Creating Empathy Through Service Learning: A Pedagogy for a
Changing World

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By

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Abstract

Service learning is the catalyst for people to enter an oppressed or disenfranchised community, create bonds of understanding through dialogue, and learn to genuinely understand the behaviors and actions of that community. This paper explores the links among empathy creation, oppression, and different forms of consciousness that service learning is responsible for creating. The theories of Paulo Freire's engaged pedagogy, bell hooks critical consciousness, Novella Keith's theory of reciprocity, and Walter Fluker's theory of ethical leadership provide the context for my exploration. These authors demonstrate the importance of creating genuine empathetic bonds through action, practice, and reflection.

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout my thesis I explain the importance of service learning as it relates to empathy and the creation of building a global consciousness based on transcending local cultural boundaries. My goal for my thesis is for my readers to understand that a pedagogical practice like service learning has the potential to transform education by building an interconnected sense of empathy. It is important for us as educational practitioners to realize that our education system is broken and in much need of repair. I have attempted to explain that as a society we must take our ideas and use our creativity to make change in areas of the world where oppression—whether systematic, cultural, economic, or racial—runs rampant. I believe that service learning provides a way to find the good in ourselves and transcend boundaries of dominance that have been created though oppression. In short, service learning is a means for generating an empathetic understanding for people around the world who live lives different from our own due to oppressive forces (Keith & Keith, 2010; Keith 2005).

Finding Empathy within Service Learning:

When I first learned I was going to Jamaica for a service learning trip following my first year in graduate school I was ecstatic. Who would not want to spend five weeks on a beach and receive course credit for working in an economically disadvantaged area? My initial thought before leaving for the town of Yallahs in the parish of St. Thomas was that I would get away for five weeks, "help" the locals, feel morally better about myself,

and come back to my life in the United States with nothing changed. I now look back and see how shortsighted my initial reaction was.

As a student who has studied social philosophy, I have heard for many years about oppression and injustices that have occurred at the hands of people in power; however, reading and experiencing are two different types of learning. Before my trip to Jamaica, I did not understand how power dynamics work within a developing world context. I got my first lesson about the construction of power in the developing world as soon as I got off the plane in Jamaica, got on the bus, and set off down the dilapidated roads of the southeastern coast of Jamaica to Yallahs. The first experience I had with Western culture domination of the developing world occurred when I was on the bus travelling to the villa where I would be living for the length of the trip. As I entered the parish of St. Thomas, I realized that signs that showed the boarders between St. Andrew and St. Thomas parishes were all sponsored by Pepsi. Upon seeing these signs for the first time, I thought nothing more than to take these signs at face value. But after much reflection, I began to realize that these signs had a deeper meaning. In Jamaica Pepsi is a symbol for limiting personal choice. For instance, Pepsi can be found at any of the small shipping containers turned bars, or at most roadside stops, or at the clubs where we would mix the Pepsi with rum. Pepsi was the preferred drink and there were not many other options—at least in St. Thomas where I spent most of my time—of soft drinks that competed with Pepsi. Pepsi seems to have monopolized and controlled the soft drink industry, thus limiting the choices people could have. This corporate ownership of a country or region can be seen all over the developing world. Even though having Pepsi sponsor everything from parish borders to cricket teams is not the worst of the world's

problems, this form of corporate domination is a theme that is prevalent in developing nations.

The idea of Western world domination does not stop at large corporations. I exemplify the mindset of the West. Even though I had never thought of myself as unkind or unethical, throughout my time in Jamaica, I subconsciously thought of myself as superior to the local people whom I lived among. I thought because I had a college degree, was studying for a graduate degree, and had an iPhone that I was more human than the people of Yallahs. Fortunately, I was able to see myself as a product of Western culture, which teaches its own rules of superiority. It was not until I returned home from Jamaica that I was able to reflect and process my behavior. The fact that I had yet to reflect on my privileged position made it difficult to understand the difference of my experiences and the experiences of the people that lived in Yallahs. The months following my return from Jamaica were some of the most difficult months for me emotionally trying to figure out my place in the world.

Following my return to the United States, there were questions about my service experience that needed answers: Had I merely been engaging in poverty tourism? Had I just been visiting an impoverished area for a short time from my place of privileged only to return home to feel all that much better about how much stuff I had and how many opportunities were open to me? Was I really nothing but a tourist who had paid for an entertaining vacation to the developing world? It was not until my return to the United States that I needed to answer many questions about myself and where I come from in relation to other people around the world. It was not until after leaving Jamaica that I realized that my experience with poverty tourism turned into an understanding of myself

and an understanding of the local Jamaicans I came in contact with. After many months of reflection, I began to understand the context of where I was living and who I was coexisting with. This reflection allowed me to consider empathy as a byproduct of my service learning.

By reflecting on my behavior in Yallahs, I could critically examine why I behaved the way I did. In "America's Continuing Empathy Deficit Disorder," business psychologist Douglas LaBier explains the importance of treating people who are different than us with empathy.

LaBier (2010) says:

Identify a situation or encounter with someone who's a stranger, especially one who may be very different from yourself. Try putting yourself within the consciousness of that stranger. The checkout person at the grocery store could be an example. Think of ways that he or she is probably like you—someone who desires love, who's probably experienced some kind of loss or disappointment along the way, or who has aspirations he or she hopes to fulfill. Focus on those commonalities that show you how this person is much like yourself—beneath the surface differences (Empathy for Strangers you Encounter, para. 1).

LaBier makes a significant point in this passage. By using our creativity and imagination to critically think where a person comes from, we begin to share experiences among one another that were originally unable to be shared (Fluker, 2011). This idea makes empathy an especially difficult concept to interpret and employ. Too many times people take the easy approach and go with their feelings from an initial encounter, rather

than to critically think about and feel a person's environmental situation. However, as LaBier (2010) explains it is important to critically think about a person's situation before making judgments about their character. Empathy is a concept that forces a person to think critically about another person's existence. By critically examining how others different from ourselves live, we are taking a step towards creating bonds of understanding between different groups of people.

Having worked for the Boy Scouts of America during an AmeriCorps year of service in Pittsburgh, and as a mentor to pre-adjudicated adolescents ages 10-14 also in Pittsburgh, I have learned that empathy is one of the most important qualities a person can possess. According to Thomas M. McCann (2011), empathy is the ability to put oneself in the place of another, and vividly imagine what the other is feeling and experiencing. Empathy differs from sympathy in that sympathy is the ability to understand another person's situation through his or her own lens, not through the lens of the other (LaBier, 2010). McCann (2011), Simon Baron-Cohen (2011), and David R. Caruso and John D. Mayer (1998) explain that empathy is a means for people to emotionally or cognitively connect with the experiences of others in a way that breeds understanding and compassion. As a mentor working for a non-profit focusing on issues touching inner city juveniles and their families, I was frequently in the homes of socioeconomically disadvantaged young African American adolescents, many of whom did not have loving parents, money for new clothes, or money for food. At first look I took a conservative stance, thinking it was the fault of mentees' families that they lived liked they did. My thought was either their parents did not work hard enough, or they should try harder to be cleaner, or their parents should work at a place where they would

have no trouble being hired, like McDonald's. However, after much reflection and analysis of cultural poverty and systematic oppression, I learned that the dilapidated conditions of my mentees' homes and social lives resulted from a system of power—i.e., political, social, and economic—that is structured to deny these youth and their parents achievement and success.

By experiencing how my mentees, their parents, and my mentees' peers lived on a daily basis, I learned understanding and compassion towards them. One especially poignant memory I have with one of my male mentees, Ray, was during his trial for possession with intent to deliver a felony amount of heroin. I remember sitting in the courtroom wanting him to be sent to a juvenile detention center so he could be taught a lesson; however, after the judge sentenced Ray to six months in a juvenile detention program, and watching two police officers drag this adolescent child out of the courtroom in handcuffs, I did not know what else to do but cry. In that moment at the Allegheny County courthouse in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, there did not seem like a better, truer response to the situation of a young boy being escorted out of a courtroom, and sent to a juvenile detention center, than to cry heartfelt tears of confusion and indignation.

In retrospect, my tears were not tears of sorrow, but tears of compassion and understanding for Ray's environmental situation. This moment in the courtroom allowed me to begin to realize that in order to make any change in this world, one must possess a level of empathy that allows one to connect with communities of those less fortunate. After I returned to my office following Ray's sentencing, I realized that the only chance he was going to have to succeed was to surround himself with positive influences. I hoped I could be the one that might help him change his destructive ways sooner. I

started to realize that people do not need to be taught a lesson, but rather need to be

shown compassion and understanding. In "Learning to see: the Development of Race and

Class Consciousness in White Teachers," Kerri Ullucci (2011) shows the positive

qualities of empathy through her qualitative research of three teachers who have battled

adversity and oppression to become positive role models to the marginalized students

they teach. Ullucci (2011) writes, "It seems that teachers in this study did not build their

understanding of diversity based on assumptions. Rather, reality shaped their

understanding" (p.575). By analyzing my experience with Ray at the courthouse, I began

to understand that my reality was no longer based on assumptions. Instead, my reality

was becoming based on interdependent and empathetic experiences I was sharing with

Ray.

In Thomas M. McCann (2011), Simon Baron-Cohen (2011), David R. Caruso and

John D. Mayer's (1998) opinion, non-empathetic people do not share understanding or

compassion for individuals who do not possess similar physical or social characteristics.

In other words, people who lack compassion and understanding seem to have trouble

identifying with the lives of those who are different from them. The question then

remains: How does a seemingly independent, pull-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps,

privatized society regain the empathy that seems to be difficult to locate and nurture in

our daily lives? The answer may be found in service learning pedagogy and ethical

leadership, which promote civic leadership, civic understanding, community service,

interdependence, self and group reflection, increased objectivity through experience, and

democracy (Fluker, 2011; Keith & Keith, 2010). Essentially, service learning is a

pedagogical practice that allows people to apply their own academic knowledge in a

community setting to better understand community context, social structures, and the symbiotic relationship between an individual and his or her community through integrated reflection that connects academic disciplines (Cress & Donahue, 2011). According to Cress and Donahue (2011) the purpose of service learning is to "enrich understanding of academic discipline knowledge while building skill sets for applying this knowledge to real life community challenges" (p.6). Furthermore, Keith (2005) explains that service learning is "frequently implicated in alleviating poverty" (p.4). Keith (2005) believes that service learning is a vehicle to help create engaged citizens who will use their abilities and knowledge to assist in creating and enhancing local and/or global neighborhoods and cities through intersubjective contact with those who are considered in need, disadvantaged, or "other" (Keith, 2005).

