schools. In doing so, the program serves to more fully diversify the university's larger teacher education program.

This cohort was unique in several ways. First, an expressed commitment to teaching in urban schools upon graduation was a requirement for the program. This distinguished these students from the majority of preservice students taking other sections of the same course; those students typically take teaching positions in non-urban environments upon graduation. Second, the cohort demographics were uncharacteristic of our larger program and perhaps other predominantly White teacher education programs. Of the 37 students enrolled in the first cohort of The Urban Program, approximately 85% were students of color (21 African American, 2 Biracial). The standard service-learning component of the course required 20–25 hours tutoring in a local school or community organization. College students were required to tutor K-12 students two consecutive hours weekly and connected their learning to various course themes

and concepts through discussions, activities, and written assignments.[5] The course covered topics in multicultural education that allowed students to examine factors that impact teaching and learning at the individual, school, community, and societal levels. In order to more closely align the service-learning with the course goals and objectives, I restructured the field experience in my section to include a variety of activities beyond one-on-one tutoring that I believed would help my students examine cultural difference, power, and social inequality at macro and micro levels within the school and community (see Appendix A for details of the Holistic Field Inquiry [HFI]). Students in my section spent one of their two hours each week tutoring between 1–3 students in an urban elementary or high school, while the other hour was spent engaging in an additional activity that I developed for the course. The additional activities included:

1. Assisting in an after-school program at a local community organization for five consecutive weeks and interviewing the Director;
2. Conducting an interview with a school administrator, teacher, or counselor;
3. Conducting observations of teaching, learning, and social interactions in classroom and non-classroom (e.g., cafeterias, hallways, playgrounds) contexts;
4. Conducting at least one observation in a special education classroom over the course of the semester; and,
5. Engaging in a community inquiry of an urban neighborhood to identify community assets for, and barriers to, student and family mobility.

There were four assignments in the HFI. These were designed to help students make connections between what they were learning in my classroom and their experiences in urban contexts. The Student Case Analysis assignment required students to analyze their experience working with their tutee by connecting their learning to at least two course concepts. Preservice students completed a Narrative Inquiry assignment in which they analyzed two course themes in the context of one of their observations or the interview that they conducted. Students also wrote a Service-Learning Paper as a final written assignment and completed a Service-Learning Group Exhibition Piece. The Exhibition Piece was a four-person group project in which students creatively demonstrated their understanding of cross-cutting themes across their individual experiences and, in some cases, service sites. Students completed an oral presentation of their projects at an end-of-the-semester course exhibition. This event was open to the public. Students were required to note their weekly activities, reflections, and observations in a service-learning journal. I provided at least one journal prompt for students each week that built on the class topic(s) for the week. In every written assignment students were required to cite at least three different course readings, videos, or activities. An online class discussion forum also provided an additional vehicle for students to share connections they were making between the course content and their field experience. Additional time was spent in class discussing students' service-learning experiences in conjunction with course readings, videos, and activities.

Twenty-one of the 37 freshmen cohort members were enrolled in my section of the course. The remaining 16 cohort members were taught by another faculty member in a different section. In my class, there were 17 females and 4 males. Approximately 57% of the students were African American, 33% were White, and 9.5% were Biracial. Sixty-seven percent of the students reported that they grew up in an urban context, and 33% of the students grew up in a suburban

context. These students were part of a larger, longitudinal research study that I was conducting about the necessary coursework and field experiences required to develop skills and dispositions of effective urban educators. I was following these students into their first year of teaching to determine whether what they learned in The Urban Program had any effect on their pedagogy and practice once they graduated. All of the students had signed voluntary consent forms to complete surveys, engage in individual and focus group interviews, and have their coursework analyzed at various points throughout their tenure in the teacher preparation program. The first interview occurred before participants began their service-learning and focused on their K-12 schooling backgrounds, their attitudes and beliefs about teaching and learning, and their attitudes and beliefs about urban schools, communities, families, and students. The second interview was conducted after students completed the 15-week course. Interview questions were designed to have students critically reflect on how the service-learning experience enhanced, if at all, their understanding of urban communities, students, schools, and families and what connections they were able to make between their coursework and the field experience that enhanced their readiness for urban teaching. Finally, several pieces of students' coursework were examined for understanding their developing thoughts about their future roles as urban educators. A team of four graduate students conducted the interviews. They also coded interviews and service-learning papers using AtlasTi software. All data reported in this article were collected between August 2006 and May 2007. I draw from interviews and service-learning final papers to discuss the ways in which the service-learning experience and coursework helped develop the dispositions of preservice teachers for urban teaching.

