

**Students' of Color Experiences in a Service-Learning Program at a Community College:
A Critical Study**

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Shanna Elaine Smith
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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the loving memory of my grandfather Jimmy Richard Duncan. To my family, I simply could not have done this without you. To my parents and grandparents, I am who I am today because of you. To my husband Nick, thank you for supporting me in this endeavor through to the end. To my daughter Adeline, you are my light. To my Pellissippi family, Dr. Jim Kelley, Dr. Kane Barker, and Dr. Nancy Ramsey, your support, wisdom, and guidance has always encouraged me. Finally, I dedicate this dissertation to my students past, present, and future in the hope that we will all work together to continue to seek justice and equity for everyone on college campuses.

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ABSTRACT

While community colleges serve the majority of Students of Color in higher education, a large percentage of these students drop out of college and do not graduate or transfer to four-year institutions. This problem is well-documented and has been the focus of multiple initiatives (i.e., first-year experience courses, cohort learning, professional advisers, student success coordinators) within higher education (Bailey & Alfonso, 2005; Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2010; Hatch, Mardock-Uman, & Garcia, 2018; Hyman, 2018; Tinto, 1999; Topper, 2019). This transformative-emancipatory mixed-methods study was conducted at a large community college in the southeastern United States, and offered a critical examination of whether or not service-learning involvement influenced graduation rates for Students of Color at community colleges, and how. The quantitative results from the study supported the literature by indicating service-learning participation and cumulative GPA increased the likelihood of graduation for Students of Color. There was a negative relationship between identifying as a Student of Color and graduation. The qualitative findings indicated Students of Color attributed service-learning with their ability to succeed in college; however, students also reported racialized experiences within the service-learning experience.

This study expanded the literature by exploring ways in which service-learning contributed to Students' of Color Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005). Due to the complex nature of service-learning and the innumerable differences between individual student's experiences, there is no simple way to illustrate the ways in which service-learning influences success in courses, graduation rates, or future success in a career. However, these findings can serve as empirical evidence to support the further exploration of Students' of Color experiences within service-learning courses and programs.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

During his presidency, former President Barack Obama announced an initiative to provide every student in the United States an opportunity to attend community college free of charge. Recently, in addition to the State of Tennessee offering all high school graduates free community college through the TNAchieves Program, the State has also announced an initiative designed to make community college free for all adult student learners through the Tennessee Reconnect Program. However, despite this increase in access, graduation rates from higher education institutions in the United States continue to be remarkably low. The national average for entering first-year students to successfully complete a bachelor's degree within six years has been around 50% for decades; and only 31% of entering first-time first-year students persist to graduation at community colleges within the United States (Nelson Laird, Chen, & Kuh, 2008; Reed, Rosenberg, Statham, & Rosing, 2015). There is a call for researchers and practitioners to continue to study issues of engagement, which could contribute to improving retention rates among Students of Color and other underrepresented students, who are at the greatest risk for attrition (Astin, 1999; Davis, McEwen, Rendon, & Howard-Hamilton, 2007; Heisserer & Perette, 2002; Hernandez, 2016; Hodara, Martinez-Wenzl, Stevens, & Mazzeo, 2017; Reynolds & Pope, 1991; Schlossberg, 1989a, 1989b; Tovar, 2015).

It is well documented that historically underrepresented student populations are at high-risk for low academic performance and stopping out (Heisserer & Perette, 2002; Mungo, 2017; O'Keefe, 2013). Walpole (2008) found that Students of Color who were of lower socioeconomic status (SES) had lower grade point averages than their higher SES peers. Additionally, studies have found that United States' colleges and universities are failing its' communities because of

the lack of success in graduating much of its' low SES, Student of Color populations (Benitez, James, Joshua, Perfetti, & Vick, 2017; Shapiro, 2008). Tinto (1975, 1987, 1993) found students enter higher educational institutions with a variety of identities/characteristics (i.e., gender, race, academic aptitude and achievement, family socioeconomic background, and parental educational levels) that affect their initial commitment toward the higher educational institution, engagement during their educational experience, and successful attainment of degree or certification.

Scholars have explored ways to promote the graduation of Students of Color through an examination of how appropriately community colleges are resourced and equipped to prepare students to persist to graduation (Hodara et al., 2017). Tovar (2015) found that the more faculty, counselors, and support programs to which Students of Color have access, and the more frequently these are available, the more likely these students are to persist, succeed academically, and graduate from community college. This is important because almost half of all Students of Color in the United States are currently attending a community college (American Association of Community Colleges, 2016). Taking all of this into consideration, there is an impetus to examine factors that may influence engagement and retention of Students of Color within community college settings so that this sudden increase in access for historically underrepresented populations may also result in an increase in graduation rates (Wood & Moore, 2015).

Service-Learning

Research indicates pedagogy is an effective way to positively influence student engagement and retention, especially if students are actively involved in their learning experience, including experiential learning activities which have been recognized as high-impact practices (Astin, 1999; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 2005; Tinto, 1997; 2006;

2010). Students who are actively involved in experiential learning, such as service-learning, on their college campuses, are more likely to be engaged, and more likely to continue re-enrolling in that institution past their first semester (Bringle, Hatcher, & Muthiah, 2010; Eyler, 2002; Keen & Hall, 2009; Lockeman & Pelco, 2013; Mungo, 2017; Reed et al., 2015). A few studies have attempted to explicitly link the relationships between service-learning involvement and retention and graduation rates (Bringle et al., 2010; Lockeman & Pelco, 2013; Mungo, 2017; Reed et al., 2015). A majority of these studies have been conducted within four-year institutions; however, there is a need to determine whether or not the same findings hold true for community colleges or two-year institutions. Past studies have primarily examined service-learning through the lens of White normativity (Bocci, 2015), and have conducted studies with few Student of Color participants (Hirschinger-Blank, Simons, Finley, Clearly, & Thoerig, 2013; Lieberman, 2014; Meens, 2014; Taggart & Crisp, 2011). It is important to examine whether or not service-learning affects engagement, but also graduation rates from community colleges for historically underrepresented populations, specifically for Students of Color.

Service-Learning and Students of Color

A majority of service-learning research has focused on White middle-class students; however, few researchers have explored how service-learning influences Students of Color (Mungo, 2017; Yeh, 2010). Coles (1999) found Students of Color at a predominately White institution (PWI) were more likely to enroll in service-learning courses when those students had personal incentives to engage in the course and when they had the ability to choose their own community service site. In addition, Pearl and Christensen (2016) found Students of Color were more knowledgeable about service-learning prior to entering higher education, and more likely to participate in service-learning courses than their White peers. Other scholars have also

established that Students of Color may experience service-learning courses differently due to their race and cultural differences (Chesler & Scalera, 2000; Coles, 1999; Green, 2008; Mitchell & Donahue, 2009; Pearl & Christensen, 2017).

One of the strongest criticisms of studies on historically underrepresented students, specifically Students of Color, is that researchers have traditionally taken an ahistorical approach to the examination of student development, engagement, and retention (i.e., examining Students of Color without placing them in both a historical and modern framework using interdisciplinary approaches) (Hernandez, 2016). The overall academic performance of Students of Color has been examined through a deficit approach, rather than an assets-based approach; with little acknowledgement given to the systemic issues that have led to such disparities (i.e., lack of access, racism) in graduation rates when examining race (Ladson-Billings, 1998; McCoy & Rodricks, 2015). When Students of Color have been studied, it has more often been a postscript to an overall analysis of an effect of a particular intervention on a large group of students, predominantly White; or a posthoc analysis of a trend identified after the initial research questions have been answered (Mungo, 2017).

Some researchers have documented the history of Students of Color in the United States to explicate the importance of understanding the past, so that current issues in higher education regarding Students of Color may be more fully understood (Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009; Thelin, 2011). Moreover, these researchers have called for an increased understanding of Students' of Color backgrounds, circumstances, experiences, and outcomes so that these issues may be appropriately discussed within higher education; and suitably addressed by policy makers, administrators, and faculty. Understanding how Students of Color experience service-learning in their courses would allow administrators and faculty to develop a better

understanding of how service-learning could influence Student of Color retention within community colleges.

Statement of Problem

Various educational researchers have concluded that college drop-out rates, and rates of college student failure in the U.S. is a “crisis” (Arce, Crespo, & Miguez-Alvarez, 2015; Barefoot, 2004; Daley, 2010). Arce et al. (2015) are among many who have presented evidence that students who do not successfully graduate from college have high unemployment rates, resulting in long-term detrimental effects on the economy. Research indicates that students who do not have the appropriate support to attend and succeed in college are at high risk for dropping out, thereby increasing states’ economic burdens and reducing their economic potential (Harper & Quaye, 2014). At greatest risk in U.S. higher educational institutions are Students of Color (Jain, Bernal, Lucero, Herrera, & Solórzano, 2016).

While community colleges serve the majority of Students of Color in higher education, a large percentage of these students drop out of college and do not graduate or transfer to four-year institutions (Jain, 2010; Jain et al., 2016). This problem is well-documented and has been the focus of multiple initiatives (i.e., first-year experience courses, cohort learning, professional advisers, student success coordinators) within higher education (Bailey & Alfonso, 2005; Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2010; Hatch, Mardock-Uman, & Garcia, 2018; Hyman, 2018; Tinto, 1999; Topper, 2019). Even when socioeconomic status and academic preparedness are controlled for, Students of Color still have lower transfer rates (25%) than their White counterparts (36%); even at colleges where the majority of students enrolled are from historically underrepresented populations (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017; Wassmer, Moore, & Shulock, 2004).

This study offered a critical examination of whether or not service-learning involvement affected graduation rates for Students of Color at community colleges, and how.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to explore if service-learning involvement affected the graduation of Students of Color within a community college; and how enrollment in service-learning courses affected the graduation of this student population. Based upon implications from previous studies, understanding if and how service-learning affects community college graduation rates could help researchers, educators, and practitioners to effectively engage and retain Students of Color; and increase the graduation rates for Students of Color (Bringle et al., 2010; Lockeman & Pelco, 2013; Reed, Rosenberg, Statham, & Rosing, 2015). If faculty, staff, and administrators can understand how service-learning influences graduation for Students of Color, they might be able to take advantage of this knowledge for the intentional design and structure of programs and pedagogy; and begin graduating Students of Color at higher rates from community college.

Research Questions

1. Did participation in service-learning courses increase the likelihood that Students of Color will graduate from community college?
2. What were Students' of Color experiences in community college service-learning programs?
3. How did Students' of Color experiences in community college service-learning programs influence graduation rates?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework guiding this study was Critical Race Theory (CRT). CRT was chosen because it primarily focuses on issues related to social justice, emancipation, empowerment, and upward socioeconomic and educational mobility for Students of Color, particularly Black or African American students (Hernandez, 2016; McCoy & Rodricks, 2015; Tate, 1997). Ladson-Billings (1998) identified critical race theory as an “important intellectual and social tool for deconstruction, reconstruction, and construction: deconstruction of oppressive structures and discourses, reconstruction of human agency, and construction of equitable and socially just relations of power” (p. 9).

Critical Race Theory has its origins in the 1970s critical legal studies (CLS) that grew out of the 1960s U. S. Civil Rights Movement (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Delgado and Stefancic (2001) stated “the critical race theory movement is a collection of activists and scholars interested in studying and transforming the relationships among race, racism, and power” (p. 2). CRT has departed from mainstream scholarship by utilizing critical methods to examine the stories of People of Color, focusing on the counternarratives and experiential knowledge of People of Color, or White people who have been labeled as “other” (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 11). As acknowledged by critical race theorists and researchers, the seven key tenets of CRT include: *the permanence of racism, experiential knowledge, interest convergence, intersectionality, Whiteness as property, critique of liberalism, and the commitment to social justice* (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015). Ladson-Billings (1998) also asserted that, within the educational curriculum of both public and higher education, a “White supremacist master script” (p. 18) of instruction is dominant, which assumes Students of Color are deficient. Historically,

when the academic experiences of Students of Color are examined in the literature, this master narrative of deficiency is predominant.

When applied to higher education institutions, CRT clearly identifies that “race and racism are embedded in the structures, discourses, and policies that guide the daily practices” (Parker & Villalpando, 2007, p. 520). Solórzano (1998) identified five tenets for a CRT approach to education and educational research: 1) the importance and intersectionality of race and racism; 2) the challenge to a systemically White ideology; 3) social justice as a primary commitment; 4) experiential knowledge; and 5) interdisciplinary perspectives. CRT emphasizes that recognizing the voices and lived experiences of Students of Color is crucial and necessary (Hernandez, 2016; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; McCoy & Rodricks, 2015; Patton, 2016; Solórzano, 1998). It has been employed to examine the history of Students of Color in U. S. higher education, including factors influencing access, engagement, and equity (Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009). Researchers have criticized the extant literature because of the significant lack of scholarship acknowledging race and racism that affects both Students and Faculty of Color on college campuses in the United States through a critical perspective (Harper, 2012; Levin, Walker, Haberler, & Jackson-Boothby, 2013). Even fewer studies have applied the CRT framework to community college studies, although it has been applied within other higher educational contexts (Acevedo-Gil, Santos, Alonso, & Solórzano, 2015; Jain, 2010; Jain et al., 2016; Pérez Huber & Malagon, 2007).

Community colleges serve a high proportion of Students of Color; and persistence to graduation for Students of Color is significantly lower than their White peers (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Community colleges have long been criticized, along with their four-year counterparts, for better serving White, affluent students (Jain, Herrera, Bernal, &

Solórzano, 2011; Mungo, 2017; Solorzano & Villalpando, 1998). Recent literature has focused on identifying best practices that support students from historically underrepresented backgrounds, such as Students of Color and first-generation college students (Acevedo-Gil & Zerquera, 2016). Viewing issues of engagement and retention at community colleges through CRT is of utmost importance because “Issues of race, racism, and sexism often become muted in community college discourse simply because the majority of students are of color and are women” (Jain, 2010, p. 79). In addition, Students of Color continue experiencing situations on college campuses in which they are labeled, stereotyped, treated inequitably, and subjugated based on their racial identity. These experiences are known as racialized experiences (Omi & Winant, 1994), and from a critical perspective, are salient, common, and persist because higher education institutions downplay or ignore the systemic racism which remains on contemporary college campuses. Because there is such a significant lack of scholarship and critical examination of these issues, it is often assumed that because there is a disproportionate number of Students of Color enrolled in community colleges when compared to four-year institutions, race must not be relevant, and need not be examined through a critical perspective (Hernandez, 2016; Vallalpando, 2004). From this viewpoint, colleges tend to focus on ways in which White students should grow and learn about other cultures, while ignoring ways in which Students of Color within PWIs face pressures to assimilate or conform to the dominant culture (Chun & Evans, 2016). However, several studies indicate a critical perspective is *the* theoretical lens by which we should actively seek to address these issues concerning Students of Color in community colleges (Hernandez, 2016; Patton, McEwen, Rendón, & Howard-Hamilton, 2007; Price, Hyle, & Jordan, 2009).

Service-learning is described as a high-impact pedagogical practice designed to educate students on social justice and democratic citizenship (Meens, 2014); thus, CRT is directly related to the practices and experiences of historically underrepresented populations within these service-learning courses. Service-learning is also a multi- and interdisciplinary pedagogical tool utilized across multiple higher educational fields and contexts. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) described CRT as a methodological tool that takes an interdisciplinary approach to understanding Students' of Color oppression and racialization. Determining how service-learning influenced Students' of Color retention at community colleges through a CRT lens may inform institutions, programs, faculty, and administrators on ways to better engage and retain a more diverse student body.

Methodology

The research design employed for this study was a social justice (transformative-emancipatory) mixed methods approach, including CRT as the theoretical framework that scaffolds the mixed method design (McCoy, 2016; Mertens, 2003). Mixed methodology studies serve a very important purpose in research because they address the multiple ways in which scholars need to address their areas of study and scientific inquiry (Creswell, 2014; Green, 2008; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; 2003). This study sought to not only describe, but also understand the relationship of service-learning on Students' of Color engagement and retention, and more specifically, their particular experiences. The study was comprised of a mixed-methods explanatory sequential design, which comprised of two separate, stand-alone phases: Phase One quantitative (quan), followed by Phase Two qualitative (QUAL) (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; 2003). First, the quantitative data were collected and analyzed, immediately followed by the separate collection and analysis of the qualitative data. These two phases of research were

combined within a final step, interpreting how the qualitative findings explained and informed the quantitative results from a critical perspective (Mertens, 2003; Ivankova, Creswell, & Stick, 2006; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The qualitative data explored participants' experiences within service-learning programs, after the quantitative data determined the likelihood that Students' of Color graduation rates were related to their participation in service-learning courses.

Significance of the Study

Astin (2000) argued that higher education's greatest "civic challenge" is the education of underprepared students. With all of the advances in society intended to increase access to higher education for *all* students, even today in the United States, the percentage of Students of Color ages 25-29 who have associate's degrees or higher is only 32%, compared to 54% of their White counterparts (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Students of Color continue to be underprepared for success in higher education, and if researchers and educational leaders do not actively identify and address ways that institutions of higher education can improve, instead of placing the impetus on the students, this inequality in attainment of higher education degrees will persist (Altbach, Resberg, & Rumbley, 2009; Mungo, 2017).

The higher educational setting in the United States is becoming increasingly more racially and ethnically diverse with each passing year, especially within community colleges (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Therefore, it is imperative that researchers, practitioners, and administrators begin to examine race beyond inclusion as a demographic variable in a post-hoc quantitative analysis; but rather, a priori in the intentional design of our studies (DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2014) to determine best how to create successful pathways for these students from access through graduation. If higher education is labeling a practice as a "high-impact practice," institutions need to ensure this practice is beneficial for all students, and

not just for White or privileged students (Seider, Huguley, & Novick, 2013). This study offered both a quantitative analysis of graduation rates for Students of Color who participated in service-learning courses; and also offered an in-depth qualitative examination on how service-learning affected these Students' of Color academic experiences in their community college classrooms.

Terminology

Key terminology utilized in this study include:

Retention – refers to a students' re-enrollment and graduation from an institution of higher education (Bettinger, 2018), specifically community college. If a student has been *retained* at an institution, they have re-enrolled past their first semester or first year of college, and have persisted until graduation.