More will be explained regarding the concept of intersubjectivity in the next chapter. Simply put, service learning, whose main goal is to create engaged citizens and ethical leaders, rather than to just teach students, is a progressive and important pedagogy in today's world economy.

Service learning does not just stop at the domestic borders of the United States. In fact, because service learning encompasses a multidimensional and multidisciplinary course curriculum, it may also be applied in an international context. Service learning beyond the domestic U.S. boundaries is appropriately termed International Service Learning (ISL) or Global Service Learning (GSL). Fundamentally, according to Robert G. Bringle and Julie A. Hatcher (2011) international service learning is the "combination of service learning, study abroad, and international education and draws from the strengths of each strategy" (p.14). Moreover, Bringle and Hatcher (2011) write that ISL is

a method of teaching students critical thinking, cognitive decision making, interpersonal skills, enhanced communication skills, and cultural empathy. The point Bringle and Hatcher (2011) make is that international service learning is similar to domestic service learning because that service is the key component of the service learning experience; however, there is a socio-cultural aspect of the service learning experience that is conducted outside of the United States or within international contexts in a student's home country. William Plater (2011) adds to the definition of international service learning by stating that international service learning, like domestic service learning, acquires its direction from the same utility and relevance—i.e., action, reflection, practice. Those who participate in international service learning programs are forced to experience the needs and wants of the community they serve—i.e., gaining insight into the community's experience. Also, these students participate in the affairs of the community in ways that promote interdependence, ethical leadership, and mutual understanding between the service students and the community member (Fluker, 2011; Keith 2005).

In the case of creating an interdependent and understanding service learning environment, international service learning allows students to become more involved in the democratic process (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011). Bringle and Hatcher (2011) in their essay "International Service Learning," explain the importance of creating a democratic learning environment, which focuses on the mutual understanding between community members and service students. These researchers write, "Democratic skills are best learned through democratic practice, and service learning aspires to providing students with opportunities to engage in and develop democratic action through community

activities" (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011, p.17). Keith (2005) explains this point further by saying that service learning is an extension of connecting physical and emotional space between those people who are privileged by his or her place in the globalized world, and those who are not. The interconnectivity between those who are part of the dominant culture and those who are not create the foundation for democratic understanding. In essence, these authors define how democratic action teaches community members and service students the importance of interdependence, empathy, and objective examination of a service community.

Interdependence, empathy, and keeping an unbiased, objective mindset are three required components for service learning partnerships to work to their full potential. In "What Makes a Learning Community," author Shannon Blady (2011) explains that, in an educational context, students should be in a position to work together. By using their own independent experiences, students can also come together in a dialogical way to create an engaging classroom. This classroom can be in a conventional college or university or in a field classroom in a service learning context. Blady (2011) continues to explain that tangibility of projects and class assignments is an extremely important aspect of a student's education. She describes tangibility as a means of building inquiry that transcends the consciousness of the status quo (Blady, 2011). Here Blady (2011) is alluding to the fact that educational opportunities, like service learning, create engaging classrooms when these classes focus on creating inquiry and higher-order creative thinking that transcends typical, classical methods of Western pedagogy. For instance, in 2010 I had the pleasure of teaching inner city high school students at a summer camp about the importance of acting like engaged, respectful citizens in their communities. I

began my first lesson by lecturing for a few minutes about the importance of responsible citizenship. Before I could lecture for five minutes, my students were either texting, asleep, or conversing with one another. At this point I decided I would give the students a lesson on the subject of interconnectedness within their daily lives. I explained how a negative comment to one of their peers at school could affect that student's home life by passing his or her anger to another of his younger siblings, which, in effect, the sadness that the student's sibling felt could be passed on to another child at school the following day. This example was used to show the actions that people choose to make are cyclical and interconnected.

The way I conducted this lesson was a shock to these students, because they were not used to learning in an environment where different forms of inquiry builds deeper meaning to different questions of reality. Instead, these students were used to learning by sitting in classroom, attempting to absorb the "important" fragments of the information that may appear on a test, and finally having to regurgitate the information on an exam. The standard education my students were accustomed to focuses almost completely on a banking method of education that can be seen in Paulo Freire and bell hooks' writing. This pedagogy where information is deposited and then withdrawn without any transformation is what service learning is attempting to make extinct. The roots of service learning grow out of the forum of experiential analysis and an objective understanding about a service site, not from deposits of information that withhold the experience aspect of a student's education. Without experiential pedagogy, ethical leadership as a means of creating a culture of empathy will fail to become a transformative aspect of a student's life.

Because service learning does not participate in the structure of conventional Western pedagogy, service learning needs to be based in theory that transcends education where bits of knowledge are deposited in students' minds. In effect, Paulo Freire created a form of pedagogy that has its foundation firmly cemented in the theory that education is an aspect of life that must be used in a practical manner that promotes objective reasoning through local cultural experience. In other words, education is the vehicle for living a well-adjusted, ethical life within one's community, thus making a person a productive member of that particular community through interdependence. In Freire's opinion (1970), education is a living, breathing organism that is used to give life to democratic communities and non-oppressive governments through empathy, interdependence, and dialogue. This idea is felt by using education as a means to create a social structure where intersubjective experience and empathy are key components in the community. When a teacher's method of teaching transcends that of banking education— i.e., depositing bits of information in students' knowledge banks for exam purposes—the teacher positions the student to understand more than just the material being taught. This teacher is thus creating an environment that makes education practical, relevant, and tangible. These three essential qualities are required of an education that produces citizens for a democratic society. Such an education is based on interdependence, empathy, learned environmental objectivity, and the creation of ethical leadership.

To return to the class I taught at summer camp, I attempted to show my students how the interconnectedness of their actions could create a community and school environment where their hurtful actions could cause emotional and physical harm. If the student were going to make a destructive decision in his or her community, then that

decision would negatively affect the family and the community. But if the student were to

make a positive or empathetic decision in his or her community, then that decision may

have a positive effect on the community. These decisions are explained by Freire's theory

of engaged pedagogy. If a student is to learn in a manner that will give him or her an

equal opportunity to participate in their community, this student must be in a position

where learning is relevant, practical, and tangible (Freire, 1970). If a student does not

perceive or understand how his or her education should be practical or tangible, then a

student and the community the student inhabits cannot grow. In other words,

irresponsible education—or global practices in a broader context—has the potential to

produce irresponsible citizens, thus possibly reaffirming oppressive practices.

Robbin Crabtree (2008) in her essay "Theoretical Foundations for International

Service-Learning," likens Paulo Freire's to a radical utopian who uses class-conflict and

cultural diversity to analyze social structures. By using social analysis to examine

oppression in class structure and diversity, Freire can be considered a trendsetter in the

field of education. He explores a reflexive pedagogy that incorporates real life

experiences in a way that is easily understood, which is not typically seen in conventional

education. Crabtree (2008) continues to explain that Freire's focus on the practical,

rational, and tangibility elements of education is one of the "theoretical anchors of SL

(service learning)" (p.27). In Crabtree's (2008) opinion, service learning is not a means to

an end—which is a conventional, Western educational model—but, rather, service

learning is a way to create increased understanding and compassionate relationships

between students, teachers, and the community being served. These relationships may be

seen as the remedy for creating a nonbiased, democratic method of learning. Crabtree

(2008) uses the context of feminist theory in her understanding of service learning and democratic pedagogy to show how some educational disciplines are striving for an experiential learning model of education. As in service learning, a class in feminist theory must create a community in the classroom, base its pedagogy on reflexive inquiry of power and privilege, and also search for knowledge through the experience of advocacy and social action (Crabtree, 2008).

Like service learning, feminism is a vessel of transporting knowledge that does not necessarily correlate with the teaching of conventional subjects. This sentiment is felt by bell hooks (1994) in *Teaching to Transgress,* where she states that an engaged voice must never be complacent. Rather, an engaged voice must be always changing and evoking dialogue with the world around itself—i.e., in classroom settings that encourage experiential learning (hooks, 1994). hooks' statement embodies the epitome of service learning and Paulo Freire's pedagogical theory. In order for students to fully engage in democratic learning, they must be willing to incorporate a pragmatic mindset that focuses on the importance of experience, reflection, and action. Service learning is that pragmatic educational format. Through Paulo Freire's practice of engaged pedagogy, and through his contribution to the theory of domestic and international service learning, he has created an educational environment where empathy, interdependence, and learned environmental objectivity are the main components in creating a non-oppressive, democratic society that breeds global citizenship. Freire's and hooks' focus on engaged pedagogy, Novella Keith's theory of interdependence in the age of globalization and neoliberal markets, and Walter Fluker's focus on ethical leadership constitute the critical research that demonstrates the importance of service learning as a vehicle that promotes

the creation of empathy for student who participate in service experiences in

disenfranchised areas of the world.

CHAPTER 1

CONSCIOUSNESS AND WORLDVIEW: THE PHILOSOPHICAL STRUCTURE FOR

CREATING EMAPTHY WITHIN AN OPPRESIVE CONTEXT

In this section I explore the deeper philosophical understanding of consciousness as it relates to empathy, rationality, idea creation and global and local worldviews in oppressive societal contexts. By understanding how oppressive contexts relate to cultural phenomena though the personal experience, a person or group of oppressed people have potential to gain insight into the source of their oppressive state. Keith and Keith (2010) explore the role of these ideas in the article "Philosophy of Modernity and Development in Jamaica," which demonstrates how prevailing Western ideas of modernity negatively affect those people from around the globe—mainly citizens who inhabit countries in the Southern hemisphere—and who are believed to be currently lagging behind in terms of interpreting oppressive environmental stimuli, community development, and the transmission of knowledge. Keith and Keith (2010) elegantly explain that a cultural environment that promotes objective analysis is based on oppressive social structures among the global North and South and are not based on personal characteristics. These social structures are understood in a local cultural context for many economically oppressed nations throughout the global Southern hemisphere: "Recognition acknowledges the unavoidably intersubjective and interdependent character of human beings and gives pride of place to the human need for empathy and love—recognizing oneself in others and the other as oneself" (p.2). This statement is especially important as

it relates to the operational characteristics of developed societies recognizing that all societies are different and there is no Western model that is uniquely appropriate for replication (Keith & Keith, 2010). For instance, a basic global example frequently portrayed by the American mainstream media is the different ideological and cultural forces that persist between Western societies—i.e., United States and Europe—and Middle Eastern societies. What the media tends to portray is the differences between United States citizens who recognize their freewill and the Middle Eastern cultures that do not adhere to modern definitions of freewill due to Islamic Law. The point Keith and Keith (2010) make is that due to oppressive cultural forces coming from dominant forms of oppression—i.e., Western ideas of modernity via different media outlets—many oppressed societies and cultures around the world continue to be seen by Westerners as different and codependent on the Western idea of modernity, not co-created or celebrated for their differences (Keith & Keith, 2010). Instead, many people in the developing and developed world employ local judgments based on experiences that have been used for many decades or centuries in order to understand their global environment.