THE ACTION-REFLECTION PROCESS FOR URBAN AND SUBURBAN PRESERVICE STUDENTS

The data revealed that engaging in the various activities of the Holistic Field Inquiry, coupled with consistent reflection on those activities in relation to coursework, expanded students' conceptions of who was urban and what urban schools looked like. Because students from urban and suburban environments attended racially homogenous K-12 schools, their views on "urbanness" were narrow. The action-reflection process deconstructed students' assumptions in ways that deepened their understanding about their future roles as urban educators. While these findings would be expected for White preservice students, the data revealed that Black preservice students from urban environments gained similar insights. Also, the HFI enhanced students' understandings of the role of institutional structures in shaping academic achievement. This was most illuminating for urban students who found similarities between their service site and their own school. Lastly, the HFI enhanced students' motivations to want to become urban teachers. Prior to the HFI, students discussed wanting to teach in urban schools to "help" or "give back" to the communities. Their motivations were more altruistic. After the HFI, many students talked about wanting to empower their future students to exert their agency to change their own lives.

From Narrow to Expanded Conceptions of "Urban"

Most of the students in my class seemed to move from a place of limited or narrow conceptions of "urban" to increased awareness and understanding, resulting from completing the field experience

and having to consistently reflect on it in relation to the course content. While one might predict the exposure to cultural diversity in the local schools and communities to be instrumental in expanding White students' awareness and understanding, the same was true for many of the preservice students of color. Most of the preservice students had attended racially homogenous K-12 schools and had lived in racially homogenous environments. Thus, their understandings about urban schools and communities were narrow.

Several of the preservice students from urban communities assumed knowledge of the challenges that the K-12 students they worked with might face based on their backgrounds as urban students. These background experiences rooted in specific home and schooling cultural contexts played a role in shaping their new understandings. The HFI transformed Black preservice students' thinking about how their urban identities might inform their teaching pedagogies. For example, Tori (Black, urban) stated:

> I always used to think, "Oh, I came from an urban environment in a urban school. I'm going to be able to relate to these kids. This is going to be a piece of cake." Now I understand, oh, I really haven't been in their shoes, because I'm not them. I don't know what they're going through or anything so I'm going to be more open-minded and just go in with a fresh mind willing to take in what my students are bringing to the table—who they are rather than going off of who I am. And who I am does have to do with it some, but the main focus is on my students.

As a result of the HFI, Tori was more critical of her own social identity and how it impacted her attitudes and beliefs about urban teaching. Tori's willingness to be "more open-minded and just go in with a fresh mind" indicated her understanding that her future students' experiences would not necessarily mirror her own K-12 experiences; this realization is important for how Tori will develop relationships with her future students and plan lessons according to her students' strengths and weaknesses. Tori recognized that her future students would bring assets to the classroom that could be integrated into her teaching. She also realized that her K-12 experiences as an urban student would not predispose her to having instant relationships with her future students or having an immediate understanding of their learning situations. Prior to engaging in the field experience, Tori assumed that her background as an urban student would afford her automatic relationships with her future students. Her remarks illuminate her new insights about the role of teachers' social identity in the teaching and learning process. Tori's attitude changed from one of assuming similarities in cultural background (i.e., identities and urban students) meant automatic relationships in the classroom to allowing her future students to teach her about what it is they need to be successful.

African American preservice students were surprised by the racial and ethnic diversity of the local schools and communities. Coming from a large urban district, many of them reported attending schools and living in communities with predominantly Black populations. However, the field experience proved different. In one of her interviews Mia (Black, urban) stated:

> The racial diversity was, uhm, a real big thing. . . . The school that I went to [for service-learning] was very racially diverse and when I think urban, you know, I'm from an urban community—a couple of White people here and there. But they [the service site] had Latino students, White students, Black students. . . . It was a different perspective definitely.

After his five-week experience at the community center, Simon (Black, urban) reflected:

> There was extreme racial diversity [at the Community Center]. You had Latinos, Blacks, Whites. You had Africans speaking from all over the place that all stayed in the same area, and I never experienced that. For the most part [his hometown] is mostly Black . . . until you go into your other areas where it's integrated.