Students of Color – can apply to students who self-identify as African American/Black, Latinx, Asian, Native American and/or Alaskan Native, or students who self-identify as two or more races (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017; Rendón, Garcia, & Person, 2004). This definition is also congruent with the standards by which universities must report demographic data to the federal government (Mungo, 2017). *Students of Color* are often described by the social construct of “minority,” and may become targets of racism, prejudice, discrimination, and/or stereotyping within institutions of higher education, especially African Americans/Blacks (Harper et al., 2009; Hernandez, 2016; Rendón et al., 2004).

Racism – The term *racism* can be defined as “the belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby the right to dominance” (Lorde, 1984, p. 45). *Racism* is an important term for this study because it explains the existence of systemic oppression for People of Color within contemporary institutions of higher education (Croom, 2017; Lewis, 2018), and provides the rationale for the utilization of *Critical Race Theory* for this study.

Service-Learning – a type of experiential learning, and the type of high-impact practice explored in this study, is a co-curricular tool that combines the course content with course-relevant community service (Becker, 2000; Bringle, & Hatcher, 1995; Erhlich, 2000; Riddle, 2003). The relationship of *service-learning* involvement on student learning, engagement, and retention has been widely researched. Studies have evidenced the beneficial influence of service-learning on student engagement, integration into university campuses, persistence, retention, and learning outcomes (Moely & Ilustre, 2014; Mungo, 2017; Reed et al., 2015; Wolf & Tinney, 2006).

Organization of the Study

Chapter One introduced the impetus for research on service-learning involvement's relationship to graduation rates for Students of Color. It also explicated the purpose, research questions, theoretical framework, methodology, significance, and key terms for this study. In Chapter Two I review the existing literature on Students of Color, service-learning, Critical Race Theory, and Critical Race Theory within the community college literature; and in Chapter Three I describe the study's research design, data collection, and methodology used to analyze the data for both the quantitative and qualitative phases of the study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this critical mixed methods study was to explore if service-learning involvement affected the graduation of Students of Color within a community college; and *how* enrollment in service-learning courses affected the graduation of this student population. To examine pertinent issues concerning Students of Color, I reviewed the literature on Students' of Color experiences in higher education, service-learning, Critical Race Theory as a theoretical lens, Community Cultural Wealth, and community colleges. Students of Color face issues of access, engagement, and retention at higher rates than their White counterparts, and the literature addresses several key factors indicating why this may be. This includes an historical and contemporary perspective on Students of Color in the United States.

Students' of Color experiences in the higher education literature includes an examination of how history has influenced contemporary issues in higher education. This leads to the importance of examining Students of Color through their own voices and experiences, as well as using methodological approaches that allow for their voices to be heard. Because there is such a dearth of literature on how educational connections and experiences within and outside the classroom influence Student of Color engagement and retention through their own perspectives, this literature review highlights the lesser known aspects about Students of Color in higher education, and also reveals areas in the literature that are lacking. All of these combined factors provide an understanding of the necessity to examine how Students of Color can have more meaningful experiences in the community college classroom setting through co-curricular and pedagogical approaches such as service-learning so they are more likely to be engaged and retained through graduation.

Students of Color

Students of Color are frequently defined as those who self-identify as African American/Black, Latinx, Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American and/or Alaskan Native; or students who self-identify as two or more races (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017; Rendón, Garcia, & Person, 2004). I used this definition of students who self-identify as Black, Latinx, Asian, Native American, Alaskan Native, or two or more races. Historical factors, socioeconomic situations, family background, racialized experiences on campus, cultural influences, and personal experiences of Students of Color shape their pathways to and through higher education (Barefoot, 2004; Chou & Feagin, 2008; Davis et al., 2007; DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2014; Harper et al., 2009; Harper & Quaye, 2014; Hernandez, 2016; Kuh et al., 2005; McCoy & Rodricks, 2015; Solórzano et al., 2005).

An area of concern for Students of Color is that historically White colleges and universities, including community colleges, overlook and/or ignore their needs out of ignorance, racism, color-blind ideologies, and White normativity (Bonilla-Silva, 2017; Harper et al., 2009; Heisserer & Perette, 2002; McCoy & Rodricks, 2015; Spradlin et al., 2010; Yeh, 2010). One issue surrounding persistent ignorance and racism is that these institutions have ignored historical factors that directly affect Student of Color experiences on contemporary community college campuses.

Historical Perspective

Harper et al. (2009) examined the history of the education of Students of Color, specifically African Americans, in the United States through a Critical Race Theory (CRT) lens, including an examination of policy issues that have influenced access, equity, and retention. Access to higher education for People of Color was first granted in the early 1820s, and was

originally intended for the education of freed slaves at predominantly White institutions (PWIs). Three decades later, the Ashmun Institute (now Lincoln University) chartered in 1853, was established for “the scientific, classical, and theological education of colored youth of the male sex” (Farrison, 1977, p. 403) as the first higher education institution to be recognized as a historically Black college or university (HBCU). Harper et al. (2009) reported that after the Civil War, out of millions of African Americans, only 28 had a college degree. The Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862 was the first major policy/legislation that provided access for public higher education because it provided greater opportunities for colleges and universities to be established through federal funding; and the subsequent Morrill Act of 1890 meant access specifically for People of Color by mandating that 17 states extend equal funds annually for African Americans. Harper et al. (2009) also explicated that, prior to de-segregation, African Americans accounted for less than 1% of all students graduating from PWIs.

Harper et al.’s (2009) work is important because it provided a history of African American higher education in the United States, and thoroughly documented how *Brown v. Board of Education*, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Higher Education Act of 1965 affected Students of Color. This provided a timeline of events for students who were enrolled in higher education institutions during the Civil Rights Movement, and also addressed issues that led up to the Civil Rights Movement (e.g., segregation). The Truman Commission marked a significant step forward by the federal government for the support of diversity and inclusion in higher education, but even after the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling in 1954, few higher education institutions actually racially integrated (Thelin, 2011). Thelin (2011) noted that desegregation efforts of both government and institutions were “largely a matter of halfhearted, token compliance” (p. 304). The result was that, despite some legislative advances,

“black students remained marginal and proportionately underrepresented at almost all racially desegregated campuses in the United States” (Thelin, 2011, p. 305). Harper et al. (2009) illuminated why there were so few Students of Color, specifically African Americans, enrolled in institutions of higher education, and just how significant an influence racial issues have had in higher education, including contemporary higher education, “White privilege has been inextricably linked to African American subordination and serves as the foundation for White superiority in an oppressive educational system” (p. 403).

Contemporary Perspective

Harper’s (2009) scholarship converged with Bonilla-Silva’s (2001) research that persistent inequality within U. S. society has perpetuated racism within social, political, cultural, and educational realms. However, compared to Jim Crow era racism, Bonilla-Silva (2001) noted contemporary racial inequality is “increasingly covert, embedded in normal operations of institutions, void of direct racial terminology, and invisible to most Whites” (p. 48). In fact, when examining Student of Color experiences within higher education, not only do these students often report experiencing hidden, or embedded, forms of racism; they also report overt stereotypes. Examples of these stereotypes include the model minority myth for Asian American students (Assalone & Fann, 2018; Chou & Feagin, 2008), the *bandido* and immigrant/alien stereotype of Latinx students (Berg, 2002; Owens & Lynch, 2012); and the stereotype that African American students are lazy, and do not value education (Johnson-Ahorlu, 2012).

While fighting both hidden and obvious stereotypes, Students of Color struggle to find a sense of belonging on predominantly White college campuses, leading to higher rates of attrition than White students. Colleges and universities have sought to alleviate this problem through interventions both on campuses as a whole, as well as within the college classroom setting. Ones

of the ways in which higher education has done this has been through co-curricular or pedagogical learning strategies. One identified high-impact practice affecting the engagement and retention of at-risk students is service-learning. The service-learning literature specified that involvement in service-learning increases the engagement and retention of White students, and there is evidence indicating this could also include Students of Color (Lockeman & Pelco, 2013; Mungo, 2017; Reed et al., 2015).

Service-Learning

Research indicated that multiple types of experiential learning have been identified as high-impact practices in higher education, including: service-learning, leadership experiences, internships, study abroad, and research (Coker & Porter, 2016). Service-learning, a type of experiential learning, is a co-curricular tool that combines the course content with course-relevant community service (Becker, 2000; Bringle, & Hatcher, 1995; Erlich, 2000; Riddle, 2003). Several studies have shown that participation in community service during college positively influences student outcomes more than almost any other co-curricular experience (Astin & Sax, 1998). Multiple studies conducted within higher education evidence the beneficial influence of service-learning on student engagement, integration into university campuses, persistence, and learning outcomes (Moely & Ilustre, 2014; Wolf & Tinney, 2006). Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, and Yee (2000) conducted a large, mixed methods longitudinal study that included 22,236 college students attending a random sample of various four-year institutions in the United States. They found that service-learning involvement had significant positive effects on academic performance, values, and helping students solidify vocational aspirations. Students who participated in service-learning were more likely to choose a career in a service field, such as social work or psychology; and students were more likely to experience the benefits

associated with service-learning if they were able to discuss their service experiences with their faculty members, especially if these faculty members encouraged their students to process their experiences in the classroom through reflection.

Hansen and Schmidt (2017) found when service-learning was implemented with other high-impact practices such as learning communities, it significantly contributed to student academic success. Knackmuhs, Farmer, and Reynolds (2017) conducted a phenomenological study examining the effects of service-learning as a high-impact practice on longitudinal learning outcomes within an ecology course. Within their sample of 12 students: 75% reported that participation in service-learning improved their learning outcomes, 100% reported they felt they had made a tangible difference in the world, 100% reported a greater appreciation for the woodlands, and 92% reported a greater sense of ownership of the environment. However, as encouraging as the findings in these studies appear, explicit evidence linking academic achievements and students' positive self-reports and perceptions of service-learning to actual institutional results is minimal.

Service-Learning and Retention

Astin and Sax (1998) were among the first to evidence a possible link between service-learning and retention. Research on the effects of service-learning involvement on retention and other institutional outcomes is a comparatively new area of study (Mungo, 2017); and there is limited understanding about exactly how service-learning is related to long-term institutional outcomes such as re-enrollment and retention (Yue & Hart, 2017). This is primarily attributed to a lack of available data and a lack of consistent methodology used to measure these outcomes (Yue & Hart, 2017). However, several studies indicate that if students are actively involved in experiential learning, such as service-learning, they are more likely to be engaged, and more

likely to continue re-enrolling in that institution beyond their first semester (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Bringle et al., 2010; Eyler, 2002; Gallini & Moely, 2003; Keen & Hall, 2009).

Bringle et al. (2010) conducted a quantitative study that examined the effects of service-learning involvement on first-year students' self-reported intentions to re-enroll the following year. This study utilized a dataset of 805 students from 11 Indiana Campus Compact member institutions, 534 of whom were enrolled in service-learning courses from several areas of study including natural and behavioral sciences, education, liberal arts and social sciences, law, and technology. Most of these students identified as White (91.8%), and only 4.9% identified as Students of Color. At the time the study was published, the findings represented the strongest results indicating that service-learning involvement was positively related to retention; however, mediating variables were associated with those results. Specifically, Bringle et al. (2010) found that service-learning involvement was positively related to post-course intentions to re-enroll the following year. Results indicated post-course intentions were good predictors of re-enrollment the following year, and those students who had participated in service-learning were more likely than their non-service-learning counterparts to affirm their re-enrollment intentions. However, service-learning demonstrated a stronger relationship to post-course intentions than to actual re-enrollment; student ratings of course quality was a significant mediating variable. Essentially, if students felt that their service-learning course was of high quality, the students would be more likely to re-enroll the following year; but, if the service-learning course was not considered a quality course, actual student re-enrollment was not influenced by service-learning participation.

Reed, Rosenberg, Staham, and Rosing (2015) found that both full-time and part-time students who participated in service-learning courses across three types of higher education institutions were more likely to re-enroll the following terms, particularly in the first and third

years of enrollment. The data gathered for this study came from DePaul University (DPU), University of Southern Indiana (USI), and University of Wisconsin-Parkside (UWP). This robust quantitative analysis ($N = 8,271$) indicated that involvement in service-learning was a stronger predictor of successful graduation than the student characteristics of age, gender, or race. However, Reed et al. (2015) also found that, at institutions where a greater proportion of Students of Color attended (29% at UWP and 37% at DPU), service-learning appeared to be a stronger predictor of graduation for Students of Color at those institutions when compared to their White counterparts at other institutions.

Lockeman and Pelco's (2013) study examining the relationship between service-learning and graduation found students enrolled in service-learning courses were more likely to graduate within a six-year timeframe with a four-year degree compared to those who did not participate in service-learning courses. Their quantitative study examined 3,458 first-time, full-time students who had ($n = 832$, 24%), and had not ($n = 3400$, 76%), been involved with service-learning courses at a large four-year institution. A majority of the students were women (60%) and identified as White (58%). The study revealed that students who participated in service-learning courses graduated at a higher rate than students who did not. Students who enrolled in service-learning courses were more likely to be female than male, and more likely to be Black/African American than White. The proportion of service-learning students who graduated (73%) was significantly higher than their non-service learning peers. In addition to these findings, Students of Color who participated in service-learning were more likely to graduate at higher rates than Students of Color who did not participate in service-learning (71% and 29% respectively) (Lockeman & Pelco, 2013).

Yue and Hart (2017) expanded Lockeman and Pelco's (2013) study by examining a large, longitudinal dataset to identify whether or not a relationship existed between service-learning and retention in undergraduates in multiple entering undergraduate cohorts. The researchers examined the relationship between service-learning participation and graduation based upon a term-by-term analysis, as opposed to a year-by-year analysis. An Event History Analysis (EHA) was employed to examine how involvement in service-learning courses was related to re-enrollment and persistence rates within six years from initial enrollment in a four-year institution. EHA, also known as survival analysis, duration models, hazard models, or failure-time models across multiple disciplines, is a style of empirical analysis that allows the researcher to study the occurrence and timing of events longitudinally (DesJardins, 2003; Ishitani & DesJardins, 2002; Yue & Hart, 2017), and has been employed recently within higher education to examine the "temporal aspects of student dropout and degree completion" (Chen, 2008; 2012; DesJardins, 2003; Yue & Hart, 2017). Their longitudinal dataset contained data on 31,074 first-year undergraduates enrolled in a large public university in the western United States from fall 2002 to fall 2009. They found that 52.5% of first-time, first-year students and 40.7% of new transfer students took at least one service-learning course during their six years at college, which was almost twice the participation rate Lockeman and Pelco (2013) reported, indicating that service-learning course participation varies greatly between institutions.

Yue and Hart (2017) concluded that participation in service-learning courses had a significant positive relationship with successful retention (e.g., graduation rates) for both first-time first-year and new transfer students: the more students enrolled in service-learning courses, the more likely they were to graduate. In addition, the study indicated two differential relationships between enrollment in service-learning courses and persistence to graduation: 1)

participation in upper division service-learning courses had a stronger positive correlation with graduation than participation in lower division service-learning courses; and 2) service-learning participation had a stronger positive relationship with retention for new transfer students than for first-time, first-year undergraduates. This study did not examine race or ethnicity. All of the aforementioned studies were conducted within four-year institutions. There is a scarcity of literature on service-learning and retention studies specifically within the community college context. Further study is needed not only examining service-learning and its influence on retention and persistence; but also investigating service-learning and its influence on retention and persistence in multiple types of higher education institutions including community colleges.

Service-Learning and Students of Color

Much of the service-learning literature focused on White, middle-class undergraduates; however, few studies have examined how service-learning is related specifically to Students of Color (Mungo, 2017; Yeh, 2010). Coles (1999) found Students of Color at PWIs were more likely than White students to enroll in service-learning courses whenever they reported a high internal motivation to be involved in service, as well as the ability to choose their own service-learning site within their communities. Pearl and Christensen (2016) identified that Students of Color were more knowledgeable about service-learning courses before enrolling in their higher education institution, and were more likely to participate in service-learning than their White counterparts. Various scholars have also found that Students of Color may experience service-learning courses differently due to race and culture (Chesler & Scalera, 2000; Coles, 1999; Green, 2008; Mitchell & Donahue, 2009; Pearl & Christensen, 2017). Pearl and Christensen (2017) conducted a quantitative study with 58 Students of Color examining motivations for service-learning enrollment and found service-learning fulfilled different needs for them when

compared to their White counterparts. Students of Color reported service-learning served to empower them and provided greater feelings of self-efficacy.

Chesler and Scalera (2000) conducted a review of the literature related to the roles of race and gender in service-learning experiences, and found that in their review of service-learning, race and gender provided a challenging yet “potentially powerful learning experience” (p. 19) for the students themselves. They suggested that the study of service-learning with a race and gender focus can teach Students of Color about identity and community – either others’ or their own – when they engage “to challenge and transform racist and sexist aspects of community life and community agencies/institutions” (p. 18). For her doctoral dissertation, McCollum (2003) conducted a qualitative study on 14 undergraduate Students of Color from one large public institution and three small private colleges in the Northeast. She examined their experiences in service-learning as they tutored students in public school systems and found that service-learning was crucial in developing their understandings of race, ethnicity, and culture; and in how that understanding helped them relate to the students they tutored.

However, the literature on service-learning and its associated outcomes with Students of Color is nuanced. Verjee (2005) completed a qualitative study examining the experiences of Women of Color in service-learning programs acknowledging the intersectionality of being a Woman of Color through a critical feminist lens. The women reported that, within their jobs, service-learning experiences, and educational experiences, they had experienced: being oppressed and undermined, despite being in positions of authority, by their supervisors or professors within their job or service sites; being judged as a Person of Color by accent, skin tone, and/or mannerisms; and being disciplined on performance evaluations, or overlooked for higher positions because they did not fit with the systemic, White ideologies. These experiences

were perceived as being present throughout their educational careers under a guise of “race doesn’t matter” (Verjee, 2005, p. 96). The women did not experience a campus or classroom climate where race was discussed. Their racialization was experienced as dehumanizing, and viewed as a “deep disrespect, as trauma and even hate for people of colour” (Verjee, 2005, p. 96). When one woman spoke about her experiences in completing a paper in a service-learning course “the professor wrote that I was too angry, bitter [and] that I shouldn’t be bringing in my personal experiences” (Verjee, 2005, p. 100). These women reported great difficulty persisting in discriminatory and abrasive environments – which may have directly affected retention in these institutions.