In "Philosophy of Modernity and Development in Jamaica," Keith and Keith (2010) use the concept of recognition as a way to determine the cultural and societal gap between the global North and South. Keith and Keith (2010) use "recognition" as an approach to recognitive social justice that promotes autonomy-building characteristics—i.e., high self-esteem, high self-respect, high self-worth, and mutual understanding—for those countries that do not follow the typical ideology of Western modernity. In their essay, Keith and Keith (2010) explain that recognition of different global and oppressive factors by people who inhabit those particular economically and socially disadvantaged

societies, leads to an understanding of what aspects of the community are needed for social change, along with a gained awareness of having increased self-esteem, self-respect, self-worth, and mutual understanding. In other words, Keith and Keith (2010) use the term "non-rational" as a means of creating liberating cognitive phenomena in contexts that would typically be considered as oppressive. Furthermore, Keith and Keith (2010) explain that when the oppressed communities in a culture begin to understand the degree to which the dominant party is objectifying them, the dominant culture begins to lose power. Rather, oppressors would like for those citizens being oppressed to remain in their current mindset of dependence. A perfect example of keeping oppressed communities mindset focused on dependence can be seen through Keith and Keith's (2010) story of Keisha—a young Jamaican woman who was a local participant in a successful service learning trip conducted by students from an American university.

The short version of Keisha's story goes as follows: Keisha was a student at the St. Thomas Women's Center for young students who had become pregnant. Sandy—one of the American students on the service learning trip who was working at the Women's Center—discovered that Keisha was almost completely blind due to extreme cataracts. Sandy did research and found funding for a procedure that was done by Cuban doctors. Keisha went to Cuba, had the surgery, and was healed of her cataracts (Keith & Keith, 2010).

This story seems to have the makings of a 60 Minutes special; however, there are deeper social and philosophical meanings to this display of developed world charity and altruism. These philosophical ideas will be explained throughout the next few paragraphs as I further explain Sandy and Keisha's ability to bridge their understanding of each

other's place in the world. Moreover in the last chapter, I will discuss the negative aspects of Sandy's service learning experience as it relates to positions of power.

These deeper philosophical meanings as seen through Keisha's experience with the service learning organization Sandy was a part of must have been a startling series of events for someone whose experiences have never extended outside Jamaica. At 15 years old, and having to make a choice to go to another country that she has never been to, would be a terrifying experience for any child her age. In my experience engaged in service learning in Jamaica, I was constantly exposed to unfamiliar situations that made me yearn to be back in my comfortable life in the United States. As previously mentioned I could not fathom how people could possibly live normal lives in these dilapidated communities until many months after my return to the United States and following much critical reflection. Following reading Keith and Keith's (2010) account of Keisha's story, I knew that I had encountered something similar on my service trip. Both Sandy and I encountered an extreme version of local mindsets as it relates to the power of poverty. In Keisha's case, she had the subconscious aspects of her community's mindset engrained in her, and with Sandy's involvement in her medical condition, the blinds that were over Keisha's understanding of her medical condition were removed. Novella Keith (2012) explains that without Sandy's involvement in the Women's Center, Keisha would have gone through the rest of her life not knowing about the medical procedure available to her outside of Jamaica (personal communication, April 25, 2012). Without knowing the different possibilities for treatment, Keisha may have continued thinking that her previous medical interventions were here only options, by which she would have continued to have her handicap viewed as a part of her life that was normal.

The fact that Keisha would not have known about the procedure outside of Jamaica if not for Sandy's intervention is the difference between Sandy living in the developed world and Keisha living in the developing world. Due to Sandy having attended a large university in the United States, she had access to multiple resources—i.e., different professors, different internet databases, study abroad opportunities, and the help of her peers—that would allow her to find medical facilities that specifically focus on correcting cataracts. The availability of resources is where Keith and Keith's (2010) theory of developing world dependence is most prominent. These authors want the reader to understand that the developing world is not dependent on the developed Western world; however, the opportunity to use the many resources of a culture is more accessible in the developed world than in the developing world, which has the potential to lead to a one-sided version of the story being told.

In addition to the end product of Sandy's service learning experience—Keisha's successful cataract surgery—there were other nonphysical phenomena that came to fruition during Sandy's experience through a recognition of Keisha's cultural understanding of her environment. From Keith and Keith's (2010) descriptions of Sandy's service experience, Sandy had experienced a sense of empathy not only for Keisha's handicap, but also for Keisha's environmental situation. Keith and Keith's (2010) description of Sandy's emotional state through the service learning process, made it seemed that Sandy was genuinely invested in creating a heightened environmental consciousness for Keisha. This idea for a better existence for people who inhabit service sites can be embedded in empathetic understanding and transcendence between cultures, classes, and races. It is apparent that Sandy and Keisha come from two very different

worlds. However, due to mutual empathetic understanding between the two women from their experience at the Women's Center, there was an increased environmental awareness not only for Keisha—which can be seen in her willingness to participate in a process that seemed dangerous and required her to fly to Cuba (an unfamiliar country) at a young age, but also with Sandy, who, I imagine, began to feel a sense of self-satisfaction. This particular outcome of service learning can be classified as a win for both the parties being served, and the people responsible for the serving.

To examine Keisha's situation a little more deeply, one can think of the cycle of action of service, to enhanced environment, to increased self-satisfaction as the outcome for every person who participates in a service learning experience; however, this cycle only scratches the surface of service learning outcomes. What we should be focusing on, as Keith and Keith (2010) and Benjamin Pinkel (1992) explain, is creating a "non-rational" understanding as it relates to transcendental understanding between cultures, races, and classes. A "non-rational" mindset may be thought of as a means for people to uncover different societal codes in his or her environment that will allow them to look in a nonbiased way at the oppressive forces in their community. For instance, when a group of oppressed people begins to understand that the oppressive world is not a rational place, they will begin to think in terms different from the mindset that mirrors their environment. Understanding structures of inequality then becomes a by-product of letting go of Western "rational" explanations for poverty and local conditions. In other words, oppressed citizens begin to understand that the status quo should not be the dominant force that governs a society. With the emergence of a global worldview, people start to use empathy as a means of describing larger global and societal contexts. Moreover,

objectivity allows people to begin to distribute the responsibilities necessary to build a harmonious society and an interdependent community; rather than a society based on an independent self, dependent "other" dichotomy (Keith & Keith, 2010).

Another aspect of Sandy's service experience in Jamaica is the concept of transcending boundaries of communication that have been constructed between the developed global North and the underdeveloped global South. Keith and Keith (2010) illustrate Sandy's experience of living through her developing world ideology and the way her experience helped to create an intersubjective bond between her and Keisha. Furthermore, this new mindset that was created for Keisha has the potential to replicate throughout her local Jamaican society. The concept of idea replication is what Dan Denntte refers to as a meme. The fundamental nature of memes can be explained by Darwin's Theory of Evolution (Dennett, 1990). Essentially, memes follow the same properties that evolutionary theory follows, by which memes—or the most fit ideas—will continue to evolve, while other memes will become extinct overtime. For instance, like the woolly mammoth, the meme behind the action of foot binding in China has been extinct for many centuries. By examining memes as an evolutionary mode of idea creation, people have the ability to create positive or negative ideas that affect the way people consciously interpret their surroundings. Dennett (1990) writes, "Just as genes propagate themselves in the gene pool by leaping from body to body via sperm or eggs, so memes propagate themselves in the meme pool by leaping form brain to brain via a process which, in the broad sense, can be called imitation" (p.128).

Memes, however, do not always follow a path of inherent goodness. Instead, memes multiply based on environment, power, and the availability of people who can

process an idea in an environmental setting. For example, Hitler used propaganda to persuade the German people that Jews, blacks, gypsies, and homosexuals were social deviants. And because Germany was in such economic and psychological dire straits following World War I, the situation created the perfect environment to implant a meme of destruction and hate into the minds of the German people. All it took to start World War II was one man and his followers with a warped sense of reality, the right economic and social environment, and the broken-down nature of a postwar World War I country.

On the other hand, not all memes have the potential to be destructive to society. In some instances, memes can also be used help create a more inclusive society. I liken this idea to the meme of empathy and compassion. In the case of an empathy meme, a thought or an idea that promotes inclusivity and understanding has the potential to be replicated throughout time; however, for an empathy meme to come to fruition, the meme must exist in an environment that promotes prosperity. Furthermore, an empathy meme also contains the potential to become extinct. For example, for centuries many Native American cultures thrived on a way of life that was based on naturalism and compassion—a meme that is the result of a certain way of life. However, when North America started to become colonized, the meme of "occupy and develop" became the stronger meme (Lyons, Mohawk & Barreiro, 1978). In this case, the meme that created the development of "The New World" became stronger than the meme that created small societies of empathy and compassion. This particular point is interesting because memes have the potential to create a consciousness that can be used in the physical world. One can even make the case that memes are stronger than the evolution of the physical world of genetics. While it may take millions of years to create a new species of animals, ideas

and concepts can be created and acted upon in a matter of days, hours, or minutes. And society now holds meme producing technology—i.e. Facebook, Twitter and an endless number of blogs—that allow for memes to be created at record speed. If you don't believe me, take a quick look at the "Arab Spring."