For Mia and Simon "urban" was synonymous with "Black" prior to their participation in service-learning. The notion of urban as representing one cultural group as well as their own experiences was deconstructed as a result of their field experience. Historical accounts of the disadvantaged, described as Black and poor (Wilson, 1987), create societal images that these individuals most often populate urban, high-needs areas. Based on these students' upbringing, their conceptions of urban were relative to their lived experiences. The exposure to culturally diverse people through the HFI illuminated for them the racial and ethnic diversity of many urban areas. For Simon, "It made me realize that I will have to adapt my teaching style to help all the different types of students in my classroom. I guess I just assumed most of my students would look like me." Simon's reflection on interacting with ethnically diverse students were representative of many of the African American preservice students. After completing the HFI activities, these students realized that urban schools and communities were not as racially monolithic as they initially perceived them to be.

Prior to the course and field experience, some of the White preservice students reported having few assumptions about urban students and schools because they lacked experiences with individuals from urban communities. These students had grown up in predominantly White communities and attended predominantly White K-12 schools. However, after the course was over, several students reflected in their second interview on how the experience changed their thinking about their future classrooms. Hannah (White, suburban) stated:

> I didn't really have too many beliefs about it [urban schools] before, because I hadn't really experienced it. I mean I grew up in the suburbs, so I haven't really experienced urban schools before this. So I think it [the field experience] just kind of opened my eyes . . . it kind of just, like, gave me, like a picture of what, uhm, an urban school is and how it was different from my experiences in school. Now that I have experienced student diversity and cultural forces in the classroom, I will now be able to look at my own future classroom through different eyes.

Hannah's increased understanding of culturally diverse students and urban teaching were made more explicit in her service-learning final paper.

> As a White urban teacher who attended suburban schools, I will not be able to know or understand the occurrences that my students face when they go home every night. However, as a teacher, it will be my job to not only *not* be afraid of these differences but to also offer true generosity to my students through shared knowledge rather than false charity. "True generosity consists precisely in fighting to destroy the causes which nourish false charity" (Freire, 1993, p. 44). . . . It [the HFI] showed me what pushing up my sleeves and getting my hands dirty really felt like. The best part has been realizing how enjoyable getting my hands dirty felt. So much of my life I have been trying to keep them clean: going to college, considering work in suburban schools. . . . My experiences working with the first graders at [Elementary X] throughout this semester have not only taught me a lot about

> White privilege, school funding, capital, and other cultural forces that may impact my future urban
> students, but also how these factors will influence my teachings as an urban teacher.

For Hannah, the HFI facilitated the shift in her thinking about cultural diversity. Instead of
fearing it, she aspired to integrate it into the teaching and learning process in her classroom
by allowing students opportunities to create knowledge and own their learning process (i.e.,
offering generosity to her students through shared knowledge). Reflecting on what she learned
from reading Paulo Freire's (1993) work in conjunction with the field experience, Hannah now
views teaching and learning as a shared process between her and her future students. The course
has led her to analyze power relations in different ways, both in her reflection upon how specific
concepts (e.g., White privilege, school funding) will impact her classroom as well as her ability
to share power in positive ways with her students to enhance their learning.

For Eddie (White, suburban), the HFI not only provided exposure to urban students but also
gave him a deeper understanding of some of the inequities between urban and suburban schools.

> I guess I kind of had, like, a picture in my mind. I don't know how accurate it was, but, like, this
> has given me a lot more accurate of a picture. So it [the HFI] gives me a better understanding of,
> like, where they're [urban students] coming from and what they're going through. . . . They're [urban
> schools] not as bad as I thought they might be. I'm sure some are probably worse than the one I was
> in for service-learning. All urban schools aren't the same, and they're all different. They definitely
> have less resources, but they're not, like, falling apart.

The direct and consistent contact with students, teachers, and administrators in an urban school
over the course of the fall semester enhanced students' worldview of urban schools and teaching.
For Eddie, his newfound understandings increased his willingness to teach in an urban school.

> It makes me want to be an urban teacher because, like, you can see all the stuff that they're [the
> students] going through. Like I never had to deal with, and it's just like not everybody knows about
> it. So nobody is really doing anything about it. It's like if they don't know, they don't have to feel
> bad about it or anything like that. So they just kind of keep themselves ignorant, so it's kind of like
> now that I know about I, I feel like I have to go do something about it. It [the field experience] hasn't
> changed my decision. It's probably strengthened it. It makes me kind of want to be a teacher more.