These findings suggested that more in depth examination of the experiences of Students’ of Color in service-learning and other high-impact practices is needed. In addition, how service-learning courses and programs are conducted within each institution and, at a macro level, how entire systems operate to support their students are important areas of study for which little research is available. Finally, campus climate, specifically the campus’ racial climate, has a distinct influence on the experiences of Students of Color within higher education and service-learning programs. However, there is a dearth of literature that addresses Students’ of Color experiences within service-learning.

Scheffield (2011) suggested that service-learning can be a critical tool for Students of Color to not only learn about themselves; but also to learn about themselves within the context of community, and to utilize that knowledge to help transform communities, if race-related issues are openly and critically discussed in the classroom. A substantial body of research indicates that making a personal connection to courses through service-learning increases student engagement in learning and higher education which positively influences institutional outcomes

including retention and persistence to graduation (Astin & Sax, 1998; Bringle et al., 2010); but none of these older studies specifically examined retention for Students of Color (Mungo, 2017; Yeh, 2010).

Yeh (2010) utilized Bourdieu's (1986) cultural capital theoretical framework to examine the service-learning experiences of six Students of Color who identified as both low-income and first-generation college students. These students reported that their service-learning experiences helped build their skills and understanding of course content, develop resilience, find personal meaning, and develop a critical consciousness (Yeh, 2010). In direct relation to retention, was the importance of resilience in these students' experiences. The students reported that the course provided them with a community of supporters through relationships and networking, and also provided them with coping skills and strategies (e.g., stick-to-itiveness), including self-efficacy. One student reported that her service-learning experience led her to discover an "academic passion" (Yeh, 2010, p. 56) she did not previously know she possessed. These findings contradicted Astin et al.'s (2000) findings from a large longitudinal study of over 22,000 students which found no relationship between self-efficacy, interpersonal skills, or leadership and service-learning involvement. As a result of this study, Yeh (2010) called for researchers to further examine how Students' of Color experiences in service-learning programs are directly related to retention. Researchers (see Lockeman & Pelco, 2013; Mungo, 2017) subsequently conducted studies to answer this call.

Studies explicitly examining retention and service-learning wherein the experiences Students of Color were examined with a critical perspective or lens by which to explain the data are sparse. In fact, one of the most compelling studies evidencing a relationship between service-learning involvement and retention explicitly stated there was not enough data to explain

the differences between Students of Color and low-income students who took service-learning courses and graduated at higher rates than Students of Color and low-income students who did not enroll in service-learning. This was unknown because students were not questioned about the specific ways service-learning supported their graduation from college (Lockeman & Pelco, 2013). The best theoretical perspective they had to offer, post hoc, was that of person-culture match theory. *A priori*, the only theoretical perspectives by which service-learning involvement and retention were examined were through the engagement and retention models of Tinto (1975) and Astin (1991).

When Reed et al. (2015) later examined data that evidenced service-learning was a greater predictor of graduation for Students of Color at institutions where a larger proportion of Students of Color attended, the post hoc theory proposed was Braxton, Hirschy and McClendon's (2004) "communal potential" (p. 77). Communal potential, in this instance, is the idea that Students of Color who participate in service-learning will more likely find other students with whom to socialize with common experiences, which promotes social integration, which in turn is positively correlated with retention. Although this theory was briefly mentioned in the literature review portion of the study, Astin and Oseguera's (2012) model of student engagement was the primary theoretical framework. If Braxton et al.'s (2004) theory had been the focus, it could not have been fully examined given the strictly quantitative approach that was utilized. The application of the theory of community potential within this context is contradicted by the findings of Verjee's (2005) qualitative study of Women of Color in service-learning courses. This study found that, even though these women may have had each other as a type of support network, they were unable to feel the sense of belongingness at their institutions because of the systemic oppression they were experiencing from within their institutions.

Although the literature is nuanced, and results vary, the overarching conclusions are generally that service-learning increases engagement and is positively related to the retention of college students (Ribera, Miller, & Dumford, 2017). However, if Students of Color have such different experiences than their White counterparts, and if service-learning and higher education as an institution have been primarily designed for White students, what is being done to actively address this disparity in, not only the systemic higher educational experience, but also in the belongingness, engagement, and successful retention of Students of Color within courses? Studies have shown that service-learning is directly related to increasing community engagement, academic performance, and belongingness. But is service-learning doing this for Students of Color, and if so, how?

It is necessary to answer these questions from not only a quantitative perspective examining Students of Color graduation rates, but also according to Students' of Color personal perspectives about their experiences. To more adequately explore the engagement and retention of Students of Color, the literature indicates it is necessary and important to carefully consider them through a racialized perspective in order to give an adequate voice to Students' of Color experiences within these service-learning courses. One key way in which this can be done is through a critical race theoretical lens.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT), as a theoretical perspective, acknowledges and recognizes the significance of an historical approach to the examination of Students of Color. CRT emerged from the Critical Legal Studies (CLS) movement of the 1970s that sought to illuminate ways in which legal reasoning and the law was influenced by cultural, political, and/or economic forces, and was, therefore, neither neutral nor objective (Brown & Jackson, 2013; Crenshaw, 1989,

1991; Taylor, 2016). CRT actively seeks to identify ways in which Students of Color have traditionally been treated as “other”; and assumes that racism should not be treated as shocking and anomalous in U.S. higher education and society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; 2001). Critical Race Theory provides a lens by which researchers, administrators, and educators can examine the counternarrative, and gives voice to Students’ of Color experiences within higher education through qualitative analyses.

Although race and racism are central to the critical race perspective, CRT also seeks to challenge claims that higher educational institutions are objective, color-blind, race neutral, and provide equal opportunity (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015; Solórzano & Yosso, 2009); and stresses disparities in graduation rates (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017; Mungo, 2017) between Students of Color and their White counterparts. CRT acknowledges the role of race and racism within higher education and actively attempts to eradicate racism as part of a larger objective; one that seeks to expose all forms of oppression related to gender, class, language, sexual orientation, and country of origin (Solórzano & Yosso, 2009; Taylor, 2016). The theory is comprised of seven primary tenets (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015; Solórzano & Yosso, 2009; Taylor, 2016): 1) the permanence of racism; 2) experiential knowledge; 3) interest convergence theory; 4) intersectionality; 5) Whiteness as property; 6) the critique of liberalism; 7) commitment to social justice.

Permanence of racism. CRT seeks to illuminate the ways in which racism permeates all facets of U.S. society, including higher education, by acknowledging the systemic ways in which the political, economic, social, and educational systems in the U.S. systemically oppress People of Color. CRT scholars acknowledge this tenet can be viewed as inflammatory or accusatory when it is used in a personal context (i.e., accusing someone of being racist); however, this tenet’s

design is to identify racism as both a social and political force to illuminate how People of Color historically have been marginalized and oppressed (i.e., segregation, denial of higher education, racial violence) and how that has affected modern U.S. culture and society (Crenshaw, 2011; McCoy & Rodricks, 2015; Taylor, 2016).

Experiential knowledge. The knowledge, stories, and experiences of Students of Color historically have been overlooked or ignored in U.S. society, politics, culture, and higher education (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; 2009). CRT gives voice to, and recognizes, People's of Color daily lived experiences as legitimate and valued through storytelling, family histories, biographies, narratives, metaphors, and testimonies (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004; Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2014; Lynn & Adams, 2002; McCoy & Rodricks, 2015; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). The history of higher education has been written from a predominately White perspective; therefore, it is important that the *counter* stories, also known as the *counternarrative*, of People of Color are acknowledged. For example, research has shown that Students of Color report feeling invisible and unwanted through faculty-student and student-student interactions known as racial microaggressions on college and university campuses (Harris, 2017; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). However, that narrative is opposite of the acceptance and belonging White students on those same campuses report experiencing.

Interest convergence theory. Derrick A. Bell, Jr., who has been recognized as the “Father of Critical Theory” (Ladson-Billings, 2013), was the first to present the idea of interest convergence. Interest convergence is the theory that the social and political interests of People of Color are advanced when those interests align with the interests of those in power, typically conservative White males (Bell, 1992; McCoy & Rodricks, 2015). An exemplar of interest convergence theory comes from the Civil Rights Movement, when a White man named Myles

Horton took up the cause for civil rights and created a social change mecca for the Black and White communities and educators to combine forces to facilitate change (Bass, Devries, & Lewis, 1973; Lovett, 2005; Wills, 2007). Horton described his educational philosophy and the Highlander Folk School as: “People learn[ing] of unity by acting in unity” (Adams, 1974, p. 520) as both People of Color and White individuals worked together to gain support in political, social, and educational realms for the cause. Through a CRT lens, Highlander was successful because the interests of People of Color were aligned with the interests of White males to facilitate the leaders of the Civil Rights Movement into activism.

Intersectionality. Kimberlé Crenshaw Williams (1991) was the first to argue the intersection of race and gender are rarely acknowledged, despite the apparent influence the ways in which sexism and racism intersect in the lives of Women of Color. Intersectionality is an important tenet of CRT within higher education due to ways in which race intersects with various other identities against which there have been various forms of discrimination and oppression (i.e., gender, class, disability status, sexual orientation, religion) (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015).

Intersectionality has been examined within historically Black Greek-letter fraternities and sororities (McCoy, 2012); and among Women of Color faculty within higher education (Croom, Beatty, & Acker, 2017; Ong, Smith, & Ko, 2018).

Whiteness as property. While CRT acknowledges race as a social construct, this tenet acknowledges the historical influence of Whiteness in the United States and within higher education as “an intangible property of interest and speaks of how the legal system protected a vested interest in white skin” (Brown & Jackson, 2013, p. 19). Whiteness as property in higher education includes White students’ ability to access higher education, recreational facilities (i.e.,

swimming pools and gyms), restrooms, and entertainment spaces (i.e., movies); while Students of Color were forbidden access (McKenzie, 2005; Washington & Nuñez, 2005).

Critique of liberalism. As a continuation of CLS, this tenet explicitly challenges traditional liberalism's notion that the law, society, U.S. culture, and pertinent to this study, higher education, is truly objective, offers an equal opportunity, is color blind and/or race neutral (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015; Taylor, 2016). CRT is fundamentally opposed to the false notion of color blindness (Worthington, Navarro, Lowey, & Hart, 2008), or the belief that race does not matter. CRT also contests the idea of incremental change, or rates of societal change for People of Color that is acceptable to those in power (e.g., White conservative males) (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004). McCoy and Rodricks (2015) used the example of integration in the Jim Crow South, when White people contested that federally mandated integration could not occur *too* swiftly because it would be upsetting for the White children and teachers.

Commitment to social justice. Critical race scholars believe in and are committed to the concept of social justice (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015). CRT illuminates the necessity for society, U.S. culture, and higher education to commit to providing safety and security to every individual, including equal opportunities and access to resources for People of Color (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015). Higher education has been criticized by CRT for failing to appropriately define and implement this ideology of social justice (Chapman, 2013). Within CRT, social justice is defined as the “full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs...[and] includes a vision of society in which the distribution of resources is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure” (Bell, 2013, p. 21).

Utilized as a theoretical instrument in higher education, CRT has explored the access, development, engagement, and persistence of Students of Color in higher education (Hernandez, 2016; McCoy, Luedke, & Winkle-Wagner, 2017; Winkle-Wagner & McCoy, 2016; 2018). However, a majority of the literature exploring higher education within CRT has been conducted within four-year institutions (Yue & Hart, 2017). For the purposes of this study, it is necessary to explore the ways in which CRT has been examined within the community college setting.

Critical Race Theory and Community Colleges

Community colleges serve a higher proportion of Students of Color than four-year institutions; and yet the graduation rates of Students of Color are significantly lower than their White counterparts at these community colleges (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Colleges tend to focus on ways in which White students should grow and learn about other cultures, while ignoring ways in which Students of Color within PWIs face pressures to conform to a predominantly White culture (Chun & Evans, 2016). However, research indicates the critical perspective is the theoretical lens by which the engagement and retention of Students of Color in community colleges should be addressed (Patton, McEwen, Rendón, & Howard-Hamilton, 2007; Price, Hyle, & Jordan, 2009).

To illustrate the importance of race on a community college campus, Price et al. (2009) conducted a critical qualitative study interviewing 17 African American students and 19 White students to examine interracial relations at a predominately White community college. Utilizing Granovetter's (1973) strength of weak ties theory and Braddock's (1980) perpetuation theory, Price et al. (2009) found that Students of Color and White students did not converse or maintain relationships outside of their racial boundaries, perpetuating feelings of racial tension these students carried with them since before entrance onto the community college campus. Price et

al.'s (2009) findings indicate because this community college setting was predominately White, and both White students and Students of Color were not developing relationships with each other, there were fewer opportunities for these Students of Color to connect socially. Research has shown that if Students of Color do not feel as if they belong on their college campuses through a lack of relationships or interaction, they are more likely to stop out, or drop out (Patton et al., 2007). What was of particular interest in the Price et al. (2009) study was that it was conducted at a community college whose primary focus had been on increasing the number of Students of Color enrolled on their campus through the implementation of service-learning programs and initiatives to reach out to historically underrepresented populations. However, the study stopped short of examining these Students' of Color experiences in their service-learning courses. Acknowledging these concerns, some studies have examined issues of engagement, persistence, and retention through the lens of CRT within community colleges (Mertes, 2013).

When conducting the literature review on areas where the CRT and community college literature intersect, there were some trends and particular areas of focus that scholars have examined when identifying ways to improve the engagement and retention of Students of Color. These areas include racialized readiness, issues of persistence and transfer, first-year experience courses, and pedagogy and theory within service-learning courses.

Racialized Readiness

A portion of the community college and critical race literature focused on ways to improve Students' of Color readiness for higher education before they graduate high school and transition to community college (Castro, 2013). Improving readiness among any student population improves the likelihood those students will successfully graduate from a higher education institution; however, due to Students of Color historically being approached from a

deficit-based perspective, this is a particularly important area of study (Acevedo-Gil & Zerquera, 2016; Castro, 2013; McCoy & Rodricks, 2015). Racialized readiness, as defined by Castro (2013), is the assessment of Students' of Color college readiness through a critical race perspective. Different approaches are necessary for Students of Color in preparing them for community college, as more than 76% of Black students and 78% of Latinx students enroll in remedial, or developmental courses at community colleges, compared to 55% of their White counterparts (Bailey, Jenkins, & Leinbach, 2005; Gonzalez, 2012).

A body of literature exists that collectively refers to the entering characteristics, circumstances, and experiences of Students of Color known as racialized readiness, and is meant to inform community college policies and practices as college and career intervention programming is created and implemented by those community colleges. This scholarship coincides with the American Association of Community Colleges' mandate that calls for colleges to expand and develop college-going cultures that extend into local area high schools prior to admission in an effort to serve the at-risk student populations that attend community colleges (Castro, 2013). The findings in these studies evidenced a need to recognize how the aspects of systemic racism, low socioeconomic status, and educational neglect affect Students of Color at higher rates than their White counterparts (Castro, 2013); and also evidenced the need to restructure community college programs and policies to protect students from deficit-based ideologies as they travel to and through higher education.

Issues of Persistence and Transfer through CRT Perspective

Another area in which scholars have examined ways to promote the graduation of Students of Color was through an assessment of how appropriately community colleges are preparing students to persist and successfully transfer to four-year institutions (Hodara,

Martinez-Wenzl, Stevens, & Mazzeo, 2017). Tovar (2015) found the more faculty, counselors, and support programs to which Latinx students have access, and the more frequently these are available, the more likely these students are to persist, succeed academically, and graduate from community college. Wassmer, Moore, and Shulock (2004) conducted a quantitative analysis of community college transfer rates and found that community colleges with higher percentages of Students of Color have significantly lower six-year transfer rates. Students most likely to transfer were younger, had higher socioeconomic status, were better prepared academically for college, and had a greater focus on academic programs versus certificate programs (Wassmer et al., 2004). Bourdieu's (1973) cultural capital framework was utilized in this study to theorize why Students of Color transferred at lower rates, acknowledging that African American students were more likely to be first-generation college students. This study also found that, although Latinx students' parents emphasized education, they also emphasized staying home or near the family, which could reduce the number of students who, upon completion of their degree, transfer on (and off) to another institution (Wassmer et al., 2004).

Using a CRT approach, Jain (2010) conducted a qualitative study examining 11 Women of Color student leaders' perceptions of transfer from community college to four-year institutions. Jain (2010) found many of these Women of Color thought community college was a path to "academic redemption and that their high school experience [did not] matter" (p. 84); however, after enrolling in community college, they quickly realized that the time it would take them to graduate or transfer would be longer than two years due to the amount of remediation or additional coursework they would have to take. Some of these women felt it was impossible for them to transfer, having to live with the negative stereotypes associated with People of Color in higher education, "...you're always going to have that stigma that colored people [sic] are

dumb; there's always been that people that look down on you, you're not as smart enough, you have to prove yourself" (Jain, 2010, p. 84).

Some of these students noted that, although their community college was recognized as one of the top institutions in successfully transferring students to four-year institutions, no one in their Latinx clubs was transferring; and most would be entering into their fourth year of community college (Jain, 2010). Other Women of Color felt that it was exciting to do well in their difficult courses (e.g., higher level math); but that, even while performing well in those courses, professors would still approach them recommending that they take so-called easier pathways (i.e., instead of graduating with a math major for transfer to a four-year institution, certifying in business administration and ending their higher educational pathway with an associate's degree). Through a CRT lens, this qualitative study illustrated the importance of community college faculty, staff, and administration listening to and validating the aspirations, experiences, and voices of Students of Color (Jain, 2010).

Other scholars have examined transfer issues for Students of Color within community college through a critical race perspective. Jain et al. (2016) conducted a mixed methods study that examined the effectiveness of a Summer Transfer Enrichment Program (STEP). Fifty-six Students of Color, the majority of whom were Latinx, participated in surveys and focus group interviews regarding their participation and experiences in the STEP program as they prepared to transfer from community college to a four-year institution. Jain et al. (2016) found that when institutions: prioritize Students of Color to ensure accessibility, retention, and graduation; address fears and misconceptions Students of Color have regarding transfer; support Students of Color financially; provide mentorship opportunities that allow Students of Color to explore their various forms of intersectionality; and complete ongoing program evaluations for quality

enhancement within programs that target Student of Color success, more Students of Color will graduate from community college and choose to pursue four-year institutions.