Memes also play a huge role in the academic world. For instance, service learning, if correctly administered, has fundamental properties of positive meme creation. The origin of service learning as described by Keith (2005) and Freire (1970) comes from the process of creating a more inclusive society through understanding, empathy, and interdependence among those who are oppressed and those who are part of the dominant culture. These three characteristics of service learning—understanding empathy and interdependence—are the main products used in meme creation for the foundation of service learning. Yet, using these three characteristics of service learning as the foundation to creating a more empathetic society is no easy task. In *The Blank Slate* Steven Pinker (2002) explains that evil and negativity are so widely talked about because negativity—on most occasions—outweighs positivity. One can turn on the local news channel and the top story will most likely be bad news about something in the local community. In Philadelphia, there is no shortage of negative news that is being brought to those who watch or read. Again, here is another form of meme creation brought to consumers by the local media.

Following up on Pinker's point regarding the consciousness of negativity, a service learning based curriculum must be in a position where empathy, compassion and interdependence are readily available and not overtaken by any potential negativity at the service site. To return to Sandy's service experience with Keisha at the Women's Center,

one can see that empathy and compassion transcended a difficult environmental situation for Keisha. According to Freire (1970), who speaks about having a genuine and emotional connection to those who are oppressed, those who undertake service learning must be sincere during their time at the service site. The way students, teachers, and service communities can transcend the negative memes associated with one another is to be genuinely invested in the service being conducted. What if Sandy had come to Jamaica to party instead of to experience a legitimate emotional connection to service learning? I would assume that Keisha's thought processes would have stayed in the same cultural mindset as it had for the first years of her life. It is possible that Sandy's emotional dedication and empathetic understanding helped to produce an interdependent bond between her and Keisha that positively affected Keisha's life. For the rest of their lives, Keisha and Sandy will be in a position to understand how service has the potential to help oppressed societies and cultures evolve from one mode of consciousness to another. Clearly, the resources Sandy had from her education in a developed nation benefitted her and Keisha during the process of researching places that would take Keisha for her surgery. However, Sandy's social and cultural capital was a vehicle for Keisha to think outside of a context that she had yet to experience. In other words, Sandy and Keisha shared an interdependent bond where their experiences created consciousness outside of their typical worldviews.

Lastly, for a student to experience service learning as it is intended to be used, he or she must understand the fundamental nature of this particular type of pedagogy. Basically, a service learning instructor must explain the who's, what's, where's, when's, and why's of the service experience. An explanation of the service being conducted

should be taught in class through literature and students' prior experience before conducting the actual service. The service coordinator or teacher must explain, and through dialogue and personal experience, the students conducting the service will come to accept the societal differences between them and the service community. Thus, service learning is a means of transcending cultural and societal boundaries through information dissemination, which leads to a mutual understanding between those being served and those doing the service. Students must also be aware that the service they are conducting is creating new ideas and modes of thinking that have the potential to manifest into something more powerful than expected. An example of the power service learning has can be seen in the aforementioned story of Sandy and Keisha. Sandy, with help from her service team and Keisha's own desire to fix her eyesight, was able to help Keisha increase her eyesight through research, reflection, and action. Also, the presence of both Sandy and Keisha in each other's lives during their time in Jamaica allowed them to think beyond their own biased worldviews and recognize the interdependent bonds that are created among people with different global experiences.

Instructors of service learning must explain to students that the most important aspect of the learning is bridging the gap between the mindsets of the students and the community to create a better understanding of the different oppressive forces that plague the service area. The way to accomplish this is through sustainable practices that lead to change; for instance, Keisha's having a medical procedure that related to her regaining her full sight. Even though the service may look like a one-time experience, the effect of Keisha's regaining her sight is sustainable. By Keisha's regaining her eyesight through the research and sincere concern of Sandy, Keisha was able to critically examine how her

life has the potential to be greater than the current environment she was living within in St. Thomas, Jamaica. By bridging the gap between developed world and developing world mindsets, it is possible to create an interdependent, co-constructed consciousness that brings together different modes of thinking that do not normally share the same wavelength. In theory, this idea sounds easy; however, creating ideas—or memes—that cross economic, racial, cultural, and societal boarders takes a lot of time and energy. To produce and systematically sustain gains, those conducting service must gain the trust and respect of those people who inhabit the environment around the service site.

Gaining the respect of the people in and around the service site has the potential to create a sustainable environment; however, also has the ability to create roadblocks that can lead to problems. The cause of problems will be discussed during the last section of this thesis.

CHAPTER 2

ENGAGED CRITICAL THEORY: PRACTICE AND EMPATHETIC IDEOLOGY

Empathy in the Face of Service-Learning and Intersubjectivity:

One of the main goals of service learning is to promote cultural and social understanding. Cultural and social understanding is used to create a reality where ideas are discussed and practiced in a non-biased, oppression free forum. To understand this concept, one must be in a position where reflection and critical thinking are at the root of the service learning experience; thus, the act of service is just one small component that makes up the actual learning. For example, the service learning trip to Yallahs, Jamaica, I participated in tested the importance of understanding cultural realities different from what I was used to in my middleclass lifestyle in the United State. I was constantly bombarded by new stimuli: the people were radically different from me; the music was different from what I had on my iPod. Different smells, a different language, and most of all, a new perspective on the politics and economics of the developing world were a shock to me. I remember asking myself, "How can people live like this and retain their dignity?" or "Why can't the rest of the world help bring these people out of poverty?" or "Why does jerk chicken taste so damn good?" All I wanted were answers. I was forced to think critically about developing world politics, race, ethnicity, and culture. I was further forced to reflect on every mental and physical sense that I was experiencing. I required myself to reason why stray goats ran through the streets; and how people could stand on

the side of the road and smoke marijuana all day long. I wondered how could a majority

of the inhabitants of Yallahs not hold a job? These different physical and mental

experiences aided my understanding of the developing world's position in the greater

context of world culture and society. These experiences also led me to want to learn to

decode these behaviors so culturally different from my own. I thought that if I could

decode how citizens of the developing world operate, I could begin to empathize and

understand their place in the larger globalized world, and, also, being to understand my

place in the world.

In "Community Service-Learning in the Face of Globalization: Rethinking Theory and

Practice," Novella Keith (2005) explains:

> People become not individuals but many as, through interaction between their
>
> own and others' subjective understanding and experiences of the world (that is
>
> intersubjectivity), they discover new and marginalized parts of themselves and so
>
> create multiple selves, in relationship to different communities. As people must
>
> find who and what they are through dialogue with others, the need for
>
> connectedness increases, supporting emerging identities on the basis of struggle
>
> against particular modes of oppression that target race, sexual preference, gender
>
> and the like (p.9).

This passage is essential to understanding the fundamental nature of service

learning. Essentially, service learning can be described as a means of creating bonds of

dialogue between human beings who are not usually bonded. Or, as an even deeper

explanation, service learning can be understood as a way of understanding a community different from one's own through action, practice, and reflection. The lack of bonding between people in different societal contexts can occur for any number of reasons—e.g., class divisions, racial divisions, ethnic divisions, gender divisions, etc. In the passage above, Keith (2005) explains to the reader that the experiences that people have throughout his or her life help to create a cultural worldview. It is these life experiences that create the learning bonds between humans. And because people must interact with one another in order to communicate, the bonds that grow between humans are intersubjective and interdependent. Thus, service learning is an academic discipline that crosses borders and combines the intersubjectivity of experiences of people from different races, ethnicities, classes, and cultures and forces humanity closer to interdependence (Keith, 2005).

A cinematic example of the intersubjective nature of the world can be seen in the film *The Matrix.* Essentially, *The Matrix* is about a computer hacker, Neo, who is pulled from a world that has been created from a deceptive computer program—the Matrix— that controls human existence. Once Neo is pulled from his fantasy world, he is forced into an existence—appropriately named the "real world"—where humans must survive in a post-apocalyptic world dominated by human-harvesting robots. While in the "real world" Neo and his group's goal is to stay alive by manipulating their previous conscious experiences within the Matrix, while also understanding how the repercussions of their actions affect the "real world." The interconnectivity between the two worlds allows the humans who go in and out of the Matrix to create worlds they desire through their brain functioning. In other words, the Matrix allows those who are in the "real world" to

manipulate the computer program in ways not rational in the "real world"—for instance, jumping between buildings and dodging bullets. The point is that interconnectivity between the two different realms of existence (the Matrix and the "real world") yields an increase in brain functioning for the humans who have been pulled from the Matrix, resulting in an increased understanding of the environment of the "real world." When in the Matrix, people have the ability to make their subjective experiences become objective reality within the program. This can be shown by all the different ways Neo and his comrades manipulate the computer program.

In *The Matrix*, one of the main premises is to show the increase in environmental consciousness by those who were once oppressed and had been freed from the grips of the false world of the Matrix. Once being freed from the Matrix, those who were once oppressed now live a life where creative oppression and stagnation are replaced, albeit not in an esthetically pleasing way, by heightened consciousness of reality. After becoming free from the Matrix, a person can use his or her non-oppressed, environmental consciousness to create a world in which he or she determines as ideal through reentering the Matrix as he or she pleases. In other words, an increase in non-oppressed thought (or truth) leads to the creation of a better functioning world, despite the presence of human-harvesting robots.

Even though this science fiction film does not seem to be the typical example one would use to describe service learning, what is important to understand is that service learning on all levels—whether it is international, global, national or local—is a way of creating interdependent bonds among those conducting the service and the service learning partners. Keith (2005) writes that liberalism's historical focus comes from the

act of freeing an individual from oppressive traditions and freeing state subjects from oppressive state forces. This historical idea of liberalism has set the foundation for the context of service learning. In order to free oneself from oppressive traditions or from an oppressive state, one must be willing to interact and connect via dialogue or some other means of communication with those who are being oppressed. Also, in order to create a non-oppressive community, one must be in a position to examine his or her life outside of the typical fishbowl worldview, or think in an unbiased way about his or her existence.