Completing the HFI in an urban high school raised Eddie's awareness of the challenges facing
urban students and reinforced his commitment to social justice teaching (i.e., I feel like I have
to go do something about it). Eddie might not have acquired all of the necessary skills (i.e.,
teaching methods and content area knowledge) yet for his future classroom, but completing the
activities in the HFI and reflecting on them through the coursework facilitated the beginning of
the attitudinal and ideological process for him to become an effective urban educator. For many
of the preservice students service-learning expanded their overall understanding of the issues
plaguing urban schools and how they could play a role in enacting change as future teachers.
In essence, they all had limited understandings of these issues, regardless of whether or not
they grew up in a city environment. While students from urban contexts may have experienced
some of the challenges plaguing urban schools, their understanding of them beyond their home
environment was limited. Their entry point into the service-learning proved to not be drastically
different from that of their White colleagues. Nonetheless, these preservice students were able

to see urban schools and students as places of promise even though inequalities were present all around them.

Expanded Understandings of the Impact of Institutional Structures on Student Achievement

Some of the preservice students from urban backgrounds reported that the HFI did not change their initial attitudes and beliefs about urban students and schools. The similarities identified between the students they worked with and their own schooling reinforced their beliefs; however, due to the nature of the course assignments these students were more conscious of how institutional structures impact student achievement. Kelise (Biracial, urban) noted:

> I think I just saw the realities of what I already thought pretty much, cause I grew up in urban schools anyway. . . . The thing that did stick out as something we talked about in class was when I did the Narrative Analysis. It was, uhm, special education class 'cause that was a big topic that we talked about. And basically everything we talked about in class was proved when I did that assignment. In the classroom I observed, there was nothin' but students of color, and when I interviewed the principal, the numbers she gave me for special education proved that overrepresentation was occurring there, especially with Black boys.

For the Narrative Analysis assignment, Kelise wrote a critical analysis of her observation in a special education classroom. In her interview she recalled her thoughts about how racism was connected to the overrepresentation of Black boys in special education. Her examination of the course readings, class discussions, and field observations led her to a critical understanding of how institutional structures privilege some and disadvantage others in schooling.

For Aja (Black, urban) the funding inequities she experienced in her own schooling resonated with her service-learning experience.

> Urban schools are—here, they are like they are at home. It's kind of the same attitude I had before class started. They strugglin' to get funding. The teachers aren't, you know, all the teachers aren't there to help the kids, you know? A lot of them are there for paychecks. They're ineffective. They're not helping the students the best they can. There are some that are, but because they have limited resources even working within the boundaries, they still can't do what they would like to do to help their students.

Aja evidenced an understanding of how funding inequities as an institutional challenge can shape the quality of teaching and learning that occurs in the classroom. Although the field experience confirmed some of the preservice teachers' beliefs about urban schools (related to their own schooling experiences), being able to reflect on these thoughts in relation to the course material was helpful to having a deeper understanding of the connections among theory, lived experiences, and practice. Although course readings, activities, and videos had exposed students to a broader definition of urban, the field component of the course helped them to *see* urban in a different way by tutoring students, working in a community center, and conducting observations and interviews. These new insights shaped their developing dispositions for urban teaching.

From Helping and Giving Back to Empowering Urban Students

The HFI also had an impact on enhancing and transforming preservice students' motivations to teach in urban areas. Prior to beginning the HFI, many of the African American preservice students reported wanting to become a teacher as part of a moral obligation to the urban communities from which they came. Foster (1997) found similar motivations among veteran Black teachers. Aja stated, "There's kids that need help, especially [her hometown] needs help. They need good teachers, and I think I could be a good teacher. So I need to go back to my city and, you know, give back." For Mia, growing up in an urban environment and "see[ing] the deficiencies" made her "want to go back and give some of the things that I wanted from my teacher." Others were motivated by individual teachers that had served as positive role models for them in their own schooling. Still others wanted to "help" urban students as a result of participating in volunteer tutoring as high school students. After completing the HFI, many of the Black preservice students alluded to goals of empowering their future students. In her service learning paper, Aja noted, "Working with kids at [Elementary X] showed me that they don't have the tools to become upwardly mobile. I want to be the kind of teacher that helps them develop the social and cultural capital they need to succeed." After the HFI, Mia wrote in her service learning paper that, "class discussions on structure vs. individual agency helped me to see that it's a part of my job to help my students use their agency in the classroom." Aja and Mia had an enhanced understanding of what their moral obligation to their communities really meant. Tutoring urban students and reflecting on their experiences through the coursework helped them arrive at these new understandings.