Other specific areas of transfer research include the experiences of student-athletes, as well as students within STEM fields. Harper (2006) examined transfer issues related specifically to community college student-athletes and found that 47% of Black student-athletes graduated within six years, compared to the 60% of White student-athletes. Harper (2006) concluded, “Perhaps nowhere in higher education is the disenfranchisement of black male students more insidious than in college athletics” (p. 6), including within community colleges. These findings were congruent with research conducted more than a decade earlier by Pascarella and Smart (1991), with no significant signs of improvement or change in community college rates of successful transfer (Harper et al., 2006).

Horton (2015) concluded that, if community colleges were going to engage and retain Students of Color, several factors needed to shift at an institutional level: institutional focus on degree completion, intentional advising, additional student support services, and additional resources for students with disabilities. Similarly, Wang, Lee, and Provost (2017) conducted a quantitative analysis with Students of Color and examined the likelihood they would successfully graduate and transfer in STEM fields. They found Students of Color were less likely to access transfer service resources than White students, and were significantly less likely to transfer to four-year institutions within those fields.

First-Year Experience Courses through CRT Perspective

Another area where the CRT and community college literature intersect is within the examination of first-year experience or college success courses, which have been positively linked to the engagement and retention of undergraduate students. Acevedo-Gil and Zerquera

(2016) conducted a qualitative study that examined the experiences of 110 Students of Color within first-year experience courses in a community college through the combined lenses of ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) and critical race theory in education (Solórzano, 1998). Overall, they determined that in order to meet their academic goals, Students of Color need individualized, asset-based advising, that does not come from a deficit ideology traditionally held for Students of Color (Acevedo-Gil & Zerquera, 2016). They also recommended that these first-year experience courses be compulsory through inclusion in general education requirements and that the courses, through classroom communities or cohorts, be designed such that they would foster and support students through graduation. Particularly applicable to my area of study, Acevedo-Gil and Zerquera (2016) concluded that pedagogical strategies within the classroom should foster “trusting relationships” (p. 80) between faculty and students, as their findings revealed a significant influence on Students of Color who felt their instructors were asset-based, approachable, and responsive to students’ questions and concerns.

The generalizable findings from these studies are the re-iterated need to focus on co-curricular programming which provides an asset-based approach to actively providing access, assisting, and graduating Students of Color within community colleges. However, the CRT perspective has not been as widely utilized in community college research as it has been at four-year institutions. A few studies have examined the pedagogical strategy of service-learning through a critical lens and its ability to reproduce or challenge color-blind racism (see Bonilla-Silva, 2001; 2017), but a majority of these studies have taken place within four-year institutions, and not community colleges (Becker & Paul, 2015).

Critical Pedagogy and Theory within Service-Learning

There is a call within the higher education literature for practitioners to intentionally focus on the design of service-learning courses through a critical lens. Findings from multiple studies indicate that the curriculum needs to transition from traditional service-learning, more closely resembling volunteerism, to more transformational, multicultural, social justice service-learning experiences, known as critical service-learning or service-learning through critical pedagogy (Blum & de la Piedra, 2010; Bocci, 2015; Caspersz & Olaru, 2014, 2017; DeLeon, 2014; Hirschinger-Blank, Simons, Finley, Clearly, & Thoeirig, 2013; Jones & Kiser, 2014; Meens, 2014; Taggart & Crisp, 2014). The literature outlines key tenets by which instructors should design their service-learning courses through a transformative lens: 1) student choice of service-learning in the classroom (Bringle et al., 2010); 2) an intentionality of connection between course content, pedagogy, and community service (Lake, Winterbottom, Ethridge, & Kelly, 2015; Meens, 2014; Phillips, Bolduc, & Gallow, 2013); 3) strong relationships with community partners (Bourelle & Bourelle, 2013); 4) multiple opportunities for reflection and meaning making (Bloomquist, 2015; Maddux & Donnett, 2015); and 5) an experiential research paper, or project, which requires synthesis and reflection of course content and experiences (Bringle et al., 2010). However, critical service-learning requires that instructors are intentional in their design of pedagogy and related community involvement while still providing opportunities for student exploration; student selection of service-learning sites; and true, meaningful reflection on their experiences (Jones & Kiser, 2014).

With the best of intentions, instructors have historically viewed the experiences of both service-learning students, and also the community they are serving, through a lens of White normativity (Bocci, 2015; Mitchell, Donohue, & Young-Law, 2012). Marbley et al. (2017) outlined ways in which all students' cultures and experiences could be utilized to strengthen the

classroom and engage students. One of the primary ways they suggested increasing engagement was through community partnerships. These partnerships should be facilitated directly by the professor to the community, with the instructor personally reaching out to make these direct connections. Through these partnerships, students should engage in an active exploration of their respective cultures, and how they culturally relate to the diversity of others; and through a strengths-based understanding of the community and social justice issues present. To truly make a difference, and create transformational democratic citizenship out of these students, it is necessary to address issues that have historically affected the communities in which these students are serving, as well as exploring their current and future roles in the community as citizens (O'Meara, 2017). One of the criticisms of service-learning is that both the literature and the faculty members who employ this pedagogical strategy in the classroom avoid the "more explicit stories about race and class" (Green, 2003, p. 277). Additionally, though the service-learning literature has often referred to terms such as "transformative service-learning" and "critical pedagogy," the literature I found primarily stopped short of explicitly discussing Critical Race Theory or its key tenets.

Although not specifically focused on community colleges, Costa and Leong (2012) reviewed the service-learning literature that addressed critical service-learning, noting that Verjee (2005) provided one of the most significant contributions to critical race and service-learning literature because she examined the experiences of Canadian Women of Color in service-learning through a critical race feminist perspective. While completing her dissertation, Verjee (2005) discovered that she could not locate *any* prior service-learning literature or studies utilizing Critical Race Theory. One of the most compelling questions Verjee (2005) asked in her research that is not immediately addressed by service-learning scholars even today is: "How

[are] we going to form service-learning partnerships that [will] enhance the well-being of the individuals and groups in these disenfranchised communities when we [are] not doing such a good job of maintaining the well-being of racialized individuals and groups within the academy?” (p. 8). Verjee (2005) wanted service-learning experiences to explicitly provide opportunities to connect students with an awareness and understanding of community social justice issues. Although a large body of literature exists about higher education and social justice, more research is still needed that will address “the impact of integrating service and service-learning with civic engagement or social justice” (Welch, 2009, p. 179).

Applied CRT: Community Cultural Wealth

One of the ways in which Students’ of Color experiences could be illuminated is through Yosso’s (2005) Community Cultural Wealth (CCW), a descendent of Critical Race Theory. The CCW model was designed as an assets-based framework to understand the various forms of capital that students bring with them from their homes, families, and communities; and how that capital can support Students’ of Color educational experiences. CCW was also created to counter traditional interpretations of cultural capital (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015; Yosso, 2005), which only account for student capital if it comes from elite or affluent backgrounds (Winkle-Wagner, 2010). CCW expands the work of CRT by recognizing ways in which social justice discourse previously has been limited through the omission of People’s of Color experiences (Yosso, 2005). Scholars have utilized this framework to examine ways in which students can honor their cultural backgrounds while simultaneously gaining new skills and experiences during college (Jayakumar, Vue, & Allen, 2013; Luna & Martinez, 2013), and others have used this framework to examine how students gain access to college, as well as their pathways through college to graduation (Burt & Johnson, 2018; Burt, Williams, & Palmer, 2018; Espiño, 2014).

CCW encompasses six forms of capital: aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant. These forms of capital work in a synergistic and dynamic process that build on each other as components of CCW (Yosso, 2005). *Aspirational capital* is the ability and desire to pursue hopes and dreams for the future, in the face of both real and perceived barriers. Aspirational capital is dreaming beyond current situations, even when the resources are not accessible to achieve those goals (Yosso, 2005). *Linguistic capital* includes both the intellectual and social skills gained by the ability to communicate in more than one language or style. Linguistic capital values and emphasizes the benefits and connections made between “racialized cultural history and language” (Yosso, 2005, p.78). *Familial capital* is the cultural knowledge nurtured among family that carries a sense of community cultural history, memory, and intuition. This type of cultural wealth engages a commitment to community well-being and expands the concept of family beyond one’s immediate family (Yosso, 2005). This particular capital emphasizes the coping skills, provision, and care that families provide which influence the emotional and educational consciousness of students. Particularly relevant to this study, *familial capital* also accounts for lessons from home that Students of Color bring with them into the classroom.

Social capital is the network of both people and community resources which provide peer and social contacts that offer support to navigate society’s institutions, particularly legal justice, employment, and health care (Yosso, 2005). *Navigational capital* refers to the skills required to navigate, and survive, institutions. Yosso (2005) described this as the ability to maneuver through institutions not systemically created for Communities of Color, particularly higher education institutions, through self-agency. *Resistant capital* is the “knowledge and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality” (Yosso, 2005, p. 80). This

type of capital is centered in Communities' of Color legacies of resistance (i.e., Black Power).

The concepts from CCW were employed as a way to better understand how students'

backgrounds were utilized as assets in their educational journeys.

Supporting Students of Color at Community Colleges

Significant gaps in the community college literature have been identified by researchers, especially pertaining to Students of Color. Kodama (2015) recognized the paucity of literature on commuter Students of Color as a category of student rarely intentionally addressed in the literature. Based upon a review of the literature on commuter Students of Color, Kodama (2015) identified themes and ways in which commuter Students of Color (predominately Students of Color enrolled in community colleges) could be best supported within a college environment. Kodama (2015) outlined tangible ways researchers, faculty, staff, and administration could address the unique needs of commuter Students of Color, which included: 1) understanding the cultural systems within home and family communities; 2) improving peer support; 3) advocating and supporting identity-based spaces on campus; 4) validating the experiential knowledge that comes from leadership and community development experiences off-campus; and 5) facilitating and encouraging faculty interactions.

One of the exemplars Kodama (2015) highlighted was that of the relationship between John Jay College and City University of New York (CUNY) Service Corps, a service-learning program that encourages students in the entire CUNY system (both four-year and community colleges) to engage in and with their communities. Kodama (2015) suggested this type of encouraged engagement within the community, directly linked to classroom learning and campus involvement as fitting with John Jay College's focus on social justice initiatives. An unexpected outcome of the service-learning focus on that campus was that these commuter Students of Color

were connected to significant and stable long-term employment opportunities through their community relationships and service. Overall, Kodama (2015) recommended “innovative programming” (p. 52) such as CUNY’s Service Corps to address the unique needs of Students of Color within community colleges, needs that have historically been misrepresented or overlooked.

With these findings in mind, service-learning as a co-curricular strategy within community colleges has the potential to be a significant contributor to Students’ of Color retention and engagement in the classroom and on campus. The key tenets of critical service-learning are to: recognize and affirm each individual students’ preferences for community sites, encourage faculty and student interaction as the service experience is conducted, connect the student with community partners and supports; and encourage students to reflect on their service-learning experience in light of the course material and recognize ways their service had an effect on them personally throughout the course of the semester. These aspects of service-learning directly address Kodama’s (2015) recommendations for campus faculty and administrations to promote the retention of commuter Students of Color on college campuses by ensuring student freedom bolstered by faculty collaboration and allowing for unlimited room for innovation and exploration of ways to connect individual students to a unique experience within higher education.

Summary

The literature reviewed in this chapter revealed issues Students of Color face as they move to and through higher education, specifically through community colleges. These students carry with them their lived experiences as Students of Color as they learn and grow within their classroom settings, college campuses, and communities. Students of Color experience the

classroom environment differently than their White peers, and bring with them various forms of capital into their educational experiences. Colleges and universities have not done enough to address the disparities in graduation rates between Students of Color and their White peers; and they have also not fully examined the experiences of Students of Color through their voices and perspectives from an assets-based perspective.

Although the Students of Color, service-learning, Critical Race Theory, Community Cultural Wealth, and community college literature identify key aspects that influence the engagement and retention of Students of Color on community college campuses such as college and career readiness, issues of transfer, first-year experience courses, critical pedagogy in co-curricular courses, and critical approaches to support commuter students, it is apparent that increased scholarship in these areas is of utmost importance if the significant disparity between the success of Students of Color and their White counterparts is to be addressed. This study examined whether or not service-learning involvement increases the likelihood Students of Color within community colleges are retained to graduation; and how this involvement may have influenced their retention.

CHAPTER 3

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I discuss the design and methodology of this mixed methods study and include critiques of mixed methods research. I then discuss the site selection, in addition to the data collection and analysis plan. I conclude this chapter with a discussion of my positionality as a researcher, and willingness to engage in this transformative-emancipatory mixed methods design (Mertens, 2003; Mertens, Bledsoe, Sullivan, & Wilson, 2010).

The research design employed for this study was a transformative-emancipatory mixed methods design (Mertens, 2003; Mertens et al., 2010), and included Critical Race Theory as the initial theoretical and foundational framework that scaffolded the study (DeCuir-Gunby & Walker-Devose, 2013; McCoy, 2016; Mertens, 2003, 2009). A mixed methods approach can be defined as “research in which the investigator collects and analyzes data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study or program of inquiry” (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007, p. 4). Mixed methods research is grounded in Campbell and Fiske’s (1959) multitrait-multimethod approach, which posits that in order to understand a specific phenomenon or experience, multiple perspectives are necessary.

My primary purpose for utilizing a mixed method approach was to increase the understanding of Students’ of Color experiences in service-learning courses, and an explanatory sequential design allowed me to explore the meaning behind the initial quantitative data collection and analysis through subsequent qualitative study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; McCoy, 2016; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Examining graduation quantitatively, and then engaging Students of Color, who have been historically marginalized and oppressed in higher education, through qualitative interviews may produce powerful results that can inform higher

educational practices and programming within community colleges (Mertens et al., 2010). This specific transformative-emancipatory mixed methodological approach has been employed for “value-based and ideological reasons” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 96). Mertens et al. (2010) recommended applying transformative paradigms to mixed methods studies within dissertation research as an appropriate method to discover ways to view social justice issues through the participants’ voices. The transformative paradigm placed primary focus on the experiential knowledge and lived experiences of

...marginalized groups such as women, ethnic/racial minorities (sic)...The researcher...consciously analyzes asymmetric power relationships, seeks ways to link the results of social inquiry to action, and links the results of the inquiry to wider questions of social inequity and social justice. (Mertens, 2003, pp. 139-140)

Most mixed methods research is conducted from the quantitative-dominant perspective, and therefore does not require the examination of theoretical perspectives (Giddings, 2006); however, mixed methods scholars have recently highlighted the importance of theories and their specific influence on research methods employed in a study (DeCuir-Gunby & Walker-DeVose, 2013). Critical Race Theory (CRT) as the initial theoretical framework allowed me to focus on race as the center of my analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data (DeCuir-Gunby & Walker-DeVose, 2013), and allowed me to explore the relationships between Students of Color and their service-learning experiences within community colleges through this lens. CRT aligned well with the transformative-emancipatory framework of this study because CRT is a transformative theory (DeCuir-Gunby & Walker-DeVose, 2013). However, as I was coding the data, particular themes emerged that aligned with a descendent CRT theory, Yosso’s (2005)

Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) framework. Therefore, to illuminate my participants' experiences, I chose to code and analyze my data within the CCW framework.

This study sought to not only describe, but also to understand the relationship of service-learning participation on Students' of Color experiences and graduation. This study answered: What were the experiences of Students of Color in service-learning courses? Because the emphasis in this research design was on the qualitative (QUAL) phase of this mixed methodological approach, despite containing a descriptive, quantitative portion (quan), this study maintained an inductive theoretical drive throughout its entirety (Mertens, 2003). My epistemological aims were accomplished through an objective analysis of graduation-related outcomes for Students of Color who participated in service-learning, and through an exploration of the meaning of their service-learning experiences through qualitative analysis of interactive phenomenological interviews (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Typically, most mixed sequential methodological studies begin with the phase of study that receives the most emphasis (i.e., QUAN → qual, or QUAL → quan) (Creswell, 2015); however, DeCuir-Gunby and Walker-DeVose (2013) proposed CRT mixed methodologies match well with the quant → QUAL explanatory mixed methods design so that the qualitative data explain and enrich the understanding of the results of the quantitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011), and the focus can still be on the participants' counterstory (Creswell, Shope, Plano Clark, & Green, 2006; DeCuir-Gunby & Walker-DeVose, 2013; Sweetman, Badiie, & Creswell, 2010).

This mixed-methods sequential transformative design comprised of two separate, stand-alone phases: Phase One quantitative (quan), followed by Phase Two qualitative (QUAL) (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; DeCuir-Gunby & Walker-DeVose, 2013; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; 2003). First, the quantitative data was collected, and analyzed; immediately followed by

the separate collection and analysis of the qualitative data (quan → QUAL) (Morse, 1991). The results from the quantitative data influenced the development of the interview questions in the qualitative phase (Teddle & Tashakkori, 2009). These two phases of research were integrated within a final step, with the analysis and combination of both quantitative and qualitative inferences, whereby the qualitative inferences explained and informed the quantitative inferences from a critical race perspective (Creswell, 2015; DeCuir-Gunby & Walker-DeVose, 2013; Mertens, 2003; Ivankova et al., 2006). The quantitative phase determined the likelihood that Students' of Color graduation rates were related to their participation in service-learning courses; and the qualitative phase explored participants' experiences within service-learning programs. See Figure 1 (below) for a diagram of the research design, complete with a timeline of events.