This same sentiment is the subtext of *The Matrix.* Essentially, by being pulled from his oppressive fishbowl view of the world, Neo is able to gain knowledge of how the world really operates, which allows him to create a new, more interconnected view of reality that revolves around objective truth. Throughout the movie, Neo is unclear as to whether the "real world" is the most appropriate place for him to be—a concept expressed by Paulo Freire (1970) in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* which states that those being oppressed are codependent with the oppressors. And because his life was "easier" while living within the oppressive forces of the Matrix, Neo has second thoughts about challenging himself to learn the truth provided in the "real world". However, after a carefully scripted plot, Neo shows the audience that the "real world" is the place where he could free himself from the oppressive forces of the Matrix that blinded him from the truth of the "real world"; which cannot be said for Cypher, another character in movie who could not resist the allure of reinserting himself into the ignorant world of the Matrix. In other words, Neo sets himself free from a tyrannical state and its tyrannical traditions because he was able to find the moral truth and moral goodness the "real world" offers.

Another illustration of moral goodness and truth, come from Kwame Anthony Appiah in *Cosmopolitianism: Ethics in a World of Strangers.* Appiah (2006), in reference to understanding the value of acting "good" says, "kindness isn't like chocolate, where you find whether you have a taste for it by giving it a try" (p.26). Rather, the idea of moral "goodness" is engrained within each person. Goodness is not an object that is either liked or disliked based on first contact. Learning what kindness is means learning, among other things, that kindness is an inherent "good." The point Appiah is attempting to convey is the difference between choosing something that is culturally good to a person in his or her community, and understanding the importance of a global moral value of "goodness" that is in one's metaphysical makeup. To know and understand the metaphysical makeup of the concept of "good," is to allow a person to strive for something more than his or her physical representation in the universe. In other words, to understand the metaphysical composition of the concept of "good" is to empathize and create compassionate bonds between people through intersubjectivity. This idea shows that peoples' personalities are, in a large part, additions to the inherent "goodness" learned through the values, morals, and ethics that have been taught to a person during his or her formative years (Appiah, 2006). To be correctly taught the moral composition of the concept of "good" is to understand the importance of personal and societal transformation, or to become empathic (Marx & Pray, 2011).

Another way to envision and deconstruct Appiah's ideas of moral consciousness is through the practice of cultural codification that Paulo Freire (1970) explains in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* To Freire (1970), codification is one of the central means of uncovering oppressive themes prevalent in different cultures and societies. Simply,

codification means to peel off the different societal themes and uncover the true environmental realities that lie beneath the outer image of a particular culture or society. One can think of codification as a societal psychoanalysis. To decode a culture or society is to explain how different cultural phenomena produce different cultural behaviors (Freire, 1970). In Freire's case, to begin to decode a culture means to begin to understand the systems of oppression present in that culture's societal structure through critical reflection. Oppressive social structures are structures of society where dialogue, action, and reflection are not present, or are continually manipulated in ways that one group controls all aspects of power (Freire, 1970). Instead, oppressive social structures are societies of static complacency—or communities of domesticated consciousness—where upward mobility in the community or culture is inconceivable (Freire, 1970). In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* Freire (1970) likens the idea of an oppressive state to a means of undervaluing those who are not part of the dominant culture. What is needed to fix this problem is a firm societal structure for the oppressed that promotes cultural experience and liberating educational practices that encourage people to break free from oppressive forces (Freire, 1970).

Additionally, Irvin Peckham (2003) in "Freirean Codifications: Changing Walls into Windows," interprets codification as seeing pictures in words that shape the perceptions of peoples' lives. Peckham (2003) explains that codification is a tool for self-reflection about one's own oppression. In Peckham's (2003) writing, codification can be shown as a society's predisposition to understanding its reality as a system of oppression, non-reformation, and the uncertainty that has created an environment where its reality is the status quo. When people live within a reality with oppression from a dominant party,

it leaves no room for growth. However, if a person has learned the method of codification to uncover the anthropological explanations of reality, this person will begin to gain a more contextual understanding of the oppressive controls of his or her society. The person who can properly uncover societal codes may take the form of an ethical leader for example, Neo. By understanding the oppressive controls of reality, a person can use his or her own knowledge to create a more compassionate and understanding community. An important example of the way codification can unlock the anthropological and sociological meanings of generative societal themes can be seen in Deborah Barndt's (1998), "The World in a Tomato: Revisiting the use of "Codes" in Freire's Problem-Posing Education."

In "The World in a Tomato," Deborah Barndt (1998) explains that the importance of codification as a component of general education that promotes a problem-posing approach. To Freire (1970), a problem-posing approach to education is the most essential method for creating a cultural atmosphere where the oppressed have an opportunity to uncover different social themes (Barndt, 1998). Barndt (1998) explains that different themes can be found within different concentric circles, all of which carry a universal character. According to Barndt (1998), the different universal character found within each theme represents many different thematic ideas: values, concepts, hopes, and obstacles. Each of these different thematic ideas carries weight into the next circle until the layers are broken down and a core theme is reached. Problem-posing education creates a way to uncover the different themes in each layer of the problem until the person or group being educated reaches the core of a particular societal issue. Once a person or group reaches the core of an issue and obtains the decoded meaning, an idea

has been created that produces a cultural power that the oppressed has never thought possible. This power can be thought of as reaching a heightened conscious reality through intersubjective dialogue.

The idea of codification is essential to understanding power relationships within Freire's work. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (1970) explains that different thresholds need to be broken in order to decode different generative themes. These thresholds include learning the cultural language between oppressors and oppressed; knowledge of cultural practices of the oppressors; an understanding of the way the oppressed think in their environment; an understanding of the oppressed's daily reality; and an empathetic understanding of the way the oppression began (Freire, 1970; Barndt, 1998). Freire explains that individuals break through each threshold through intense action, reflection, and practice (Freire, 1970). By practicing education in this manner, students learn to understand the configuration of their oppressive reality (Freire, 1970). Once oppressed citizens begin to understand the inner workings of an oppressed reality, they will exist in a world where liberation is tangible (Freire, 1970).

Moreover, bell hooks (1994), Keith (2005), and Paulo Freire (1970) write that liberation is the key to reaching a humane existence between people within a culture or society. Freire (1970) believes that by reaching the core of a societal problem and after decoding the themes within that problem, students can begin to uncover the meanings within their observations. In educational contexts like service learning, students would use a Freirean process of action, reflection, and practice to engage and possibly uncover different community themes in their service learning projects related to the oppression of their service partner (Deans, 1999). The action of the service learning would be the actual

community service, followed by reflection, which would come in the form of open

dialogue with classmates and professors or writing in a journal. It would end with

practicing the skills one has learned from his or her service experience in the home

community. This pedagogical method invites students and teachers to cooperatively learn

from one another. Questions that could possibly be answered during an engaged teaching

session—i.e., classes using a model of action, reflection, and practis—that focuses on

empathy and interdependence as major themes are existential problems that need to be

addressed to create a more humane community (Keith, 2005). For instance, an epiphanic

moment may occur in the classroom after individual reflection reveals that a student is

living in an oppressed state. This moment may appear in the form of understanding

oppressive forces brought to consciousness by different oppressive societal norms, for

example, understanding the impact of failing education, or the impact of financial

instability, or recognizing substance abuse problems within that particular community.

By gaining understanding of the structural aspects of oppressive community issues,

inhabitants of a community and the service learning students may begin to understand the

power structures that have always existed (Freire, 1970). For Freire (1970), hooks (1994)

and Keith (2005), to begin to fight oppressive power is to gain an understanding of one's

place in the world as it relates to the existence of others. The way to challenge oppressive

power is to theorize and reflect creatively on the components of a community, and create

a culture of interdependence among dominant and oppressed groups (Fluker, 2011; Keith,

2005).

Freire's (1970) theory of power dynamics focuses on the attainment of a

consciousness in the oppressed community that promotes the ability to decode different

structures of oppression. Freire (1970), a philosophical pragmatist, explains that

objectivity is an essential tool in decoding oppressive forces. For Freire (1970), the

oppressed must be able to critically analyze and idealize their place in the community in a

way that can force the creation of transformative change. When people live within a

community of limited objectivity, they are bound to means of thinking that produce

stagnation and complacency. Stagnation and complacency are the oppressive forces that

tend to keep oppressed societies and communities bound by the law of the oppressors

(Freire, 1970). Freire (1970) and Keith (2005) explain that by keeping the oppressed

immobile in their local mindsets—like not offering a quality education to poorer areas of

a city that could help to increase social mobility—an oppressed community must engage

in repetitive activities day after day, without having the opportunities to engage in higher-

order critical and creative thought as to why their environment is the way it is. An

important example of how racial oppression has shaped the American landscape is

presented by William Julius Wilson (2008) who posits that due to the different racial

practices that have shaped the urban American landscape—i.e., redlining (the practice of

grouping areas of a city where non-white races or ethnicities could not live) and the loss

of manufacturing jobs to developing nations—African Americans have become

enmeshed in new structures of systematic oppression. Wilson (2008) continues to explain

that these oppressive practices by local and national government organizations have

created a system where many African Americans can only do what is necessary to get by

in their daily lives. In other words, oppressive forces have trapped this group of

oppressed Americans in a state of limited social mobility that seems almost impossible to

emerge from. An example of these forces can be seen in failing schools, extreme

unemployment, increase social services, and increased substance abuse in the African American community.

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* Paulo Freire (1970) explains that:

> The oppressed suffer from a duality which has established itself in their inner most being. They discover that without freedom they cannot exist authentically. Yet, although they desire authentic existence, they fear it. They are at one and the same time themselves and the oppressor whose consciousness they have internalized. The conflict lies in the choice between being wholly themselves or being divided; between ejecting the oppressor within or not ejecting them; between human solidarity or alienation, between following prescriptions or having choices; between being spectators or actors; between acting or having the illusion of acting through the action of the oppressors; between speaking out or being silent, castrated in their power to create and re-create, in their power to transform the world. This is the tragic dilemma of the oppressed which their education must take into account (p.48).