In her second interview Madison (Black, urban) reflected about a former teacher who served as an advocate for students. She aspired to do the same: "I want to be a voice to somebody that doesn't have one. I want to show them that they have a voice, too, and they should use it to better their education." Madison credited her interview with a school principal and several course videos as having impacted her thinking in this area. CJ (Black, urban) wrote in her service-learning paper:

> I want to inspire students living in environments that are considered unhealthy and unstable, students whose parents do not provide the mental and physical support conducive to higher education. I want to influence these students so that they are able to fully take advantage of their potential. I want my students to understand that despite their backgrounds or how they are depicted by society as a whole, that I believe in each student's personal success. My faith in the prosperity of urban neighborhoods has not been waived. Working in [the local city] has confirmed my desire to pursue a career in urban education. I know the task of working in the inner-city is challenging, but the efforts reap so many self-fulfilling rewards.

The HFI helped CJ transition in her thinking to recognize that in her role as a classroom teacher, she could help students rise above society's negative stereotypes about them. CJ saw her own potential to help students enact their own change. Prior to writing her service-learning paper at the end of the semester, CJ's motivations for urban teaching were described as "giving back to my community."

Several of the White students reported similar motivations as those of the Black preservice students. Ideas of helping and giving back were prevalent among these students; however, these motivations for urban teaching came from a different starting place. The White preservice students did not indicate the moral obligation to teach in urban schools. "I like helping kids learn. It's really

cool to see them finally get something they struggled with, and I like giving back to people, and I think it would be a lot of fun to be a teacher" (Eddie). Sarah (White, suburban) enjoyed helping students also. "If I can only help one kid it would be worth it." Others reported teachers that had a positive impact on their learning and family members who were educators. These motivations for urban teaching lacked any allusions to working to challenge privilege, oppression, or social inequality in schools or to help future students engage in such analysis. As a result of the HFI, students' motivations to teach in urban schools were enhanced by their examination of social inequality and urban promise throughout the semester. In her service-learning paper, Roxy (White, urban) stated:

> Even though I went to an urban school, I wasn't really aware of the experiences of the Black kids around me. Being at [Elementary B] helped me to see that White privilege does impact student learning. My urban experience was much different than those kids. I want to help English language learners and other students of color reach their fullest potential. They may not have a head start in life, but that does not mean they should give up. . . . All it means is that they are going to have to work harder and that the prize at the top is a little farther from them, and I want them to see how to get it.

Roxy's comment evidences a heightened awareness of the experiences of marginalized students in urban schools. Her remarks are situated in a discussion of the myth of meritocracy in her paper, and she acknowledges that due to their race and social class, many of her future students will "have to work harder" than others. As a result of tutoring students at a local elementary school, Roxy's more aware of racism and classism and their effects on student achievement. She is motivated to help students gain this same awareness and overcome these potential obstacles.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE HOLISTIC FIELD INQUIRY

My main objectives for the HFI were for students to (a) gain a deeper sociocultural understanding of urban students, schools, and communities; (b) gain a more critical understanding of how their social location impacted their thoughts about urban teaching; and (c) begin developing dispositions for urban teaching. I believe that my students were able to achieve these goals. The HFI allowed preservice students from urban and suburban backgrounds an opportunity to expand their understanding of urban-ness through engagement with urban students, administrators, and community members. It also helped them to begin the "identity work" necessary to be an effective urban educator. These results are consistent with what service-learning has offered to other preservice students (Boyle-Baise, 2002; Flippo et al., 1993; McKenna & Ward, 1996). Where this research differs is in its illumination of the effects of service-learning on urban preservice students of color.

I saw the course material and assignments coupled with the field experience as a vehicle for students to achieve the aforementioned goals. In their end-of-semester interviews, students cited the field experience as enhancing their understanding of the course content and vice versa. I attribute this reported outcome to students' willingness to engage in the material and the structure of the course assignments. Although research shows that White preservice students sometimes resist engaging multicultural material, there were no resistors in my class. Perhaps this is due to the fact that all of the students entered the course having selected to be in the urban-focused

section as part of The Urban Program. In existing research, much of the resistance from White preservice students to learning multicultural material arises when it is imposed on them as a requirement in the teacher education program (Anderson et al., 2001).