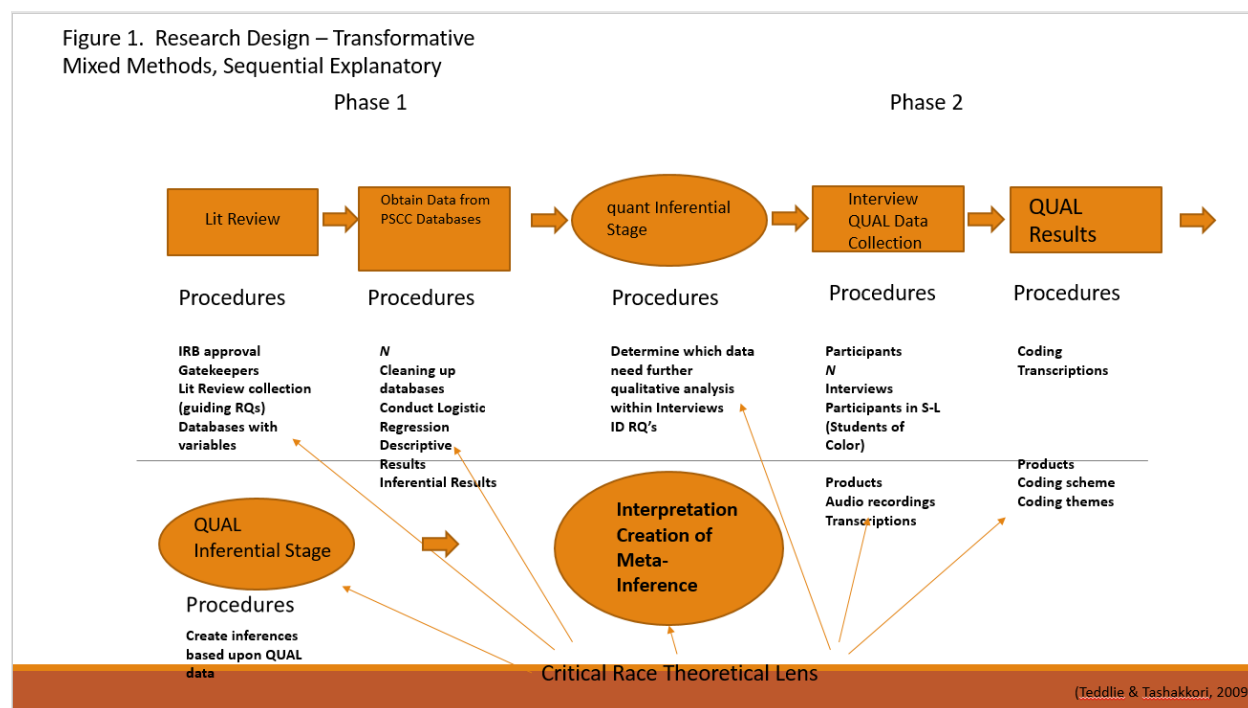


Figure 1. Research design

Research Questions

Because this study took a mixed methods approach, there were three guiding questions for this study (Creswell, 2015; Plano Clark & Badiee, 2010):

Phase 1 - quan

1) Did participation in service-learning courses increase the likelihood that Students of Color graduated from community college?

Phase 2 - QUAL

2) What were Students' of Color experiences in a community college service-learning program?

Mixed Methods Question

3) How did Students' of Color experiences in a community college service-learning program influence graduation rates?

Quantitative Phase Design

For the quantitative phase, a nonexperimental *ex post facto* research design (Lockeman & Pelco, 2013; McMillan, 2011; Onanuga & Saka, 2018) was utilized to investigate the influences of the independent variables of service-learning participation, status (full-time or part-time), Duncan Succeeds eligibility, gender, cumulative GPA, and race on the dependent variable of graduation at Duncan Community College in the southeast region of the United States.

Variables such as age, gender, Duncan Succeeds eligibility, status (full-time or part-time), and race were recoded into categorical variables for data analysis. This quantitative approach to the examination of retention rates was appropriate because this approach to investigating graduation rates for Students of Color is an objective measure that answered the question of whether or not enrollment in service-learning courses increased the likelihood of graduation for Students of Color. It is also the standard approach utilized widely by higher education scholars when

examining retention (Astin, 1999; Caruth, 2018; Ishitani & DesJardins, 2002). Some threats to the validity (Drost, 2011; Roberts, Priest, & Traynor, 2006) of this phase of the study were that I was not able to discern or indicate the quality of service-learning courses in which these students enrolled, or examine all individual experiences of the students within this population. However, the advantage of only examining the graduation rates within one institution was that there was a definition of what constituted a service-learning course (i.e., each course must offer at least 10-15 hours of service-learning, and the site must be approved by the Service-Learning Program at the college); and all service-learning courses in which these students were enrolled followed the same guidelines and procedures within the overarching Service-Learning Program.

Site

The site for this study was a large community college in the Southeastern United States: Duncan Community College (DCC). DCC has five distinct campus locations. The largest DCC campus is located in an affluent area in Duncan County. It enrolls approximately 5,500 students each semester, and is the most diverse campus racially, with a Student of Color population of approximately 18%, which is consistent with county demographics. DCC is classified as a public two-year associate's college with a high-transfer, mixed-traditional/nontraditional student population (Carnegie, 2014) of approximately 11,000. In fall 2013 DCC had a student enrollment of 10,704 (5,211 students classified as full-time enrollment); and in fall 2014 a total enrollment of 10,099 students (5,030 full-time students). These cohorts were selected because the average time for completion of a college degree at community colleges is three to six years for Students of Color (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017); and enough time must have elapsed at the time the data was collected (fall 2018) to allow these students sufficient time to graduate. In fall 2018, DCC enrolled 10,894 students, 6,889 of those were considered full-

time enrolled (FTE). Students of Color comprised approximately 11% of the enrollment and women were almost 52% of the student body during the fall 2018 semester.

Data Collection and Methods

IRB approval was sought from The University of Tennessee at Knoxville (UTK), in compliance with ethical guidelines and considerations for the completion of this study. However, due to the fact DCC was the institution where this data would be provided and collected, DCC and UTK entered into a Reliance Agreement (see Appendix A). This institutional agreement meant that any and all changes to my study and data collection was approved directly by the Director of Institutional Effectiveness. Institutional data were collected from the DCC Service-Learning Program's database, and the College's Office of Institutional Effectiveness. The overall population of students from the cohorts of entering full-time college students both as first-year and transfer students from fall 2013 and fall 2014 (N = 3,453) were downloaded from the institution's database, which included all student information maintained by the Service-Learning Program and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness.

Earlier cohorts were not selected because Duncan Succeeds, a state-based scholarship program which offers full academic scholarships to high school seniors to increase access for low-SES, first-generation college students, was not as widely utilized by students in years prior to 2013; and as a result, there may not have been a sufficient population from previous cohorts for the analyses. For the purposes of confidentiality, all variables that could uniquely identify individual students (i.e., student names, email addresses, student identification numbers, etc.) were removed from the files by the institutional research staff prior to my receipt of the files.

Quantitative Phase

Once the data was obtained and personal identifiers removed, it was cleaned to develop a separate database that was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The inferential data analysis technique applied to this study was a binary logistic regression, which determined the likelihood that students' graduation rates were related to their participation in service-learning courses (Liao, 1994; Mungo, 2017; Reed et al., 2015; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009); and also examined other potential variables that could be related to the probability of graduation. Logistic regression "allows one to predict a discrete outcome such as group membership from a set of variables that may be continuous, discrete, dichotomous, or a mix" (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007, p. 437). The binary nature of the dependent measure of success, graduation, necessitated a logistic regression analysis that provided the likelihood of success for graduation, given the independent variables for this study. Within the logistic regression analysis, there were no assumptions about linear relationships among the predictor variables; however, logistic regression did require independent observations, little to no multicollinearity among the independent variables, linearity of independent variables to log odds; and a large sample size, which is why the populations of both cohorts were utilized (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007; 2013). Multicollinearity is a phenomenon that occurs when two or more highly correlated independent variables are placed in a regression model, and may produce unstable estimates of standard errors and *p*-values, resulting in skewed findings (Gordon, 1968; Rahbar et al., 2012). Linearity of independent variables to log odds is primarily an issue associated with continuous variables as predictor variables within a logistic regression analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Thus, this quantitative analysis did not contain multiple continuous independent variables, and a correlation matrix was examined to ensure lack of multicollinearity between predictor variables. In

addition, a Hosmer-Lemeshow test was administered to evaluate the fit of the logistic regression model.

Furthermore, an examination of the strength of each predictor variable in the model determined the probability of its effect on graduation rates, and an examination of the confidence intervals (95%) and the use of cox & snell r^2 determined the relative strength of the association of independent variables (Reed et al., 2015). The logistic regression was conducted with a software package for the use of logical batched and non-batched statistical analysis, SPSS (Collier, 2010; Kirkpatrick 2016). Results from this logistic regression and subsequent follow-up analysis determined the direction of the qualitative phase of this study through the development of interview questions. Based upon the results from the logistic regression, inferences were drawn that contributed to the direction of the interview questions in the subsequent qualitative phase of the study (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

Qualitative Phase

After the quantitative data was analyzed, I determined which inferences needed further explanation through semi-structured participant interviews (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016); and the “conclusions based on the results of the first lead to the formulation of design components for the next [phase]” (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 153). Longden (2004) asserted that qualitative methodologies were best for understanding the process of college retention and success; and Shumer (2000) posited that qualitative and critical research methodologies were well-matched with the philosophy and study of service-learning. The qualitative component allowed me to understand the perspective and experiences of these students through both critical race and community cultural wealth perspectives (DeCuir-Gunby & Walker-DeVose, 2013; McCoy & Rodricks, 2015; Yosso, 2005). I employed phenomenological methods (Dowling, 2007;

Moustakas, 1994) to examine these Students' of Color service-learning experiences to illustrate the essence or basic structure of their experiences in service-learning courses (Moustakas, 1994).

Participants

To select participants, I utilized purposeful sampling (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). Specifically, criterion sampling (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016) was utilized to identify prospective participants for the interviews. All participants graduated from DCC, possessed the distinction of Service-Learning Scholar through the service-learning program by completing 60 or more hours of service-learning, and self-identified as a Student of Color (i.e., Black/African American, Latinx, Asian, and/or Native American). Any student at DCC who completed at least 60 hours of service-learning through the Service-Learning Program graduated with the distinction of a Service-Learning Scholar; and this information was housed within the Service-Learning Program database, which was then provided to the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. The current and previous directors for the Service-Learning Program and the Executive Director for Institutional Effectiveness served as the gatekeepers (McFadyen & Rankin, 2017) for access to the participants, and provided verbal and written consent for the collection of this data.

Data Collection

Each participant was asked to complete the informed consent form provided by the University of Tennessee, Knoxville's Institutional Review Board, in accordance with the policies and procedures regarding research with human subjects, and all University of Tennessee, Knoxville submission requirements, including confidentiality and ethical considerations. Upon completion of the participant consent form, one-on-one interviews were conducted with each participant. These interviews took place in an office at DCC's main campus; or via a ZOOM

interview (see Rahim, 2017), when physical interviews were not a possibility due to availability or location of the participant.

After each participant voluntarily agreed to participate, semi-structured interviews were conducted wherein an interview protocol was utilized that contained a set of specific, uniform, open-ended questions (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). A phenomenological approach to interviewing was employed for this study (Patton, 2002). To engage in phenomenological inquiry, participants must have experienced the phenomenon (i.e., service-learning), be interested in understanding the phenomenon, be willing to participate in the interview process, and also provided permission for me to record the interview, as well as publish the data in my dissertation (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) asserted that “perception is regarded as the primary source of knowledge, the source that cannot be doubted” (p. 52); and this study’s qualitative phase focused on participants’ perceptions and experiences within service-learning courses.

Six Students of Color were interviewed using these open-ended, semi-structured interview questions (see Appendix B) to help build an understanding of service-learning experiences for this group of students (Morse, 1994, Patton, 2002). These questions addressed the Students’ of Color experiences in service-learning courses, ways in which service-learning contributed to their academic success, how their race may have influenced their experiences; and what influence service-learning may have had on the students within their experiences at DCC. Each interview lasted between 30-60 minutes. Although there was a list of specific questions (i.e., “Tell me about your experiences in service-learning courses.”), these questions were presented in any order; and follow-up, or probing, questions were utilized as needed (Merriam, 2009). Each participant was identified by a pseudonym (Allen & Wiles, 2016) of the

participant's choice, to meet ethical obligations to protect participants' identities. These participants' pseudonyms were coded to match with each participant, and this information was stored in a separate, secure location, apart from all other data. I described each participant racially by the way in which they self-identified (i.e., Black, African American/Black, Asian/Korean). All interviews were recorded with a digital recording device and/or via ZOOM recording software. A backup handheld recorder was used in the interviewing process should the primary recording device fail; to prevent loss of data. I transcribed all data collected from these interviews. I took and compiled field notes (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016) documenting the setting, as well as participants' non-verbal responses and actions during the interview.

Data Analysis

Each participant's interview transcript was identified by pseudonym and demographic information. All data collected from the interviews were coded by hand utilizing *in vivo* coding, which is a literal coding process taken directly from the participants' language in order to honor their voice and experience (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Saldaña, 2009). This data was analyzed in small chunks, and given a two-five word code to the side of the data, using the participants' words when possible (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). After the initial coding was completed, initial codes were grouped utilizing the *axial coding methodology* (Corbin & Strauss, 2007; Merriam, 2009). *Axial coding methodology* is the process by which the initial *in vivo* codes are combined into what can be classified as common themes in the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2007). For example, a participant comment of "This was helpful" may be openly coded as "Helpful," and then later grouped into the category of "Positive service learning experience." All data was initially examined as if all portions of the data held equal weight and importance in a process called *horizontalization*. Moustakas (1994) described *horizontalization* as: "[the]

interweaving of person, conscious experience, and phenomenon. In the process of explicating the phenomenon, qualities are recognized and described; every perception is granted equal value, non-repetitive constituents of experience are linked thematically, and a full description is derived” (p. 96).

To determine what characterized the experiences of Students of Color in service-learning courses, I employed phenomenological analysis of the data (Farmer, Knapp, & Benton, 2007; Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 1990). Phenomenological analysis examines experiences to clarify the similarities and differences across a group of participants in a fashion that allows for the emergence of themes from the collective qualitative data set, and has been applied to the study of experiential education programs (Field, Lauzon, & Meldrum, 2016; Knackmuhs et al., 2017). I coded data into like concepts, groups, and phrasing, then into discrete categories using *in vivo* coding, which extracted and highlighted words and phrases from the original content and placed them into categories of similar words (Merriam, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). After these groups were made, commonalities between transcripts were identified, and codes were viewed through the lens of CCW, and connected to the research questions guiding this study (Merriam, 2009). Qualitative inferences were then created based upon the thematic codes that emerged from the transcript data (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). As I made these qualitative interferences, to demonstrate trustworthiness, and specific to phemonological methodology, I also employed bracketing, which is a methodological tool in which I intentionally set aside my personal beliefs about the phenomenon (e.g., service-learning experiences) under investigation; or what I already know about the subject prior to and throughout this study (Carpenter, 2007; Chan, Fung, & Chien, 2013).

Integration

The quantitative inferences from phase one of the study was followed by the reporting of the qualitative inferences from phase two of the study. The final combined explanation of how the qualitative inferences help to clarify the quantitative inferences were interpreted, and both quantitative and qualitative inferences were combined to form a final meta-inference, and to answer the mixed methods research question (Mertens, 2003; McCoy, 2016; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). These two phases (quan and QUAL) of research were integrated within a final step, with the analysis and combination of both quantitative and qualitative inferences; whereby the qualitative inferences explained and informed the quantitative inferences from a critical race perspective (Creswell, 2015; DeCuir-Gunby & Walker-DeVose, 2013; Ivankova et al., 2006; Mertens, 2003;).

Limitations

This study was difficult to conduct logistically as a doctoral student, particularly the qualitative interview data collection phase. It was time-intensive, with back-to-back data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Additionally, because mixed-methods research depends primarily on the researcher and how they attempt to collect, analyze, and interpret information, particularly how they choose to place varying levels of emphasis on either qualitative or quantitative components, there was still room for error in interpretation (Ivankova et al., 2006). For the quantitative analysis, there were so few Students of Color in each racial category that, in order to conduct a logistic regression, all racial groups had to be combined into one overall Student of Color category for the NEWRACE variable. This could be a limitation because the quantitative analysis does not account for differences in graduation between races.

I relied upon the gatekeepers at DCC who worked primarily with service-learning students to encourage graduates of the program to participate in the qualitative data collection. I depended on students to volunteer their time to meet with me to conduct the one-on-one interviews. Students may have felt uncomfortable meeting with a stranger and honestly disclosing their experiences within their service-learning courses, especially when they realized I was a faculty member at Duncan Community College.

This study was additionally challenging for the qualitative data collection because there were significant barriers in participant recruitment. Initially, I followed the proposed protocol of sending out a recruitment email to all participants who met my criteria: DCC Student of Color graduates from fall cohorts 2013 and 2014, who had completed at least 60 hours of service-learning. However, only 92 potential participants met this criteria. After this initial email was sent mid-February 2019, there was no response. An additional email was sent a week later with no response. After seeking support and permission from DCC's Office of Institutional Effectiveness, as well as from my faculty chair, I sent another email offering an opportunity for each respondent to be entered to win \$10 VISA gift cards for their time. This email received no response. After seeking additional support and permission, I sent out an email offering every participant \$25 for their time. This email received no response. At this time, I chose to engage in calling these participants at the phone numbers provided by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. More than 20 phone calls were made, and none of these potential participants agreed to participate in the study, and/or did not return my phone calls – several potential participants voiced displeasure I had called their phones to make this request, especially after they had initially ignored my request via email. Upon further reflection and planning, a new email was sent offering each participant a \$100 Amazon gift card for their time and participation.

After this email was sent, four responses were received within three days. Of the initial four respondents, only three of them followed through with participation. The fourth participant no-showed at least five different times over the course of three months. Another participant offered to participate, but also no-showed on two separate occasions, stalling data collection completely for two months.

Realizing data collection would be impossible without further assistance, I recruited the former service-learning director for her immediate help. The current director had only been in her position for two years, and she did not have established relationships with service-learning participants from 2013 and 2014. The previous director asked if I would be able to use data from participants who may not have entered in 2013 or 2014, but who would have attended before or during those years. My faculty chair approved of this change in criteria so that I could include more potential participants. As a result, I was able to add three more participants to my data pool. Two other participants also agreed to participate in this study, referred by the former director, but they also no-showed their interview appointment dates and times.

After repeated attempts to recruit additional participants, I requested permission from my faculty chair and committee members to end my study, despite only having five out of the desired eight to 10 participants for which I initially planned for this study's qualitative phase. The number of total participants in the qualitative phase of my study could be considered a limitation for some qualitative researchers and methodologists who see any pool less than eight to be problematic for a phenomenological qualitative study (see Mertens, 2003; Mertens et al., 2010).

Trustworthiness

To develop trustworthiness, I engaged a senior critical scholar and community cultural wealth expert to recheck my qualitative data to ensure my data was true to the CCW framework. I also consulted with a second senior scholar (my faculty chair) regarding my coding scheme and process; and subsequently engaged in peer debriefing (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Shenton, 2004). Trustworthiness was directly addressed utilizing *triangulation* (Shenton, 2004). Triangulation was achieved by utilizing various sources of information within this mixed-methodological approach: 1) quantitative results from phase one; 2) interviews; and 3) field notes from direct observations. Each data type was used to inform the other, filling in potential holes in information, understanding, and fact checking. To ensure consistency, an audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009) evidenced, as accurately as possible, how I arrived at my findings by documenting my path as I conducted my research; and also, as I interpreted the data via notes of my methodology, transcripts and coding processes.