Essentially, Freire (1970) explains that the oppressed suffer from a duality that completely negates that ability to live a non-oppressed life. Depending on the oppressive context—which could differ from Freire's work with the peasants in Brazil—Freire's duality has the potential to take different forms. In other words, the oppressed may suffer from an inability to think past their oppressive context—due to some oppressive force— and think less objectively about his or her environmental situation. The oppressors, therefore, possess the ability to objectify the oppressed by using them as a means to stay

in power. In Freire's (1970) writing, the oppressors take away the agency of the oppressed and destroy solidarity—possibly through different types of aggression—and create a non-transformative environment (Belgrave et al., 2010). Similarly, according to Belgrave, Nguyen, Johnson, and Hood (2010), Walter Fluker (2011) in "Preparing Students for Ethical Complexity at the Intersection Where Worlds Collide: The Quest for Character, Civility, and Community," Freire (1970), and Keith (2005), the way to create an understanding, well-adjusted environment for the oppressed is through addressing the sources of injustice and the use of genuine ethical leadership, which contains elements of empathy and intersubjectivity. However, empathy cannot be employed unless people have interdependent connections with one another that can warrant a tangible use of empathy—for instance, in Belgrave et al.'s case, a strong ethnic identity. In Belgrave et al.'s (2010) research, a strong ethnic identity led to an increase in empathy, which is directly related to prosocial behavior. Moreover, Belgrave et al.'s (2010) research shows that a strong ethnic identity—or the ability to identify with one's ethnicity and use it as means to create a positive worldview based on that ethnicity—is one of the ways to overcome aggression and maladjusted behavior. However, for one to have a strong ethnic identity, he or she must be in position where that ethnic identity can be acted upon in a constantly evolving way, which is not completely suppressed by oppressive forces. In a service learning context, it is possible that a phenomenon like a strong ethnic identity can make a difference for those who participate in a service learning course. It is possible that those who participate in service learning courses have the ability to empathize and assume a role within the community being served (Heldman, 2011). In Paulo Freire's (1970), bell hooks' (1994), and Keith's (2005) writing, a strong understanding of their

involvement in the service site is a way for oppressed people to create a critical consciousness.

Basically, critical consciousness, or conscientization as Freire (1970) would term it, is a method of developing an existential paradigm that can uncover critical characteristics of oppression through action, reflection, and practice (hooks, 1994). For a person or a group of people to possess this kind of existential reflection, they must be in a situation where oppression is either being fought against or the truth of their reality is understood in a context that is comprehensible by the oppressed. Critical consciousness can be used as a mode of enlightenment for those who are being oppressed. For instance, when a person reaches critical consciousness, his or her existential questions have been put in a context that can be understood—or better yet, the person has created an increase in understanding of a community's reality. For example, after reaching enlightenment, a Buddhist can readily put his or her existence into a context where suffering and completion meet—or where a subjective and objective dualism becomes a means of spiritual transcendence. This spiritual transcendence gives the person the ability to look at suffering without becoming enmeshed in it. An example of the way critical consciousness plays out in a contemporary setting is told by bell hooks in her discussion of engaged pedagogy in her classroom. In *Teaching to Transgress,* hooks (1994) uses a conversation with her colleague, Ron Scapp, to identify the methods of teaching they use to create critical consciousness in their classrooms. The most important part of their dialogue occurs when hooks asks Scapp if he can comment on the benefits of disrupting peoples' judgments in society's current state, in order to create a society that focuses more on understanding the properties of culture and domination (hooks, 1994). In response, Scapp

explains that many people—especially those who are university students in urban settings—tend to come from suburban areas where isolation from realities of the city is the norm (hooks, 1994). Scapp continues to explain that those suburban students need to understand that cultural, racial, and ethnic differences do exist. Any well-functioning society—whether it is a classroom community or a larger community of people cannot remain ignorant and exclusive to his or her local mindset—and, at the same time, be socially responsible.

The point hooks (1994) is attempting to convey is that communities that practice isolation and ignorance cannot become fully conscious. Rather, isolated societies tend to focus on the realities of their environment—I'm white, I have kids, I have a mortgage, I go to work, I pay my bills, and I do not really care what happens to people that are not directly related to me—and the lives of those who would be considered "others" in outside communities. During her conversation with Scapp, hooks makes the case for teaching and learning in ways that promote critical consciousness within the realm of education, which, in turn, can be used as a means of liberation outside the classroom. hooks seems to be a person who would advocate for different types of experiential learning, like service learning, as a way of creating experiences that use cultural phenomena to promote creating bonds among people.

This idea can be best explained as hooks (1994) writes:

> You can't deny that students have experiences and you can't deny that these experiences are relevant to the learning process even though you might say these experiences are limited, raw, unfruitful, or whatever. Students have memories,

families, religions, feelings, languages and cultures that give them a distinctive

voice. We can critically engage that experience and we can move beyond it. But

we can't deny it. Usually it is in a context where the experiential knowledge of

students is being denied or negated that they may feel most determined to impress

upon listeners value and its superiority to other ways of knowing (p.88).

In hooks' classroom, as in any classroom around the world, the main goal is for

students to learn course content. What makes learning in hooks' classroom different,

however, is her attention to experiential phenomena that shapes the lives of her students.

It is important to note that in hooks' method of teaching and learning from her students,

the most important aspect of the dualism is critical reflection on experience (hooks,

1994). To hooks, critical reflection is the vehicle to understanding how the world

operates. One may also call this critical reflection or theorizing. To hooks, theorizing is

the way to make the abstract concrete, and making the abstract more concrete—or

moving from personal experience to intersubjectivity—is one of the most important

qualities of a pedagogical practice that teaches the importance of empathy (hooks, 1994;

Keith, 2005). For instance, if a student does not understand the reasons a racial group

different from his own acts a certain way, this student is thinking in his or her own

cultural terms. And because he does not fully understand the experiences of that

particular racial group, the student may use heuristics as a shortcut to understand a racial

group. The only way for this student to begin to understand how groups of people

different from himself or herself live is to understand that racial group's experiences

through critical reflection. In essence, critical reflection is a method of breaking down

one's thought process through different cultural experiences. To understand the experiential makeup of a racial or ethnic group is to become more empathetic towards that group.

As practitioners of education it is important that we do not take the experiences of different cultures for granted. If we take different cultural groups for granted during service experiences, it is possible to create our own culture of assumptions, heuristics and false charities. Rather, we must use our experiences and their experiences as a means of creating interdependent ideas that promote development and liberation.

False Charity As a Means of Creating Barriers Among Cultural Groups:

Furthermore, Freire (1970) explains that genuine community aid results from an environment where false charity is diminished. Many times within the United States, privatized, non-profit, and corporate entities have set up charities or foundations for their own self-interest. An example that epitomizes false charity can be seen in the recent Internet phenomenon "Kony2012." "Kony2012" is a short video created by Jason Russell—an attractive, White American filmmaker, who is also the founder of the Invisible Children non-profit organization—to bring awareness to a Ugandan warlord, Joseph Kony. Kony is the leader of the Lord's Resistant Army (LRA)—a rebel group known for abducting children and forcing them to join the LRA—who has yet to be brought to justice. "Kony2012" is one of the most watched viral videos in history of the Internet collecting over 80 million views during the span of a month (Holden, 2012). On the surface, this video seems to embody the makings of a worldwide protest to bring this warlord to justice. However, after much scrutiny behind the facts of "Kony2012," the

video seems to have taken more of the shape of a White, developed-world, self-interest, rather than actual charity for the people of Uganda. Ultimately, "Kony2012" is more of a means of creating selfish morality than trying to uplift a group of oppressed people. Where "Kony2012" shows its flaws is in its message. According to Teju Cole (2012)—an America writer born to Nigeria parents—the message behind "Kony2012" is related to what he calls "The White Savior Industrial Complex." Essentially, Jason Russell's interest in the LRA and Joseph Kony is what Cole explains as a need to show the world that he is out to save those "less fortunate" (or live outside of the Western idea of modernity).

 Cole (2012) deconstructs Russell's place in the White Savior Industrial Complex by explaining:

> His (Russell) good heart does not always allow him to think constellationally. He does not connect the dots or see the patterns of power behind the isolated "disasters." All he sees are hungry mouths, and he, in his own advocacy-by-journalism way, putting food in the mouth as fast as he can. All he sees is need, and sees no need to reason out the need for the need (p. 4).

Coles' quote illustrates that the developing world is more nuanced than the developed world seems to believe, which can be seen by the use of the term "constellationally." Cole (2012) shows that Russell does not seem to have connected all of the dots that make up current Ugandan politics and way of life. Instead, Russell is focused on "saving" Ugandan children from a warlord based on his moral need to save

those people who are not of "Western" origin. The type of mindset that Russell reinforces

is a Western ideological misconception that the developing world needs our help in order

to survive (Keith & Keith, 2010). Not only does Russell believe that he is helping the

Ugandan people by bringing awareness about Joseph Kony and LRA, but he is also

creating barriers between the developing and developed world by attempting to become a

superman-esque hero for the developing world. In the case of "Kony2012," false or

ignorant empathetic understanding is the curtain that protects the identity of the

oppressor. Moreover, false charity is a form of manipulation that may be acted out of our

own best intentions created from our empathy toward another culture. In the case of

"Kony2012," however, Russell's empathy needed to be moderated—and not based

simply on the information from the story he knows about the Invisible Children of

Uganda—before he made the mistake of creating a video that assumed the people of

Uganda were being oppressed by Joseph Kony and the LRA. Because the people who

promote false charity control how charitable acts are distributed, it may be difficult for

oppressed people to understand the underlying context of a charitable act. It may be that

these charitable acts are used as more as a handout than a way of assistance out of

domination. What classifies situations like "Kony2012" as false charity is the inability to

properly use empathy as a way to promote restorative justice. Rather, "Kony2012" and

other Western ideas of empathy towards the developing world tend to appeal more

towards Western emotionalism and other means of self-aggrandizment than to genuine

charity. Instead of producing empathy, false charity produces a selfish morality that is

used to boost the power of the dominant party. This notion of false charity will be

discussed further in the "Challenges Facing Service Learning" section at the end of the paper.

The question then remains: how do the world's always evolving cultural norms combat the oppressive forces contained in self-serving false charity? The answer to the question can be found in Walter Fluker's "Preparing Students for Ethical Complexity at the Intersection Where Worlds Collide: The Quest for Character, Civility, and Community." Here Fluker (2011) explains the way to rectify the current issues of failing community concern in the United States is to create a community focus on ethical leadership. Essentially, ethical leadership is a way for people to act responsibly within his or her community, while focusing on the collective good (Fluker, 2011). Moreover, ethical leadership helps human beings put the values of their community into relevant terms that incorporate overall communal concerns (Fluker, 2011). Fluker (2011) continues to explain that ethical leadership is created through the development of character, civility, and a sense of community. These three essential components to ethical leadership form the foundations for human development, productivity, and a peaceful coexistence.