As a result of the HFI, many students did report a deeper understanding of the concepts discussed in class. Even though many of the preservice students from urban areas had experienced structural challenges to their academic success, they had never examined these challenges in any critical way. The HFI allowed for this to happen. In her service-learning final paper, CJ (Black, urban) reflected on her new insights on social inequality, power, and privilege:

> The information that I have learned this semester has truly sculpted my overall ideology about school, and the major role that teachers play in molding their students' future. Prior to this class, I did not fully understand how challenging teaching is, both in urban and suburban neighborhoods. Social inequality was normal to me. My schooling did not influence me to question the schooling system or the negative affects it has on minority students. This class has taught me how to question, how to use my mind in a critical way. Going directly into [Elementary X] my freshmen year was an opportunity of a lifetime. . . . Understanding the inequalities of power and privilege in the United States, allows me the opportunity to cater my lesson plans to a unique group of students.

As a result of examining concepts that are fundamental to teaching for social justice, CJ not only has a clearer sense of how to structure her future teaching, but she also learned how to think critically about inequity. This is a skill that will benefit her throughout the teacher education program and her teaching career. For Simon the HFI allowed him to see first-hand Freire's (1993) concept of the banking method.

> One of the methods we talked about [in class] was the banking method, and that was pretty much the teacher depositing knowledge instead of listening and doing whatever they need to pull it out. And it made sense while we were in the [college] classroom, but it didn't resonate with me until I actually saw it in practice at the school.

When asked if the HFI enhanced her understanding of the course material, Tori spoke of the connections she made about special education.

> When I went into special education classes, I was looking for some of the things that I read about. How are teachers connecting with the students? Or let me ask about their IEPs. . . . When I went into the Holistic Field Inquiry, I asked questions about it because I wanted to know is this school connected to some of the things I read? Are they different? Are they doing some of the bad things? Are they doing good things?

The structure of the HFI allowed students to make connections between their field experience and university course content in ways that have not been made explicit in previous studies. The combination of being able to examine urban contexts at the micro (classroom) level and macro (building and community) level gave students an expanded view beyond one-on-one tutoring with K-12 students. Overall, I believe that the HFI assisted students in connecting theory and practice. Service-learning proved beneficial for initial development in these preservice students dispositions for urban teaching that can be honed throughout their tenure in The Urban Program and the larger university teacher education program. Their commitment and motivations to teach

in an urban environment upon graduation were strengthened resulting from this course and its field experience. Hannah's closing statement in her service-learning paper captures the essence of how many of these students felt.

> Urban teaching isn't about making money or changing the entire world. The heart of urban teaching lies in the impact a teacher has on each individual student. Many may say that urban youth are the hardest to teach, or the hardest to control. And while urban teaching may require more effort and compassion as a teacher, to me urban teaching is the hardest thing to turn from.

CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTATION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR URBAN TEACHER EDUCATION

While there were several benefits to the HFI implementation, there also were challenges to implementing service-learning effectively in the course. First, I found it difficult to consistently allot class time for connecting students' learning in the field to course content. Although the class met twice weekly, it was difficult to plan for these discussions amidst the overcrowded course curriculum. The course was not structured around the service-learning; rather, the service-learning was structured around the course. To address this challenge, I created an online discussion forum where students could post reflections outside of class in hopes that I could integrate some of their comments into the following class discussion. Time has been the primary obstacle reported by teacher educators who have implemented service-learning in their classrooms (Anderson & Pickeral, 2000). Second, I found it challenging to monitor students' activity during the HFI. I met with three building principals in advance, and they were fully aware of the activities for the HFI. However, it was difficult to establish and maintain contact with classroom teachers in the three school sites in my HFI. The fieldwork should be supervised in some systematic way to maximize the experience. The teacher educator should be aware of the kinds of experiences students are having at their sites and the pitfalls and shortcomings that may be encountered. The literature also cites difficulty in maintaining communication with K-12 teachers and community agency staff as another challenge to successfully implementing service-learning (Anderson & Pickeral, 2000). I would like to have observed students at their sites throughout the semester; however, maintaining balance in my faculty workload was a priority. Research and service still needed to occur alongside my teaching, particularly as a non-tenured professor.