Positionality

Of particular importance in qualitative research is the need to identify and understand the researcher's position, or reflexivity, in relation to the topic of study (Merriam, 2009; Milner, 2007). This study examined graduation and Students' of Color service-learning experiences. The issues of race, culture, biases, prejudice, and discrimination were woven throughout the interpretation of participant interviews, particularly through a critical lens. I self-identify as a White, first-generation, female college student who has personally witnessed situations involving racism, discrimination, cultural bias, and prejudice. Having been fortunate enough to spend the first 18 years of my life growing up in an incredibly diverse environment, with friends and peers from myriad cultural, racial, and ethnic backgrounds; and then transitioning to spend my

undergraduate years in a rural PWI, I experienced culture shock in a way that had a profound influence on my life. I was able to see and experience what my White peers from predominantly White backgrounds could not, and it was frustrating and infuriating to, for the first time in my life, witness overt instances of racism and microaggressions when my White peers did not perceive them as such. I heard Students' of Color voices in a History of African Americans class. Only there, with a professor of color, did they feel their voices were heard or valued on campus. I wanted to do something to change that, and I too, did not feel I had a voice to do so.

My background, life experiences, witnessed accounts, and personal convictions and beliefs have had, and continue to have, a strong influence on my perception of others, my views, and possibly my interpretation of events. I only understand them through my perspective, although I have endeavored to constantly expand my cultural work, experiences, and knowledge (Milner, 2007). To increase the credibility of my study, I maintained a journal (Merriam, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) of my thoughts and feelings as they arose throughout the research process. I peer debriefed my feelings, thoughts, and perspectives with other researchers (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) who have completed multiple studies in this area, and who have specialized their life's work in the study of historically underrepresented populations. In both my life and research, I acknowledge my Whiteness, and also my privilege. I do not pretend to understand the experiences of People of Color, as if I have lived them; nor do I attempt to speak on behalf of any Person of Color. However, it is very important to me that the voices and experiences of the Students of Color in my research are heard. I want Students of Color to feel heard, valued, and respected on college campuses. I view my role as, what one of my mentors describes so succinctly, a bridge builder. I want to model and demonstrate critical conversations with civility and respect for: White students who have either never critically engaged, or have

historically engaged with defensiveness; Students of Color who wish to explore critical conversations, and who want to be heard, empowered, and valued; and administrators, faculty, and staff who may have never had the opportunity to discuss race in a safe environment, and who wish to address or confront personal biases. I also desire for administrators and faculty to utilize the information from my research to improve the belongingness, engagement, and retention of Students of Color on their respective college and university campuses.

In addition, over the course of several years, I have implemented service-learning in my classroom as an assistant professor of psychology at Duncan Community College within a human development course. I have witnessed how this high impact pedagogical technique has influenced and affected participating students. Therefore, I could be viewed as an “insider” regarding the examination of service-learning involvement at community colleges, which is also referred to as an *emic* perspective (Merriam, 2009). However, I also maintained my “outsider” or *etic* perspective (Merriam, 2009) because I may not have had personal interactions with the students I interviewed prior to this study. Since these students had already graduated from DCC, they may have been more forthcoming with their experiences.

As I coded my data, I realized my experiences working in the mental health field as a family counselor also influenced the ways in which I interpreted participants’ presentation and experiences. When words like “healing” were used to describe service-learning experiences, I found myself reflecting on the psychological and emotional benefits service-learning provided. This portion of my reflexivity was included in the debriefing process with my chair to explore ways in which I interpreted participant thoughts and actions, and ways that could influence the coding and interpretation of data.

Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the design and methodology of this transformative-
emancipatory mixed methods study, including the site selection, data collection, and analyses of
both phases of this study; as well as the integration of both quantitative and qualitative portions
of the research. I addressed why Critical Race Theory was chosen as the theoretical framework
which scaffolded the study. I also discussed why my qualitative data was coded using a
descendent of Critical Race Theory, Community Cultural Wealth, the limitations,
trustworthiness, and data validity of the study. I concluded this chapter with a discussion of my
positionality as a researcher, and my transparency and willingness to engage in this social justice
mixed methods design (McCoy, 2016).

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this transformative-emancipatory mixed methods study was to explore if service-learning involvement influenced the graduation of Students of Color enrolled at a community college; and *how*. I collected the data from a single community college, DCC; and from six individual participants for the qualitative phase of my study who all took coursework primarily at DCC's main campus. To examine my quantitative data, a binary logistic regression was conducted to determine the relationship between various predictor variables, including service-learning participation, on graduation. To examine my qualitative data, I used Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth framework to identify the various forms of capital Students of Color brought with them into and through their service-learning experiences.

Quantitative Findings

A binary logistic regression was conducted to investigate the relationship between service-learning involvement and graduation from Duncan Community College (DCC) within the fall 2013 and fall 2014 cohorts ($N = 4,184$). For the purposes of this study, in the data analysis, I only included full-time students who did not have missing data ($N = 3,453$). Within this population, the racial breakdown was: White ($n = 2,780$), Black ($n = 317$), Latinx ($n = 128$), Native American ($n = 16$), Pacific Islander ($n = 4$), Asian ($n = 50$), and Two or More ($n = 156$). See Table 1 for demographic information for this population.

Table 1. *Demographic information*

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Cohort		
2013	1,693	49.0
2014	1,760	51.0
Gender		
Female	1,805	52.3
Male	1,648	47.7
Service-Learning Participant		
No	2,985	86.4
Yes	468	13.6
Race		
White	2,780	80.5
Students of Color	671	19.4
Unknown	2	.0
Duncan Succeeds		
No	2,625	76.0
Yes	828	24.0

Note. N = 3,453.

To test the relationship between these predictor variables and graduation, a logistic regression was conducted with graduation as the dichotomous outcome measure. The initial iteration of predictor variables used in the logistic regression analyses were gender, race, cumulative GPA, PELL eligibility, Duncan Succeeds status, and service-learning participation (defined as 10 or more hours of service-learning coursework). A NEWRACE variable was created in which all Black/African American, Latinx, Asian, Native American, and Pacific Islander students were collapsed into the Students of Color category. The final prediction model included race (coded White and Student of Color in NEWRACE variable), Duncan Succeeds status, cumulative GPA, and service-learning participation were entered as predictor variables. Duncan Succeeds was non-significant as a predictor variable for graduation within these two cohorts. The final model included NEWRACE, service-learning participation, Duncan Succeeds, and cumulative GPA ($\mu = 2.09$), with service-learning participation, cumulative GPA, and NEWRACE as significant predictor variables. A Hosmer-Lemeshow goodness-of-fit was administered to determine how good the model was in terms of its predictability power $X^2(3) = 4.68, p = .197$. A chi-square test was conducted and revealed that the overall combination of these predictor variables significantly predicted the outcome variable, graduation $X^2(1) = 519.05, p < .001, \text{Pseudo } R^2 = .14$ (see Table 2).

Table 2. *Binary logistic regression results*

Variable	B	SE	Wald statistic	Odds Ratio ¹
Service-Learning	1.58	.11	210.88***	4.86 (3.92 to 6.01)
Cumulative GPA	.57	.04	206.63***	1.77 (1.64 to 1.92)
NEWRACE	-.01	.004	5.15**	.99 (.985 to .99)
Duncan Succeeds	-.055	.10	.34	.95 (.79 to 1.14)

¹Confidence Intervals in parentheses.

** $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 2 displays the results of the logistic regression. To interpret coefficients using odds ratios for logistic regressions, for every increase (or decrease, if the ratio is less than one) in the odds of being in one outcome category, an odds ratio (e^b) greater than one shows the increase in odds of an outcome of one with a one-unit increase in the predictor variable. Odds ratios less than one show the decrease in odds of that outcome with a one-unit change. For example, in this study, if there were no relationship between the predictor variable and graduation, the odds ratio would be one. If there was a negative relationship between the predictor variable and the graduation, the odds ratio would be less than one. If there was a positive relationship between the predictor variable and graduation, the odds ratio would be greater than one. To calculate the percentage increase or decrease in probability of an outcome in logistic regression, if the odds ratio is greater than one, this algorithm is applied: $(\text{odds ratio} - 1) * 100 = \% \text{ of increase}$. If the odds ratio is less than one, the following is applied: $(1 - \text{odds ratio}) * 100 = \% \text{ of decrease}$. The farther the odds ratio is from one, the more influential the predictor variable.

As the analyses demonstrate, the predictors NEWRACE, service-learning, and cumulative GPA were significant predictor variables on graduation as the outcome variable. Cumulative GPA and service-learning participation had a positive significant relationship with predicting graduation, producing the odds ratios of 1.77 for cumulative GPA and 4.86 for service-learning participation. NEWRACE was less significant, with an odds ratio of .99. These results indicated that every one-unit increase in service-learning participation was associated with increasing the odds of graduation by 386%, $\chi^2(1) = 210.88, p < .001$, odds ratio = 4.86 (3.92 to 6.01). In addition, an increase in cumulative GPA was associated with increasing the odds of graduation by 77%, $\chi^2(1) = 206.63, p < .001$, odds ratio = 1.77 (1.64 to 1.92). The variable NEWRACE had a significant negative relationship with graduation, meaning that being a Student of Color decreased the odds of graduation by 1%, $\chi^2(1) = 5.15, p = .023$, odds ratio = .99 (.985 to .99).

Quantitative Inferences

These results indicated there was a negative relationship between being a Student of Color and the likelihood of graduation. This is congruent with the critical perspective that higher education as a system, in this case at DCC, is designed for the success (as measured by graduation) of White students. However, the results also indicated that participating in service-learning increases the likelihood of graduation for Students of Color. Because I was not able to delve into Students' of Color experiences with service-learning specifically within the quantitative data, I wanted to examine this inference (that service-learning may positively relate to graduation for Students of Color) with a qualitative phase of the study.

Using a critical lens, I developed additional questions for the interview protocol to assess how these students' race may have influenced their service-learning experiences; as well as their

perception of White students' experiences in the same service-learning courses. I wanted to also assess specific ways in which students perceived service-learning as contributing to their overall academic experience, and ways in which those experiences affected their decision-making, lives, life-lessons; as well as ways in which these students felt their voices were "heard" through sharing their experiences with others.

Qualitative Findings

Six service-learning scholar Student of Color graduates (one Asian male, one Asian female, and four Black/African American females) from DCC participated in my study, and were interviewed between February 2019 and June 2019. The findings are presented in two parts. The first section of qualitative findings are specifically related to service-learning experience themes for participants. See Table 3 for a brief description of each participant and their involvement with service-learning. The second section of qualitative findings are specifically related to Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth framework, which emerged from my data.

Qualitative Findings: Service-Learning Themes

Specific service-learning experiences among the six participants were varied, but each participant described their overall service-learning experience as positive. Each participant recognized that service-learning helped them with their overall time management and success in college. All six participants identified that service-learning helped them in their academic success, including persistence to graduation; and all six participants had graduated from four-year institutions, post-graduation from DCC. A few themes emerged pertaining to these participants' service-learning coursework; and how, as Students of Color, those courses were experienced. Students of Color experienced service-learning as:

Table 3. *Descriptive table of students' service learning experiences*

	<i>Race</i>	<i>Initial Reason for Participation</i>	<i>Service-Learning Courses</i>	<i>Service-Learning Sites</i>	<i>Capacity in which Served</i>
Leah	Black/African American	Duncan Succeeds scholarship	English	High school DCC	Volunteer
Christian	Asian (Vietnamese)	Duncan Succeeds scholarship/ Director of Service-Learning	English Biology	Opera House DCC Community Gardens English tutor Walk for diseases Community center	Volunteer Gardener Tutor Mentor
Kimber	Asian (Korean) and White	Duncan Succeeds Scholarship Mentor/former teacher	Sociology Psychology	Elementary and Middle Schools	Teacher Tutor Mentor
Nashville	Black/African American	High school religious studies teacher	English	Community center for children	Tutor Mentor
Amina	Black/African American	Director of Service-Learning/ Criminology professor	Philosophy Sociology	Legal advocacy groups Several non-profit organizations	Advocate Mentor Tutor Executive Director
Kay	Black/African American	Director of service-learning/ Director of student life	College Student Success English	DCC	New Student Orientation Mentor Service-Learning Advocate

Note. Sites are not listed by name to protect the anonymity of the participants.

1. Life changing: Experiences were personalized, meaningful, and fulfilling.
2. A message: Participants wanted to share with others about their experiences, outside of academic settings.
3. Racialized: Students of Color experienced racism within their experiences.

“Life Changing” – The Personalization of the Experience

Participants shared ways in which they felt service-learning helped or changed them individually. These Student of Color service-learning scholars felt service-learning added to their lives. They each expressed various ways in which they deemed their service-learning experiences were deeply meaningful and important. Christian, an Asian American first-generation college student, noted that when he helped people:

...it fulfilled me...Every day I go to do the service-learning I feel happier because I never had donated money to anything. But in doing this, I give out my time. I am a part of this country, so I come here, they give me a free scholarship, they give me a free education, even though I don't have money. But I'm giving something back! I think it's a very good thing. I feel that I just didn't get everything that America gave me for free. I just give back the same, so it does fulfill me.

When he did not have the financial resources to give, to better the lives of others, Christian felt service-learning was his own personal way to contribute to his community and his country. He expressed fulfillment in giving back through service to others.

Nashville, a Black psychology major, described her experience as personally “life-changing” because, when she saw what the children at the community center “did not have, it made me grateful for what I [do] have.” Kay, a Black first-generation college student, recognized that service-learning strengthened her problem-solving skills, by providing her

opportunities to “practice how to think more critically about problems and how to solve them.” She expressed gratitude that her ability to think divergently, rooted in her service-learning experiences, enabled her to work better within non-profit organizations. Amina, an African American philosophy major, said her service-learning experiences could be described as a “dream come true” because they provided her with the hands-on education she needed, and also solidified her desire to major in philosophy; with plans to later attend law school.

Participants expressed that, as positive as their experiences were for them personally, they hoped the sites, children, and communities in which they served benefitted more. Kimber, who identified racially as both Asian and White, said:

I hope that the site benefitted more because I got to really take a lot of work and stress off of the teachers [because of all the things] I could do for these kids and just be a positive figure in their life and try to bring happiness for them.

These Students of Color expressed that part of the reason why service-learning affected them so greatly was because they believed they had personally bettered others’ lives around them. They each felt they had personally engaged with and contributed to their communities in unique ways, and in turn, it had changed them as individuals. They excitedly shared ways in which their experiences were internalized, and how they had reached out to others about the significance of their involvement.

“Spread the Word” – Service-Learning as an Important Message

Participants went out of their way to express the importance of increasing awareness on campus for the service-learning program. They wanted to clearly communicate the benefits the service-learning program could bring to other students. All of the participants stated the need for

more students to participate in service-learning; for there to be more awareness raised about the positive benefits of the program; and also about the opportunities it provided. Nashville shared:

I hope [service-learning is] mandatory for everyone. I think it should be mandatory for everyone to have to go out and into the community...because it could definitely change your outlook on life, and it will help you to...grow as a person.

Not only did Nashville want to share her experiences with others, she acknowledged the growth she experienced as a result of her service-learning participation.

Amina, a non-traditional student (see Kenner & Weinerman, 2011), shared that more students should be told the importance of participation in service-learning. She emphasized, "...word needs to get out more! A lot of students are not aware of what is available and how those opportunities can turn into lifetime contacts!" Christian said:

I think DCC should put more posters [up] about service-learning! I think that it is very good for students with English majors, especially if they want to be a teacher in the future...I worked at DCC and I didn't see any posters. I think some students...could be interested in that [if they knew it was available]!

Kay, an organizational leadership major, spent the majority of her time at DCC as a new student orientation leader educating first-year students ("up to 300 at one time") about the service-learning program, and the various opportunities and benefits students could have as a result of their participation in service-learning courses. She was so excited in sharing about her personal experiences, she began encouraging me to also tell others about the importance of service-learning:

I just encourage you to keep going, keep spreading [the word] to get more and more students involved. I think it's a beautiful thing, and I think it's a way to do our job as a community college and to work in the community!

Participants not only thought it was important to tell others about service-learning, they also shared the ways in which they had taken opportunities to share their personal experiences with others. Leah expressed how she had shared her experiences with her children, "I shared my experiences with my boys!" Christian, an undergraduate music major at DCC laughed and said:

Of course I talk with my friends...to try to get them to do [service-learning]!...I talk to my sister and I try to make her do it...so I tell her as soon as she [does], she will learn more about other people and life. But I think helping people is a very good thing!

This theme of spreading the word about service-learning emerged from the participants' experiences, and indicated the perceived importance of the service-learning program for all students. These participants not only believed their experiences were powerful and helped them, but they believed those experiences could be beneficial for others. Service-learning scholars were outspoken advocates for other students' success in college.

“White Students Had It Easier” – Racialized Service-Learning Experiences

Participants acknowledged how race was a salient factor in their service-learning experiences. Leah reflected that “White students had an easier time going through college,” and did not have the same “barriers,” both academic and personal, within their service-learning experiences. Christian expressed, in a frustrated manner, that he was able to make the time to complete all of his service-learning hours (over 100 hours total) during the two years he attended DCC, while simultaneously being a full-time student. However, his White peers would consistently say they “did not have time to be involved in service-learning, when they had

similar schedules.” Christian recognized a difference in prioritization of time and service-learning as a racial component of his experiences. Kimber, a psychology major, reflected that while she had to explain her race to the students she tutored and mentored at the elementary and middle schools, White students’ race “never was a topic of conversation” during their shared service-learning experiences. She noted she would consistently have to explain her race to students who would question her racial identity.

Nashville acknowledged that White students viewed their participation in service-learning as a task, or as if they were sacrificing by giving their time. However, she felt they were not really understanding the significance of the role of true mentorship in the children’s lives at the children’s community center, and were not really learning much from their experiences. Amina noticed the White students who participated in service-learning roles at non-profits only wanted roles or positions that were notable, and were not willing to work hard without recognition. She stated, “White students were hesitant or afraid to go into communities with People of Color.” However, Amina enjoyed reaching out and going into communities with People of Color, “I had no fear of going to the east side of the city...so I don’t think any other race would feel as comfortable going into the projects [as I did]...” Amina also described situations in which she lost funding for her service projects because funding agencies discovered her race:

A lot of times funding fell through because organizations found out I was not of the right persuasion...because I was a Person of Color. I felt that had a big baring...it felt really disheartening, especially after all the work we did. Getting word from all of these [people] that “You’re the top runner and [the funding] is going to happen!”, and then all of a sudden [they said] “We can’t help you.” when they found out who I was.