One of Fluker's (2011) most important points in "Preparing Students for Ethical Complexity at the Intersection Where Worlds Collide: The Quest for Character, Civility, and Community" is the importance of dialogue, especially through experience.

Fluker (2011) writes:

> They (students) must examine their life experiences in relation to the larger historical and cultural narratives. Reclaiming the ethical center requires that

unfinished business of the student's life story (the pains, the hurts, the unresolved

contradictions) be addressed. It also means reattachment to historically grounded

values that have protected their communities through ritualistic healing bringing

about integrity and self-esteem, trust and empathy, courage and hope as personal

and social practices (p. 3)

This particular passage is imperative for understanding the necessary steps to be

taken in order to create a community where leaders are born not of self-interest, but of

community incorporation. Fluker (2011) extends his discussion of preparing ethical

leaders through experiential narratives by explaining that one major function—the

practice of empathy—is needed in order to create a moral ethos. In Fluker's (2011)

opinion, the practice of empathy is a process that helps to create a more imaginative and

creative society. Fluker's focus on the imagination distinguishes his research. Fluker

(2011) explains, "Imagination plays an important role in this process. Through the use of

imagination, students are enabled to transcend self and to empathize with others at the

seat of 'common consciousness'" (p. 3). Fundamentally, Fluker is equating creativity and

imagination as a means of interpreting the world. Fluker's ideas of "common

consciousness" and imagination seem to be heavily rooted in Freirean theory. For

example, "common consciousness" is similar to Freire's (1970) philosophy of

conscientization and hooks' (1994) idea of critical consciousness. In addition, these three

critical ideas focus heavily on the imaginative and reflective qualities of critical reflection

that takes into account structures of power and injustice. Fluker (2011), Freire (1970),

hooks (1994), and Keith (2005) all point out that community-enhancing phenomena are

based on transcending local cultural thought and creating a better understanding of the societal forces that affect different communities. Local experience is the starting point that encourages experiential dialogue. For a person to explain his or her ideas in any forum, he or she must have personal experiences that led to the development of those ideas. In Fluker's (2011) writing, empathy is a main byproduct of interdependent thinking between groups of people. This type of higher order thinking is a characteristic of human thought that is based almost entirely on experience and imagination. Without access to consciousness that promotes a global view of the world, people become relegated to daily lives of stagnation and local mindsets that have been created by those ruling oppressive societies.

This section is meant to show that empathy and moral understanding, if used incorrectly, can create a culture of assumptions and biases towards cultures not considered "Western." It is important that empathy is not overused—as in the case of "Kony2012"—but is regulated through dialogue with people from that particular culture that promotes interdependence. This section shows the importance of dialogue and cultural understanding as it relates to the prevention of creating assumptions about people who come from different cultural backgrounds not considered "Western."

Service Learning is Jamaica:

In this section, I explain the benefits of my service learning experience in Yallahs, Jamaica, as it relates to empathy acquisition. This section is meant to show real world examples of the correlation between empathy and service learning.

Many of the aforementioned theories and ideas have come to into play in my thinking since my international service learning trip to Jamaica in summer 2011. During my time on the island, I was not aware of the learning I was doing. Before my service trip, I thought I was going to drive around the country, meet different groups of people, complete my service, and come home to my usual American life. However, after experiencing the culture shock and undergoing many months of reflection, my trip to Jamaica has been an essential component in my growth as a student and a person.

During my reflection period in the months after my service trip, I realized that one of the main teaching goals of my professors was to introduce empathy as an essential quality in service learning. Several years ago, I remember having a homework assignment in high school where my class had to think of the most important value in our lives. This value could be a moral value or an ethical value or a family value. There was no right or wrong answer; however, I was unable to think of a worthy value that contained all of the different attributes I thought a good person should have. So, as any young inquiring mind would do, I deferred to my father. Without hesitation after explaining to him the assignment prompt, my father responded and said "empathy." At the time I was not familiar with the concept of empathy, so he explained it. I do not remember his exact words, but I recall his saying something like, "Ben, empathy is when you imagine yourself in someone else's position, and consider how you would feel being in that person's position." He followed that first part by saying, "I guarantee if you use empathy as foundation for your life, you will be in a position to treat everyone you come in contact with respect. Respect is the key."

While in Jamaica during my service learning trip, a few occasions were critically significant to the development of this thesis, the development of my interest in service learning, and the development of empathy in my life. The first experience that motivated my thesis came from my experience farming with a group of farmers in a small village on the outskirts of Morant Bay—the capital of the parish of St. Thomas. During my day of farming, I was required to weed an incredibly steep hillside with nothing but a machete, plant coconut and plantain trees by hand, and walk miles through the forest. This was one of the most physically and mentally taxing days of my trip to Jamaica, and I was in bed the minute I walked through the doors of the villa where I was staying. Despite my fatigue, I remember thinking to myself that I have never been so happy. I do not know if my happiness stemmed from the simplicity of the work or the satisfaction I received once I finished the day. All I know is that I felt a sense of accomplishment and understanding towards people who live much different lives than I do. By farming with these farmers for the day, I was able to breakdown many misconceptions—i.e., Jamaicans are lazy and smoke marijuana all day—I had about Jamaicans from past experiences.

I have reflected many times during my years finishing my undergraduate degree, working in social services in Pittsburgh, and presently in graduate school about how lucky and fortunate I am for the positive upbringing I had. Not many people in this world are born to a mother who has a PhD and a father who has a Master's degree. With this in mind, the chances of my failing at any aspect in my life were slim. So, while farming in Jamaica, the only thing I could think of on the treacherous hillside was, "Damn, these guys are no joke. I can't hang in this type of physically taxing environment." I was lucky enough to play four years of college basketball, but no sports specific workout was ever

as difficult as manual labor on the side of a hill for six hours. Not even close. This particular experience gave me not only respect for the farmers that day, but for the people in developing countries who do not have the sophisticated farming tools and machinery available in the United States. One of the most important things I heard while in Jamaica came from the owner of the farm, Chapman. He answered a question I asked him about his happiness while farming: "I have my farm, I have my wife, and I have my weed (marijuana). There is nothing else I need." The simplicity of this answer shook me to my core. Looking back on his response, I could tell that Chapman was genuinely happy. Not only was he happy that he was farming, but he was happy that I could farm with him and get to know him personally through the way he lives his life. At the end of the day, we had a mutual understanding about where we both came from, our skills, and our overall social standing. Moreover, we had an understanding that we were people willing to learn from one another's experiences. I am the city boy who could not handle his marijuana smoke and did not participate in manual labor, but I was willing to learn a trade important to the culture of Jamaica. And Chapman is a Jamaican who valued labor for his overall satisfaction but was not a citizen of the developed world. This existential dichotomy is one critical incident that led to my empathetic learning and understanding of non-popular culture Jamaica.

Another critical experience I had while in Jamaica occurred while I was walking down the uneven gravel road that led from my beachfront villa to the main road through St. Thomas. On my walk I noticed one of the neighborhood males—who is approximately my age, 25, or a little younger—hammering a serrated roof to the top of a hut he built so he could sell various items—e.g., snacks, friend chicken and fries, candy,

and phone cards. On my walk, I stopped to ask him if he needed any help. He looked at me in disbelief and with a smile said, "No thanks," and kept working. At that moment my brain started to analyze the situation. What did that man think of me asking him for help? How did I feel about a man hammering a metal-sheet roof to a small hut? This particular incident was a moment of culture shock for both of us. We both did not understand how to react to the situation. I believe we were not sure whether to accept the help, look strangely at one another, apply all of the different stereotypes we have learned throughout our lives, or just be friendly about the whole situation. In retrospect, it seems that taking the friendly route was the best way to navigate the situation.

On my walk back to the villa, I walked by the man again. This time he stopped me, gave me the hand greeting where one grabs another's hand, followed by both people interlocking their hands at the knuckles, and finally flicking thumbs together like a cigarette lighter. Then he started a little small talk before I walked back to the villa. This moment was very poignant in my experience in Jamaica. That moment where we locked hands was the moment where we both began to understand each other for the people we were meant to be in the world: my place was a student coming to Jamaica to study culture and conduct service, and his place was to keep living the life he has always lived prior to seeing white people set foot once a summer in his neighborhood. I remember saying to myself on my walk home after this moment, "Did I just have a moment of empathetic understanding?" "I do not know if this is actually it, but it sure felt like it." Keith (2005) writes, "Service-learning must thus involve more than contractual relationships, calling for dialogue not only as an exchange of idea but as an encounter between fellow human beings" (p.17). Keith encapsulates the deep spiritual and personal exchange that service

learning hopes to provide between a server and the service community. In my case with the young man working on his roof, we created an encounter that was more than just a dialogue. Our encounter was genuine human contact that simply stated, "I understand you and you understand me." It is moments like these that are the fundamental experiences needed to create a quality service learning experience that should foster a sense of empathetic understanding between a server and the service community.

The experiences in Jamaica farming with Chapman and the incident with the young man on the street were by far my most educational learning experiences. These experiences allowed me the opportunity to begin to understand the world through the process of breaking down the different societal codes that are prevalent in my life. Before these experiences the following words came to mind when I thought about Jamaica: poor, black, good dancers, Bob Marley, Damien Marley, Stephen Marley, Usain Bolt, third-world, violent, hyper-sexualized and marijuana. After these critical experiences during my service-learning I began to understand Jamaica in these terms: poor, black, extremely hard workers, creative, crafty, extremely hospitable, understanding, intelligent, disenfranchised, developing world, and marijuana. The numerous experiences I had while in Jamaica allowed me to foster a new perspective of myself, to begin to understand what is really important in my life, and to find ways to care how others live around the world. Furthermore, the fundamental design behind service learning seems to be based in empathetic understanding and community building between those people who conduct the service and those people who inhabit the service site. In essence, service learning is a way to break down different societal codes that oppressive forces have constructed to blind communities from the reality of their oppression.

Finally, the fundamental nature of service learning is what Keith (2005) calls "a corrective for power asymmetries" (p.17). In other words, service learning is a step to creating a world of equality for those who are oppressed by the forces of neoliberalism, irresponsible business practices, corrupt governments, globalization, and an overall lack of general empathy.