Despite the aforementioned challenges, the data presented in this paper indicate that the HFI facilitated the development of dispositions for urban teaching in the preservice freshman students. While many of the reflections shared by the White preservice students are not new, those shared by the African American preservice students provide some insight into how urban preservice students experience service-learning in schools that are similar to their own in some ways but not others. Service-learning can be an effective pedagogy for developing dispositions for urban teaching in preservice teachers. Those who may be considering its use need to have a clear understanding of the practice and philosophy of service-learning. Many definitions of service-learning exist, and this can lead to confusion among teacher education faculty and the institutions with which they partner (Furco & Ammon, 2000). It also is important to ensure that course assignments are carefully constructed to engage students in purposeful reflection. Assignments that require students to make connections to existing literature are one way to

ensure that preservice students ground their thinking in theory and research that can apply to their pedagogy and practice. Teacher educators who implement service-learning should also provide a range of activities that allow preservice students to examine factors at various levels (individual, classroom, school, community, and society) that affect student achievement in urban schools. This means moving beyond only providing preservice students with a tutoring experience. The multi-layered approach to examination and reflection in service-learning can deepen students' understanding of the social and institutional structures that inform teaching and learning in urban contexts. Lastly, this kind of field experience cannot be a "one-shot deal." Students in The Urban Program will have a field experience each of their four semesters in the program. Other programs considering implementing service-learning need to consider how to create a sequence of field experiences so that concepts and themes are revisited throughout the teacher education program. Students in my class will revisit concepts they were exposed to in their remaining three semester of The Urban Program. In this manner, they will have opportunities to extend their developing ideas in a critical way as they construct new knowledge for their future roles as urban educators. While service-learning is proving itself an effective medium for developing the disposition of preservice students, we do not know if these students become better teachers in urban classrooms. Future research should examine these students' dispositions and behaviors once they enter the teaching profession (Sleeter, 2001). Additionally, we still need to know more about whether or not recruiting preservice students from urban environments is an effective tool for increasing the teacher of color pipeline to urban schools and whether or not these students become effective urban educators.

NOTES

1. In my work, I capitalize the terms "Black" and "White" because they are proper nouns used to identify racial groups. It is a matter of respect for the racial groups. Wachal (2000) states, "Capitalization is determined by whether a term is a proper noun or not. Surely *Black* is synonymous with *Negro*, just as *White* is synonymous with *Caucasian*. Either they are all proper nouns or none of them is" (pp. 364–365).
2. There is much debate in teacher education about what we actually mean by "dispositions." In fact, the *Journal of Teacher Education* dedicated an entire issue to this topic (see December, 2007, volume 58, number 5). In this article, I am referring to an individual's ideals and ways of thinking that then affect the behaviors they employ in their careers as classroom teachers.
3. In this article, I use the terms *preserivce students* and *teacher candidates* interchangeably to refer to those individuals matriculating through a teacher preparation program. I also use the terms *teacher education* and *teacher preparation* interchangeably.
4. All names of individuals and programs are pseudonyms.
5. Course themes and concepts included topics such as: racism; sexism; white privilege; classism; linguicism; special education and disabilities; ableism; the myth of meritocracy; social mobility and social reproduction theory; theories of cultural, social, and human capital; heterosexism and homophobia; and the achievement gap. Preservice teachers engaged in critical examination of how these concepts proved advantageous and oppressive for different cultural groups and individuals.

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Dorinda J. Carter Andrews is an assistant professor in the Department of Teacher Education at Michigan State University. Her research focuses on black achievement, race and equality in education, and preparing teachers for culturally diverse classrooms.

APPENDIX A: DESCRIPTION OF THE HOLISTIC FIELD INQUIRY

Holistic Field Inquiry Description

TE250: Human Diversity, Power and Opportunity in Social Institutions

Fall 2006, Section 4, Dr. Carter

Community service learning is a way to connect academic concepts with the practices of the real world of education, and thus deepen one's understanding of these concepts. For this section of TE250, you will engage in a service learning project called the Holistic Field Inquiry (HFI). Depending on your request for an elementary or high school placement, you will complete your service at XXX Elementary School or XXXX High School. Each student will also spend a certain amount of time engaging in activities at the Community Center in Lansing.