Kay believed that as a Person of Color, she understood the significance of “reaching back to other African Americans,” and helping those like herself. While she believed DCC fostered diversity and inclusion, she felt she understood the significance of her service in a way that White students would not be able to understand because of their race.

When describing their service-learning experiences, a few themes emerged from these Students of Color. Students of Color described their service-learning experiences as personally meaningful, and described how giving back to the community helped them feel positive, happy, and as if they were making a difference in others’ lives. Service-learning experiences were salient experiences, to the extent that participants wanted to share with as many students as possible, all of the positive benefits service-learning could bring. Participants not only thought the college should do more to share the program with others; they offered stories and examples of their own experiences sharing with family and community members. Finally, these Students of Color expressed ways in which their service-learning experiences were racialized.

Qualitative Findings: A Community Cultural Wealth Perspective

I used Critical Race Theory's descendent theory, Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth to code my qualitative data, and to create the qualitative inferences for this study. The emergent themes illuminated how DCC's service-learning program contributed to the participants' Community Cultural Wealth (CCW), thereby contributing to participants' success in college, including their persistence to graduation. Although each participant's service-learning experience varied, common themes emerged from the analysis. These themes were each specifically related to the ways in which service-learning contributed to participants' CCW.

“Service-Learning Pushed Me...” – (Aspirational Capital)

Aspirational capital is what Yosso (2005) defined as maintaining “hopes and dreams” (p.77) for future success, even in the face of difficulty. Participation in the service-learning program fueled participants' desires to succeed in college. This resilience was not only related to graduation from DCC, but also in pursuit of participants' four-year degrees. The program encouraged students to become engaged in their communities, positive role models, mentors to others, and to encourage others - friends and family members - in their pursuits. For example, Leah a Black first-generation college student and technical communications major, described she initially only chose to participate in service-learning to meet scholarship requirements. Leah said service-learning enabled her to overcome personal barriers, and motivated her to continue toward graduation. Reflecting on the reasons her service-learning experience was beneficial, she said, “I learned not to give up, and to keep going in life ...it just pushed me to go further in life.” Leah said, “It helped [me] manage [my] time better outside [of class].” By knowing she had to balance work, life, and school with service, it motivated her to “get stuff done,” such as studying for her coursework. Leah described the service-learning environment as “friendly” and “encouraging” helping her persist in college.

Leah passionately explained that being a single mother of two young children, working full-time, attending school full-time, and serving in the community was difficult, "...some of the classes that I had to take at DCC were night classes, and I had to sacrifice a lot, [not] seeing my children." However, she attributed her experiences in service-learning with teaching her how to manage her time better outside of school, "I used [time management from service-learning] in my personal home." She also determined service-learning helped her when transferring to a four-year institution because she had already completed her two-year degree debt-free. This included her successful completion of service-learning courses, which enabled her to maintain her full scholarship:

I think that my experience is different because going to Grand University there were others...I saw students that were kind of struggling with their classes, and just financially, cause their fees were more than what mine was. So I felt like that's where my route was better than theirs.

Nashville knew what to expect from college because her mother and grandmother had both attended, but she recognized that service-learning contributed to her ability to graduate because, "[she] definitely learned time management." Christian attributed service-learning to helping him "control my time better, and I just learned, and gained more knowledge [than I would have without service-learning]." He continued stating and re-stating how "happy" service-learning made him, and how much it "helped" him persist. Kimber said that service-learning helped her graduate:

So if I had to complete...hours...for that class doing community service; it helped me in that class particularly. I liked that class more because I absolutely had to do something,

not just show up to lecture, take notes, take a quiz, test, go home...it helped boost my GPA because it helped me to stay focused and determined.

Through her service-learning experiences, Kimber discovered her desire and passion to become a school counselor for elementary and middle school children. She said, "I realized it was more than just something to put on your resume...it gave me a purpose. [Service-learning] helped me realize...my BIG goal is to be a school counselor!" Service-learning also inspired Kimber to keep pushing, and inspired her to continue in her coursework. She excitedly shared, "[Service-learning] pushed me to not only help these children become more successful, but that also gave me...intrinsic reward[s] where I felt the need to push myself, and it gave me purpose." Service-learning provided her with the desire and motivation to continue to aspire toward graduation from both a two-year and four-year institution.

Amina attributed her overall service-learning experience at DCC, including the personal, uplifting relationships she had with service-learning faculty, with her ability to heal after her son was implicated in a violent crime:

Those two [her instructor and service-learning director] got me through...they helped build me up and to let me know that this was where you can put your energy because I had it so bottled up, I was like "What do I do!?" [The service-learning director] was like, "Volunteer! Just go out, talk to kids, let them know your story, that's how you can heal." So that's how I started healing, was telling children [my story].

Amina's relationships with the service-learning director and other faculty members inspired her to heal and continue her college education to overcome a seemingly insurmountable tragedy. In this way, these relationships fostered aspirational capital for Amina on her journey toward graduation.

In addition, Kay attributed service-learning with contributing to her ability to finish college by emphatically stating: "...this is something that has stayed with me, you know, forever. Something that...inspired my major, inspired a lot of actions that I've taken, so it definitely [was most beneficial] to me." Service-learning contributed to Kay's aspirational capital to graduate from DCC, and then to continue on in her career in organizational leadership, with a specialty in non-profit work. Kay believed the shared experiences with other students in service-learning courses created a sense of purpose and belonging for her, which contributed to her desire to persist:

Coming in as a first-gen...the people you do service-learning with, you create this bond with them. I don't think I really knew what to expect from college, or that college was for me, or [if I would] fit in. But when you're in a community service-learning project, and you're getting your hands dirty and working and growing together, it eliminates a lot of that. It creates a sense of family, and gives you this purpose. I think that's important when you're not sure what to expect.

Even though Kay was unsure what to expect from college, service-learning provided a community in which she persisted alongside with purpose. Kay also acknowledged that participating in service-learning motivated her to perform well in her classes:

Part of service-learning, and especially for me at DCC was being a leader, so it was important to maintain that on all fronts. I know that for me...a lot of my teachers recognized me as being involved, and in my free time they would say, "Hey, Kay, can you tell us what's going on at DCC?" And that would be part of the class. So if I was going to stand in front of my class, I didn't want to be failing. I definitely wanted to be

there and be active and present, so it definitely contributed to my success because you wanted to maintain that.

Not only did participants describe their experiences as positive, but they attributed them to their persistence to graduation, and identified specific ways in which service-learning helped them feel as if they could be successful in college. This was important because these participants possessed different racial identities, and each had varying levels of exposure to higher education. However, service-learning benefitted each in different ways and contributed to their success. Service-learning helped students persist to graduation by teaching them time management, giving them a place of belonging, and supplementing their course material with experiential knowledge, aspiring them to graduate and overcome various barriers and difficulties.

“I Got to Expose Them to Korean!” – Linguistic Capital

Linguistic capital is defined as both the intellectual and social skills inherent in bilingualism (Yosso, 2005). One aspect of Yosso’s (2005) CCW found within participant service-learning experiences, were ways in which the participants’ linguistic capital, including their skillsets and knowledge in bilingualism, were demonstrated and practiced in various ways. After teaching students English during the day, Kimber, who spoke Korean, Chinese, and English, excitedly shared:

If [the fifth-graders] behaved well and did their work, at the end of the day I would go to the board and teach them how to read and write in Korean. And at the time I was taking Chinese at DCC, so I could also teach them some Chinese as well.

Kimber shared she was able to connect with these students, while also honing her teaching skills by teaching fifth-graders how to read and write in basic Korean. This added to Kimber’s linguistic capital because she was sharpening her “teaching and tutoring skills [and] civic and

familial responsibility” (Yosso, 2005, p. 79) and feel personally connected to her work with children. Kimber emphasized students like her who want to participate in service-learning should “pick something that you’re really connected with. And that’s what I did with this service-learning opportunity.” She proudly and excitedly shared, “I got to be a positive figure in [the children’s lives] and try to bring them happiness. I got to expose them to Korean culture!” Kimber described her experience sharing her culture and language with children as something that “helped me with my future.”

Christian, a music major who spoke both Vietnamese and English, said that when he first moved to America with his family, he did not speak English very well. He voiced his concerns with the service-learning director, who immediately connected him with a monk in the community who needed to learn English. Christian was laughing as he shared:

[The service-learning director], she’s just so friendly. She gives me a lot of things to do, like, one time, she asked me to teach English to a Vietnamese monk, and I just tell her, “I don’t know how to teach, and I don’t think I have any talent that [I] can teach anybody,” but she told me “Just try.” and I did! Not so bad! And when I’m done with the monk, he thanked me a lot for helping him improve his English...I had more emotional maturity, get more confidence...I recognize more about life and myself...I have experience in trusting how I teach people, I have to give them instruction. It is a very good experience...I learn about patience.

Christian utilized his linguistic capital within his service-learning experience, and through that, was able to develop multiple social skills including: vocabulary, cross-cultural awareness, literacy, teaching and tutoring, civic responsibility, and social maturity.

All of these social skills are indicative of the linguistic capital students utilized and brought with them through their service-learning and educational experiences. Although only two participants demonstrated linguistic capital throughout their service-learning experiences, linguistic capital was important because it enabled them to engage others in very personal and meaningful ways through language. According to Yosso (2005), children who bring bilingual skills into their higher education experiences demonstrate a more dynamic set of intellectual and social skills. Therefore, these participants exhibited the unique strength and importance of cultural wealth rooted in language.

“I Just Want to Walk with Them.” – Familial Capital

Familial capital is a cultural consciousness of family which models lessons of caring, coping, and providing for others in students’ lives (Yosso, 2005). It acknowledges both biological family connections as well as community kinship connections, which “inform our emotional, moral, educational and occupational consciousness” (Yosso, 2005, p. 79). Students spoke about their familial capital, and how that influenced their decisions to become involved with service-learning programs, as well as their experiences within service-learning. Leah described a mentor from her church who encouraged her to participate in service-learning:

Her name’s Ms. A. So she kinda pushed me to kinda go to college, ‘cause I have two little boys, so she thought it would be a good insight for me to just go to college and just to continue on in my education.

Ms. A’s close mentorship and kinship ties with Leah encouraged her to go to college and participate in service-learning at DCC. In turn, Leah felt going to college and participating in service-learning enabled her to be a role model to other first-generation college students in the community who did not know what to expect in college, like her siblings:

I got to share within my household, my home, like with my parents. And I got to explain to my siblings how DCC was, and how it's an easy path, like [service-learning] is an easy route to go, and take your time, manage your time better, outside – I explained it. I used it in my personal home.

Leah demonstrated her familial capital and her service-learning and college experiences to inform the educational consciousness of others.

Kimber happily spoke about the ways in which the expectations of her family, specifically her father and mother, had influenced her to not only attend college, but also give back to others. She spoke about both perceived and real expectations from her family, and how she just wanted to make them proud through her service to her community. She became emotional when reflecting on these expectations from her mother:

...the Korean culture on my mom's side, she is a carefree spirit, but she still has some Korean values, so of course in all Asian cultures, it's [to] protect face - so I'm supposed to, as her child, as well as myself. But if I make her look bad, it makes her look like she doesn't know how to raise kids if I'm out here doing things that isn't good for me, that she thinks isn't good for me. I was nervous about college and not going to grad school or making sure that in my service-learning I was doing everything that I could. I was really trying to make sure, my main goal, was to make sure my mom was proud of me.

Kimber's familial capital contributed to the work she did as a service-learning scholar, and she was able to fulfill her responsibility to her mother and family through her service tutoring children in the community. Kimber joyfully spoke of a mentor who had been both a teacher to her in elementary school, as well as a close family friend. This mentor encouraged her to participate in service-learning courses at DCC, and to serve by working as a teacher, tutor, and

mentor in her fifth-grade classroom. Kimber made her service experience personal and strongly connected it to her family and cultural heritage by teaching the students about her culture:

I've also gotten to utilize [my service-learning experience] in my personal life. If I had a positive experience such as a kid asking me...questions on the Korean culture and food, I got to tell my parents and family that "Hey! There are actually people that appreciate our culture and they actually really want to know, and not just make fun of it, or mock it."

Kimber also acknowledged her experience as a racialized experience because, in the community in which she served, there were no other Asian children or families – only White or Latinx families. Sharing about her culture and family heritage with these children through service-learning brought her pride in being able to connect the children with someone from another race and experiences within her own family. Kimber demonstrated the lessons of caring and providing education for these children that modeled Yosso's (2005) description of familial capital. She extended understanding of the importance of community and connections to others.

Christian smiled when he identified that one of his major service-learning projects included volunteering to work in a fundraising walk for diseases in the city in which he lived. When he reflected on his experience, he became emotional when he shared the main reason he wanted to volunteer in that specific capacity was because his grandmother, "whom I loved very much," had passed away from this disease, "So I just try to be good to people who also have loved ones or friends who died from that disease. And I just want to walk with them. I really loved that." Christian felt that by serving his community in this way, he was honoring the memory of his grandmother, and also extending care to others whom he would consider family because of the shared experience of loss. Service-learning provided him an opportunity to

demonstrate this form of community cultural wealth that engaged with the commitment to community well-being, and expanded the concept of family and kinship with others.

Nashville shared that her experiences working at a children's community club reminded her of her own community and life experiences. She stated that she felt more connected to the students there because most of them identified as African American:

I was relating and seeing, they were telling me stories about being at home, and sometimes kids would tell me, like their mother didn't cook them dinner, or like their mom left them at home by themselves, and I could definitely relate being around that growing up, too.

Nashville found White students' experiences differed from her experience. She laughed and shook her head when sharing:

They thought everything was cute. I could just see that they kinda just took this more as something extra, like they're just helping someone out. I don't think it really impacts their life much, and they can't really relate to the situation that some of these kids were going through.

Nashville explicated she had this consciousness and awareness of what it meant to grow up as a Person of Color in a community where parents sometimes work multiple jobs to support their families, and what it was like being a child within that experience. She felt the White students did not "get" what the children were communicating, and did not fully understand the importance of a community center, and the roles of the volunteers there. Nashville related she understood the importance of mentors in the community to help raise children when their parents were absent. Furthermore, she communicated that everyone should volunteer in their communities. She re-stated the importance of "volunteering for kids who probably can't go

home right after school ‘cause their parent is busy and can’t pick them up.” Nashville brought her familial capital with her into her service-learning experience, and the service-learning experience enabled her to utilize that capital to help care for others in her community through tutoring and mentoring.

Participants utilized their familial capital while engaged in service-learning in multiple ways. Service-learning was a way for participants to activate familial capital while in college, even if their family-of-origin was not physically present. They demonstrated their understanding of the importance of ties to their community. In addition, the participants displayed kinship bonds with those in the community with whom they were not biologically related; but with whom they felt the need to provide care and compassion. These participants also explicated the important assets familial capital provides within racialized and classed experiences while serving in the community.

“Life-Long Connections” – Social Capital

Social capital is defined as “networks of people and community resources” (Yosso, 2005, p. 79). These networks provide emotional and tangible supports to students as they pursue higher education. In turn, social capital is also what motivates students to reach back to their communities and work toward uniting the various social networks they have gained in order to pursue social justice (Yosso, 2005).

Kimber reflected that, by working with her former teacher, close family friend, and current mentor through the service-learning program, she was able to better realize her career goal of working with children, majoring in psychology, and one day becoming a school counselor. Kimber shared:

My Kindergarten teacher...she inspired me, 'cause she had told me about this program at DCC, and she inspired me to do the work with her. I told her I was going to DCC in the fall of 2013...once I got my scholarship and then I got into the classes that required [service-learning], I realized that...I do want to work with kids...So I asked her if I could work with her.

She stated that this opportunity, thanks to her social network in the community, helped her realize “my career goals are on the right path,” and that she had the “patience and heart to work with children.” Kimber spoke about how much her experience in the community motivated her to work harder in her coursework to attain her education, especially since her career goals had been realized.

Christian was sad when he shared that when he first came to DCC, he did not have any friends. He began laughing when he explained he realized soon after enrolling in service-learning courses, he was able to meet an entire network of friends and people. He initially identified as a shy individual when he first entered college, but thanks to his active involvement in service projects, and being “forced” by the service-learning director to “go out and meet people,” he recognized he was able to speak more confidently to others, and practice his English through communication. The service-learning director served as a form of social capital for Christian by consistently pushing him outside of his comfort zone, inviting him to participate in service-projects on campus and in the community, pushing him in his English course, and encouraging him consistently on his language improvement and service involvement. Christian laughed when he shared:

My first year at DCC my English [was] not really good...but I tried and [the service-learning director] always say every year that “Your English gets better! Your English

gets better!” So she’s talking, she’s really pushing me to practice my speaking [laughing]...other students they talk so fast. I always had to tell them, “Please slower so I’ll understand”, but it’s better now!

This is an example of how the service-learning director contributed to Christian’s aspirational capital, by pushing him to succeed; as well as his social capital, by expanding his network to others.

Kay reflected that a significant part of her desire to participate in service-learning came from the social networks she established when she came to DCC:

I started out with the director of student life and the director for new student orientation. That’s where I did a lot of networking and meeting a lot of people. I also connected with the director of service-learning, and we did service-learning courses. I did a lot of help with the orientation students and the first-year freshmen (sic) and teaching them, getting into the college experience and giving them advice and connecting them to different resources within the college.

The service-learning director and director of student life built relationships with her, and engaged her in courses that provided service within the college and community. She immediately used her social capital to reach out to other first-time first-year students and educate them about the need to become involved, as well as where they could go for help at the college. Kay thoughtfully reflected:

Once I started networking with [the service-learning director and director of student life] and getting out into the community it was something that became important to me. My church is close to that elementary school, it’s on the same road, and that’s where [the

service-learning director] started with a lot of her work with mentoring. My church [has] the same vision. So it just kinda aligned for me.