CHAPTER 3

CHALLENGES SURROUNDING SERVICE LEARING

Despite service learning's incredible upside, it is not a panacea. If not conducted

properly, service learning has the potential to build walls between the culture of the

service site and the culture of those students conducting the service. If service learning is

used as a tool for self-aggrandizement, then more harm than good will be done. This idea

not only goes for the people working on the service site, but also for those responsible for

spreading ideas between people that inhabit the service community and those using the

service for research purposes. In essence, those people associated with conducting the

service learning must use responsible service practices when conducting research and

communicating with the service site culture. It is important that those conducting the

service must not treat the service site as a laboratory for learning (Dreese et al., 2008).

This particular sentiment can be felt though much of the literature starting with

Paulo Freire in his warning against creating a more oppressive environment for citizens

of oppressed societies though false charity, and highlighted in Ivan Illich's (1968) speech

to the Conference on Inter American Student Projects (CIASP) appropriately titled "The

Hell with Good Intentions." These two critics of service pedagogy and service learning

are expressing the negative aspects of the pedagogy as it relates to increasing one's own

selfish moral feelings; rather than genuinely wanting to create a society or culture of

people that have the ability transcend oppression.

In "To Hell with Good Intentions," Ivan Illich (1968) explains to the Conference

of Inter American Student Projects (CIASP) that their service work, or "mission-vacations" (p.1) are not welcomed in the Mexican communities that they are believed to be helping. Illich (1968) explains that these places need to be left alone to the cultures that inhabit these places: they do not need to be treated as places that need saving. Furthermore, Illich (1968) explains that countries that are not as developed as the United States may view service as "offensive" (p.1) to the people and the culture of the service sites. Illich (1968) sums up his argument by saying that the developed world needs to stay away from pretentiously imposing itself upon those who inhabit developing countries. He explains that countries like Mexico do not need to import the American Dream. Rather, if Americans and other people from countries in the developed world want to come to Mexico to vacation or explore, then they are free to do so. According to Illich (1968), however, if the developed world wants to impose its will on the developing world by "helping," then the help is not wanted. In sum, Illich is attempting to explain that the moral value of international service is nonexistent. Rather than creating an atmosphere of development, service activities, in Illich's (1968) opinion, are a way to supplement a person's morality and appease the Western Savior Complex. In other words, when international service loses its ability to empathetically understand the different cultures of the service site, it begins to resemble poverty tourism more than an international community building experience.

Illich's theory of self-indulgent service can be best explained in Keith and Keith's (2010) article "Philosophy of Modernity and Development in Jamaica." As mentioned in a previous section, Sandy—a service student—and Keisha—a teenager from the St. Thomas community who was assisted by those conducting the service learning—were

involved in a "successful" service experience. In this story, Sandy was able to find Keisha a Cuban medical program that provided free eye surgery that would fix her cataracts pro bono, and Sandy was able to say that she helped Keisha regain her eyesight. Sandy and Keisha's particular experience together is what service learning teachers and experts would consider the "goal" of service learning—i.e., one group of people provide help (servers or the privileged) and one group of people receive the help (community members or the oppressed). However, the questions Keith and Keith (2010) ask in "Philosophy of Modernity and Development in Jamaica" is who or what does the service actually help?

In their writing Keith and Keith (2010) and Donelle Dreese, Thomas Dutton, Bonnie Neumeier, and Christopher Wilkey (2008) in "A People's History: Teaching a Neighborhood as a Place of Social Empowerment," explain that by making a service site like a laboratory, those who are conducting the service are using their power and privilege to make the service learning experience a one-sided learning experience. The people conducting the service are gaining valuable information from their experience while those receiving the service are being left out of the critical progress that would lead that community towards an interdependent bond with the service group (Keith, 2005). For instance, Dreese et al. (2008) use the example of a university based service learning program in an economically disadvantaged neighborhood—Over-the-Rhine—outside of Cincinnati, Ohio.

In Dreese et al.'s (2008) discussion of their service-leaning research in Over-the-Rhine, they explain:

> Working on these activities (service learning) reinforces our conviction that productive community-based teaching and learning requires critical awareness of the ethics involved in the partnering with local community members and outsiders. The key ethical consideration here involves the issues of who is to actually benefit from participation in the projects designed to promote broader social good. More time and energy is placed on community activist and workers when representatives of the university continually seek them out to engage in service-learning initiatives. The danger is that community members are placed with a higher burden. In a nutshell, university partners need to make sure they are not over-taxing the community. The community should not be viewed as a "laboratory for learning" where universities can extract community labor to discover new knowledge with little consideration of how that work might reinforce social hierarchies (p.156-157).

Dreese et al. (2008) make an important point with this particular passage. Essentially these researchers are explaining that service sites are not classrooms where students can enter, learn, and move on to their next class. These service communities are areas where people work, live, and have families. Also, these communities are a reflection of the people who live in them. For this reason Dress et al. (2008) and Freire (1970) stipulate that for genuine service learning to take place, students must form real alliances within the context of the service community. If no alliances are formed, the

people in these communities will be looked upon as remainders left out of the

development the service was attempting to produce (Keith & Keith, 2010). These genuine

relationships challenge the status quo of social isolation and create an environment of

postmodern ideas and information (Keith & Keith, 2010). This particular point is what

Keith (2005) and Kwame Appiah (2007) consider the basis of creating global citizenship,

the fundamental goal of service learning.

Dreese et al.'s (2008) research may also be used as a lens to examine the

relationship between Sandy and Keisha during Sandy's service learning trip to Jamaica.

By taking the knowledge of Sandy's efforts to help Keisha correct her eyesight, one may

think of Sandy as being a hero to Keisha and her community. Moreover, one may think of

Sandy as a savior of the developing world. However, there is potential for Sandy's

successful service to "reinforce social hierarchies" (p.157), as mentioned by Dreese et al.

(2008). For instance, one may be able to interpret the outcome of Keisha's surgery as a

means of reinforcing certain social hierarchies that are present between Northern and

Southern countries throughout the world (Dreese et al. 2008; Keith, 2005). In this sense,

Sandy is creating a culture where she has the ability to help Keisha and return back to her

country with a warm feeling in her heart, thus, leaving Keisha and her experience as a

leftover of the service experience. On the contrary, despite Sandy's outcome of helping

Keisha with her eyes, Keisha is still going to be living within an oppressed culture

following her surgery. The physical suffering may be gone, but the mental oppression

will be sustained. This mental oppression is an inability to explain why students are doing

the service in the first place. Even though Keisha was the recipient of corrected eyesight,

was she the recipient of an enhanced understanding of the social inequalities that exist in

her environment, or was Keisha better able to understand the structural changes that need

to be made in the Jamaican medical system so other people suffering from her condition

can have an enhanced quality of life? Keisha and the community in St. Thomas, Jamaica,

are not solutions being mixed in a cultural laboratory for an experiment for credit (Dreese

et al, 2008). The people that make up the community of the parish of St. Thomas are

people with lives that have been formed though evolving social and cultural experiences.

According to Illich (1968), Sandy would only be helping herself, and not necessarily

helping the community where she was conducting the service, due to the fact that she is a

person from the Western world, which is a position that is seen to hold more weight than

Keisha's experience coming from a developing world point of view (Keith & Keith,

2010). For service to be conducted properly, and to gain a nonbiased perspective, it is

critical to examine both Sandy's and Keisha's service experience. Keisha's story

exemplifies Illich's (1968) belief that developing countries do not need our exported

American idealism. In Illich's (1968) opinion, because the developing world will always

be economically less advanced than the developed world, it is the responsibility of those

who live in the developed world not to overstep their boundaries when it comes to

"helping" the rest of the world.

Where Illich (1968) goes wrong, however, and where Novella and Nelson Keith

have an impact is the sustainable commitment to the community of St. Thomas, Jamaica.

At first glance, Keith and Keith may seem to be in the same category as many of the

service groups Illich is referring to. However, contrary to Illich's thoughts, Keith and

Keith have created a sustainable service learning program that addresses the needs of the

citizens within the community. In other words, it is possible to consider these authors as

"genuine" practitioners of service learning. In "Philosophy of Modernity and Development in Jamaica," Keith and Keith (2010) write, "our understanding of truth must be humanity driven and not driven by calculability, mathematical reasoning, and purely materialistic and appetitive understanding of who we are" (p.2). Their credo helps students to interpret a situation like Sandy and Keisha's, which can also help practitioners avoid falling into the Illich category of service learning by showing that each person affected by the service learning experience has a story. The point Keith and Keith (2010) are making is that service learning should not be used as a method of leaving others on the outside looking in. These authors do not believe in neoliberal views of working with the developing world, which promotes a bias towards Western modernity. In their opinion, Keith and Keith (2010) write that all cultures—whether in the global North or South—deserve to have their own perspective with the ability to tell their story from their point of view. Once people become left out of the social equation, they become objectified and exploited. The goal the service leaders and participants must strive for is the humanity and social justice aspects of service learning, which can be documented in Keith and Keith's eight year service to the community of St. Thomas, Jamaica.

CONCLUSION

The goal of this paper is to show the positive community building and empathy creating properties service learning embodies. My research is focused around the importance of creating equitable bonds of empathy among students and teachers who work in the different service sites and the people who inhabit those sites. My research shows that those students who genuinely create bonds with the people who live in the service sites have a greater sense of empathy for those people who they work with. Empathy is a means to cognitively and emotionally understand the social inequalities different cultures face in a service site. Empathy may also be understood as the ability for those who live in the service sites to increase their global knowledge of their living situation by transcending basic environmental experiences (Freire, 1970). It is my hope that the people who live in communities that need assistance will become supporters of service learning. More research is needed to fully understand how the community receiving the service reacts to a privileged few entering and working in their community.

Finally, it is important for people who work in the academy to understand that service learning is not a social experiment. Rather, service learning is a means of creating bonds and open dialogue with people in communities different from our own. In order for global equality to become tangible, we must understand that the service sites we work in may contain a different set of cultural, moral, and ethical rules than we are accustomed to. It is once we understand how to work within these rules that we will be able to create emotional bonds, increased dialogue between the different cultures of people, and foster a sense of empathy for the way these people live. However, it cannot be stressed enough

that the people that inhabit the service sites are not academic tools. Instead, we must think of the people that inhabit service communities as members of a larger interdependent whole that we can learn from based on dialogue and that community's prior experiences. It is the transformation of information between dominant and minority groups that makes service learning a relevant pedagogy for the twenty-first century.

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