In the HFI, you will engage in weekly tutoring and mentoring with a student who is culturally different from you. You will also complete other activities that familiarize you with the environment surrounding urban schools. This set of experiences will hopefully give you a broader scope of how urban communities, schools and individuals interact to affect students' educational and life opportunities. From now until the end of the semester, you will spend two hours each week engaging in service learning activities. One hour must be spent tutoring and mentoring a child in a school context. The other hour will be spent engaged in inquiry and exploratory activities, either at your school site or at the Community Center. Below is a description of each activity that students will complete in addition to their tutoring.

HFI Activities
Student Tutoring and Mentoring (∼11 hrs of interaction with a student)

   For at least one hour each week for the duration of the semester, you will tutor and mentor 1-3 children at your school site. During this time, you should help the student(s) with class work, homework, or other items that the school adult coordinator identifies. You will also observe how your student interacts with other students and adults in the school community.

Community Inquiry (∼ 1 hr)

   As a group, students will explore the surrounding community in which their school site is located. This includes gathering data about the school site itself. You will also gather facts about the surrounding community by possibly attending a neighborhood association meeting. You might visit local stores in the area or talk to local citizens of the area. You will be provided with materials to gather your data.

Administrator Interview (∼1 hr)

In small groups, you will interview an administrator in the school site. This could be a principal, assistant principal, or guidance counselor. At XXXX Elementary, the principal, Mr. XXXX has agreed to be interviewed by TE250 students. At XXXX High School, the Service Learning Coordinator and Guidance Counselor, Mrs. XXXX, has also agreed to be interviewed by MSU students. The director of the Community Center, Mr. XXXX, is also in agreement to be interviewed by you. The interview should last no more than one hour. You will be able to use a tape recorder or video camera if needed. XXXX has an on-site social worker. Some of you might be interested in interviewing this person for your administrator interview.

Observation in a special education classroom (30–60 mins)

You should spend some time observing adult-student and student-student interactions in a special education classroom or resource room at XXXX or XXXX. Mrs. XXXX and Mr. XXXX can direct you to teachers who are willing to let you do this.

Observation in non-classroom environments (∼1 hr)

To get a sense of how individuals interact in non-classroom environments, you should spend at least 1 hour observing and taking notes in social contexts in the school. At XXXX, Mrs. XXXX will pair you with an adult so that you can "do" lunch duty a few times while you are there. You will also have the opportunity to observe student behaviors and interactions in the gymnasium. At XXXX, Mr. XXXX is amenable to MSU students observing activity in the lunchroom and on the playground.

Classroom teacher interview (30–45 mins)

Part of understanding the operation of urban schools comes from talking with classroom teachers. You should interview a classroom teacher of the grade level or subject area that you are most interested in for your own future teaching. Discover the joys and challenges of teaching in an urban school. Ask questions related to at least three concepts discussed in the course.

Community Organization Exploration (5 hrs)

Each of you will spend 5 weeks providing 2 hours of service (3pm-5pm) at the Community Center. This experience will help you understand how a community organization impacts individuals and students in urban environments in beneficial ways. Mr. XXXX will provide instruction on what you are to do. Students should go in groups of approximately 7. More details to follow.

HFI Assignments
Student Case Study

You will write a Student Case Study based on your experiences with your student(s). This assignment is 5% of your HFI grade. More details will follow.

Narrative Analysis

You will write a 3–4 page analysis of one of the activities mentioned above. You will focus on what you learned in the experience about human diversity, power and opportunity in schools

by connecting your learning to at least two course concepts. This assignment is 5% of your HFI grade. More details to follow.

Journal

You will be provided with a journal for documenting your experiences each time that you are in the field. You should document your *observations* and *your reflections on those observations*. What do you see that seems familiar to you? What's different from your own schooling experiences? How is what you're seeing and experiencing connected to what we're discussing in class? What troubles you? What challenges do you see facing urban schools, teachers, and students? You should also use the journal to take interview notes. I will collect the journals throughout the semester. You will also be asked to share entries during class. The journal is 5% of your HFI grade.

Final Paper

Every TE250 student has to write a final analytic paper about their service learning experience. More details will follow. This assignment is 15% of your HFI grade.

Exhibition Piece

For the final exam, you will develop a HFI project with other members of section 4 who were also at your school site. This assignment is 10% of your HFI grade. You will present your projects during final exam week along with Dr. XXX's section 5. More details to follow.