The connection to both Kay's community (church) and school led to her active participation in this elementary school's community garden for two years, while she attended DCC. She also shared that her experiences growing up were combined with her collegiate service-learning experience when she volunteered within literacy schools:

With my family, we did a lot of inner-city literacy programs. I think for my mom, looking back now, [it was] obviously low-cost childcare, but also it was important to keep us always learning and growing and that is something that impacted me. I [volunteered] a lot with [children's literacy programs] growing up, so it's just as important to me, instilled in me to be a part of my community, and then helping other people. Being [Black] is an ingrained part of me...to be able to reach out and help other African Americans, especially young people, to have another positive example of someone doing something was important to me. It was important to me to see that, and now that I am grown it is important for me to be that.

Not only did Kay give back by volunteering as a reader for literacy programs for children, but she also served as a mentor and student orientation leader. Kay said she spent her time, "teaching people how to be successful and how to learn to adjust at college, but also give them basic life skills." Kay saw her mission as a successful, first-generation college student was to reach out to other college students, and to educate and inform them of the opportunities the service-learning program could provide:

I also worked at the front desk [in the student life center], so I had a lot of one-on-one interactions with students and I had also had a lot of big group interactions...and my job

was really to show them about service-learning, about the different avenues, the different groups, different clubs, just introduce them to the whole culture in general. I would tell them all about service-learning and about the different teachers they could connect with, and that was the biggest way I reached people.

Service-learning provided Kay a way in which to use her social networks in the community and within DCC to reach back to help others, while she was seeking a path to higher education. She saw reaching back to help others through service as a personal mission for her both as a Black female, and a first-generation college student. She emphatically expressed a desire for other students to feel engaged and a sense of belonging as she did at DCC:

You know I think one of the most beautiful things about DCC was that the culture, I didn't feel that it was divisive. I worked hand-in-hand with a lot, I grew up in a White majority, and...the student life director was White, and I can't mention [her] without mentioning her co-worker who acted like a second mother to me. They were a tag team duo, and they were White and Black. I didn't feel a divisive nature as far as minorities (sic) at DCC.

Kay recognized her sense of belonging came from this relationship she saw modeled for her between the director of student life and her co-worker. She emotionally expressed how seeing this close relationship of a Black woman with a White woman as a "tag team" in a White majority – a relationship and network she possessed as a direct result of her engagement on campus through service-learning – helped her feel like she had a place at DCC. Kay's love for her social network and the deep connection they shared was evident as she became emotional speaking about the director of student life who had recently passed away, "[the director of

student life], when we lost her, that touched my heart in such a way.” Kay acknowledged these social networks she had established through service-learning did not end when she graduated:

You know the people you meet just change your life. [The service-learning director] each time I’ve had my babies, I’ve had two babies, she reaches out to me, and sends me energy and just that thoughtfulness of these life-long connections that you meet, people that I did service-learning with, I’m still close to. On Facebook we still talk, communicate, now we’re growing, you know, we’re adults and all, but we’re still connected through the things that we did together then.

When Amina first enrolled at DCC, she said she felt broken, and needed help understanding how to interpret the law because of her son’s legal situation and status. Her professor connected her with legal resources and programs within the community so that she could receive the support needed. In turn, Amina chose some of those same organizations to donate her time within sociology and philosophy within her service-learning courses. She leaned in and expressed:

I wanted to give back because so many people had helped me anonymously. [She and her professor] just started another organization here in this city for the families of offenders because we found that the victims and their families were being assisted, but the families of offenders who do violent crimes, their families kind of go into hiding and are alienated by the communities because of what their children or family members have done. So we’re trying to get them to come out and talk and feel comfortable with what happened, and just have somewhere to go that’s a safe place.

Amina demonstrated her social capital by using her resources and knowledge (i.e., her professor and community contacts) she gained from her service-learning experiences to establish an

organization for those in the community who had experienced similar legal situations. She recognized the power her social networks could bring when applied in ways that currently were not being provided within her community. Amina emphasized what she wanted others to know:

Let them know that this was the best experience. It was something so painful and it turned out to be something so beautiful because I touched a lot of children, a lot of families. It's very important that the children see there are people like them who volunteer. I mean, I'm sure there are a lot, but in too many communities I do not see People of Color volunteer. It's very important that the children see there are people like them who volunteer, who help, who are intelligent, who can articulate, that there are ways that they can become the same way. That's why it's important for us to be seen as well as heard.

Amina also used her social capital to mentor first-generation college students within her service-learning courses at the college, and assisted in finding those students their own service-learning sites so they could also make positive relationships in the community, and give back in the communities in which they grew up:

I've mentored a few of the youth who are going to college, helping them get their programs in order and letting them know that volunteerism starts now. So even before they enroll in DCC, when they're in high school, we try to locate places they can volunteer and get a good foundation on what it takes [to build] a name for yourself out in the community...and then other young people started going out into the communities and really started trying to grasp what it meant to be a part of the service-learning community, and how they could [be a part of] what we had done.

Social capital was demonstrated and experienced by multiple participants in this study as a result of their service-learning experiences. This is significant because students transcended adversity in their own lives, while assisting others with attaining education, legal justice, and well-being (Yosso, 2005); and were able to unite multiple social networks in various ways for support and resources for themselves and others. Service-learning provided Students of Color opportunities to work with currently existing connections they may have had within the community; as well as make new connections and networks of people within their school and community. Participating in service-learning provided them with essential information they could draw upon for their own lives and future careers. In turn, the participants reported taking that information and giving back to the communities in which they were working, and also for other People of Color.

“It Definitely Contributed to My Success.” – Navigational Capital

Navigational capital refers to Students’ of Color abilities to navigate through “structures of inequality permeated by racism” (Yosso, 2005, p. 80), as well as students’ abilities to “maneuver” (Yosso, 2005, p. 80) through institutions not originally created for People of Color. Students were able to utilize their connections within service-learning, as well as their experiences within service-learning courses to help them persist to graduation from their community college and beyond. Leah recognized, being a Black first-generation college student, White students did not seem to have the same barriers she did within higher education. She felt at a disadvantage because she was Black, the first to attend college, did not do well academically in high school, and had several difficult situations in her personal life:

I didn’t really have good grades in high school so that kind of made it a way that I thought I wouldn’t be able to get into school or anything like that. But it was still possible though, getting through those classes with the [service-learning]

experiences...with my race, people just kind of viewed it as I needed more help. So, [service-learning] opened more doors for me, it gave me other options, and people were willing to help me. I felt the White students had it easy. They didn't have to go through the same battles...[service-learning helped] because I got jobs ahead of others when the job sites learned what classes I took and what I was studying...so it definitely helped me in that way.

Leah also stated that service-learning, and the relationships she made on campus by being more engaged, taught her perseverance:

I learned not to give up, and to keep going in life...I kept pushing, I didn't want to give up. People were willing to meet with you, they were just engaged in whatever you needed help with, so that was my experience.

While this example was used as evidence of aspirational capital, this example also demonstrated how service-learning served as navigational capital for Leah. Leah's service-learning experience provided her with a pathway to graduation through a network of support, tutors, and instructors within her coursework.

Kay's experience and involvement with service-learning was important because it helped her as a first-generation college student by getting her connected to the college as a community, and increased her individual agency (Yosso, 2005) and awareness of her academic performance. She explained she initially had no idea what to expect, or how to succeed in college, "I was a first-generation [student]. I don't think I really knew what to expect from college." Kay recognized how her connections and relationships with staff and faculty promoted her success; knowing there were others supporting her, and helping her find her major and passions in life

through service. Service-learning also helped Kay navigate her path beyond her two-year degree:

I wanted to make an impact. I think I left DCC on fire, really such a great time for me. [Service-learning] helped me branch out culturally, but also just meeting so many people and just having such a passion, it helped me to use my college major, which is organizational leadership. With that kind of focus on non-profit it helped me a lot, I went on to India after I graduated from DCC ...I did a lot of going out to the different orphanages and working with the different kids and just being present, which is what I learned from service-learning. The number one thing is just being present and being a force wherever you are, so that motivated me a lot in picking my major, and it also motivated me a lot in the decisions I made after college.

Participants' service-learning experiences contributed to their navigational capital by providing them pathways to graduation and beyond. These experiences were noteworthy to participants as they reflected on the reasons they were able to continue persisting in both community college and four-year institutions. This modeled Yosso's (2005) navigational capital because it demonstrated participants' "individual agency within institutional constraints" (p. 80), while connecting participants to "social networks that facilitate community navigation through places and spaces including schools" (p. 80).

“I’m the Person You’re Talking About...” – Resistant Capital

Resistant capital is Student's of Color resistance to systemic Whiteness, and is rooted in a legacy of resistance passed down by communities of color (Yosso, 2005). Participants demonstrated their resistant capital within their service-learning experiences, and consciously

utilized their positions in the community to combat systems of oppression. Kay excitedly reflected on her experience working in a community garden at a Title I elementary school:

My church is [on the same road as the elementary school] so I've seen it a lot of times, especially because we know that funding for schools is based on the money of the homeowners in that area, especially in [this city]. There's such a difference in inner-city schools compared to [more affluent areas in the city]. [Affluent school children's experiences are] completely different from the inner-city experience. But since the community garden started at this elementary school, and they've been reaching out, you can see them doing new construction, you can see their garden, and it just looks like a place that is a community center. It's important for a lot of kids who don't [normally] see that...you can see how the school has flourished and you can see how it's developed and I think that it's awesome! It's still growing every time I go past the elementary school. I see something new or different.

Kay utilized her service-learning experience to contribute to a community garden at an elementary school which historically has not received sufficient funds to function well for the community and children for which it serves. She described how her contributions and service made up for a lack of resources that local entities did not provide. In this way, Kay utilized her service experience as a form of resistance in the community.

Amina recognized that her participation in service within service-learning courses could be used as a form of resistance in her community. She emphatically described a turning point in her service-learning experience when she recognized those around the table at a non-profit executive board meeting were not representing the best interests of the people they were

claiming to serve. As she responded, Amina sat on the edge of her seat, and raised her voice and described the following account:

...sitting at the table as a volunteer...I was sitting with executive directors, people who ran programs...and my experience sitting in that environment was overwhelming... because I was not educationally at that level of master's or doctorate, but [my participation in service-learning] had put me at an executive director level of participation. So, I was sitting at this table, and here I am this person who's just coming in as being a recipient of these programs listening to how the executive directors and program directors speak about us as individuals...the group kept saying "they"...so I became offended. I waited until [the meeting was over]...and I let everyone know that I was "they." I'm the person you're talking about when you talk about those that are receiving services.

Amina used her service as an opportunity to be the voice for those who were being served in the community. She forcefully pushed back against both the attitudes and beliefs White board members possessed about the People of Color who were receiving services from the organization. She identified that no one on these organization boards had any personal connections with People of Color, so she chose to advocate through her service in both the community and on the board. Amina powerfully communicated:

I'm confident in who I am as a Person of Color, so I would challenge the status quo and I'm a troublemaker, so I go into the organization letting them know, "Hey, I'm the only Woman of Color, now what are you guys doing here, and where are the People of Color? I mean, for every organization I volunteered at, if I didn't see that there were other People of Color I would bring it up, "Why not? What's going on?" I wanted to be out with the

people, I wanted to be surrounded by those getting the services, and I needed to feel like they felt so I could know which way to go as far as helping them. So [there was a] disconnect with those who were implementing the programs because they hadn't been amongst the people in so many years that they had lost that connection. That's what I felt sitting as a Person of Color amongst a majority of White people who were running these programs.

Amina used her service-learning experiences and life experiences to utilize her voice as resistant capital. Specifically, she used her voice as a Person of Color to challenge the systemic Whiteness in these community organizations, and to call out the need for diversity and inclusion on these non-profit boards.

Although there were only two participants who explicitly described their service-learning experiences as forms of resistance, this was noteworthy because participants “challenged the status quo” (Yosso, 2005, p. 81) in the communities in which they served. Just as Yosso (2005) described, these students were “oppositional with their bodies, minds and spirits in the face of race, gender and class inequality.” (p. 81). This is significant because these Students of Color served as the “hands and feet” of social justice in their communities through their service-learning experience.

Qualitative Inferences

Service-learning experiences positively influenced these six Student of Color participants' graduation from DCC by helping them academically through both a hands-on understanding of the material within the service-learning courses, as well as providing them with the motivation to succeed in these courses. It also provided a sense of engagement and belonging on campus, and the program's flexibility with site selection allowed the participants to

select experiences that were deeply personal and meaningful. Participants' service-learning sites also contributed to and/or coincided with their overall educational and career paths, as well as provided opportunities for them to intentionally give back to their communities. They chose to share their experiences with others, including family and friends, which contributed to participants' understanding of their experiences and the meaning-making process. In addition, service-learning experiences contributed to participants' community cultural wealth through their demonstration of: aspirational capital, linguistic capital, familial capital, social capital, navigational capital, and resistant capital.

Meta-Inference

The qualitative inferences helped explain and support the quantitative inferences in this study by demonstrating the positive influence of service-learning participation on graduation. All six participants in this study graduated from DCC, which supported the quantitative finding that students who participated in service-learning hours were more likely to graduate. In addition, each participant linked their service-learning participation with their ability to continue on to graduate from a four-year institution. Two of the participants explicated that their decision to pursue graduate education was a direct result of their experiences and the knowledge gained in service-learning at DCC. Though each student's experience was unique, each was able to describe specific ways in which their academic and personal lives were affected, as well as their perceived ability to graduate as a direct outcome of their service-learning involvement.

Summary

This chapter included an analysis of the quantitative results from the DCC Department of Institutional Effectiveness, as well as the qualitative data from six participant interviews. This information provided answers to the guiding research questions in this study by providing evidence that students who participated in service-learning courses were more likely to graduate from DCC, as well as provided a description and framework for the experiences shared by the six Students of Color service-learning scholars interviewed. I also described and provided support for the six forms of capital of Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth: 1) aspirational capital; 2) linguistic capital; 3) familial capital; 4) social capital; 5) navigational capital; and 6) resistant capital. Despite the participants engaging in the same DCC service-learning program, and even though some shared the same racial identity, each had unique experiences, backgrounds, cultures, and stories. The emergence of the CCW framework demonstrated the pervasiveness and importance of this critical perspective within service-learning experiences for Students of Color.

Chapter Five includes analysis of these inferences grounded in both the existing literature and the CRT and CCW theoretical frameworks. It also includes instances of unexpected findings and provides implications for policy and practices for service-learning programs. Finally, Chapter Five includes suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I conducted a transformative-emancipatory mixed methods study at a public two-year associate's college with a high-transfer mixed-traditional/nontraditional student population in the Southeastern United States, Duncan Community College (DCC). I collected data from the Department of Institutional Effectiveness and DCC's Service-Learning Program; as well as from six individual participant interviews. The research questions guiding this study were:

1. Did participation in service-learning courses increase the likelihood that Students of Color graduated from community college?
2. What were Students' of Color experiences in a community college service-learning program?
3. How did Students' of Color experiences in community a college service-learning program influence graduation rates?

In Chapter Four I discussed the findings from my analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative data (interviews) I collected. The quantitative results were that service-learning participation and cumulative GPA were predictor variables that increased the likelihood that students would graduate; and that identifying as a Student of Color decreased the likelihood that students would graduate from DCC. The quantitative inferences suggested, due to completion of service-learning courses being a significant predictor of graduation, Students of Color should enroll in service-learning courses to increase the likelihood of graduation. The qualitative findings were that service-learning participation positively influenced Students' of Color graduation, and the qualitative inferences indicated that service-learning experiences contributed to participants' Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005). The subsequent meta-inference was that the qualitative findings converged with the quantitative results by examining how service-

learning contributed to an increase in the likelihood of graduation for Students of Color. This chapter includes an analysis and discussion of the findings, and its congruence with current literature. It also discusses unexpected findings, implications for policy and practice, and suggestions for future research.

Discussion and Analysis Linked to Community Cultural Wealth

In this section, I discuss and analyze the findings of this study related specifically to service-learning participation for Students of Color from a Community Cultural Wealth perspective. The discussion and analysis of participants' service-learning involvement includes discourse about how these participants' experiences within this particular service-learning program aligned with current service-learning literature, and also ways in which the findings from this study add to the existing literature.

While service-learning pedagogy has sometimes acknowledged the importance of a critical perspective, and even included important aspects of CCW (Blum & de la Piedra, 2010), CCW has not been widely used to interpret Students' of Color experiences within service-learning programs. Service-learning pedagogy has maintained the need to focus on the importance of White students' exposure to culture before and during service-learning experiences (Moeller & Bielfeldt, 2011), rather than a focus on the interpretation of Students' of Color service-learning experiences. This study provided context for how one community college's service-learning program has embraced students' backgrounds while allowing students to acquire new knowledge and skills while engaging with and serving the community around them.

Service-Learning Experiences

The initial qualitative findings centered around service-learning outcomes and themes that emerged from the data. Students of Color described their overall experiences in service-learning as “life-changing,” “positive,” and “fulfilling.” Participants described their experiences as personally enriching as they engaged their communities, and gave a part of themselves to those around them. They felt their contributions made a positive impact in the lives of those they helped, thus bettering their own lives. Participants also advocated for the participation of other students in service-learning courses, and each had varying suggestions as to how to increase participation in the service-learning program. Nashville thought service-learning should be “mandatory” for all students, because of all of the ways in which service-learning bettered her own experiences in college as she served in the community. They each expressed ways in which they had chosen to engage others in conversation about the positive experiences and benefits with which service-learning provided them.

These participants also described their racialized experiences as Students of Color within their service-learning courses. Participants found White students to lack understanding of the cultures in Communities of Color, even displaying, as Amina described, hesitancy and fear to enter into communities which were predominately People of Color. Amina attributed this to a generalized ignorance and lack of exposure to People of Color.

Community Cultural Wealth

The second qualitative findings focused on ways in which participants demonstrated their cultural capital within their service-learning experiences. Figure 2 is a visual representation of the way Yosso (2005) envisioned the CCW framework, and the ways in which each aspect of CCW contributes to overall community cultural wealth for Students of Color. This figure

“demonstrates that community cultural wealth is an array of knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed and utilized by Communities of Color to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression” (Yosso, 2005, p. 77). An important way in which this service-learning program helped students connect to their backgrounds was to facilitate their desires to do work in their communities.

Aspirational capital was present in each of the participants. They credited service-learning with pushing them toward graduation, providing them with positive supports and mentors at the college, and exposing them to positive supports and resources in the community. Graduation and career aspirations were cultivated by the experiences within service-learning

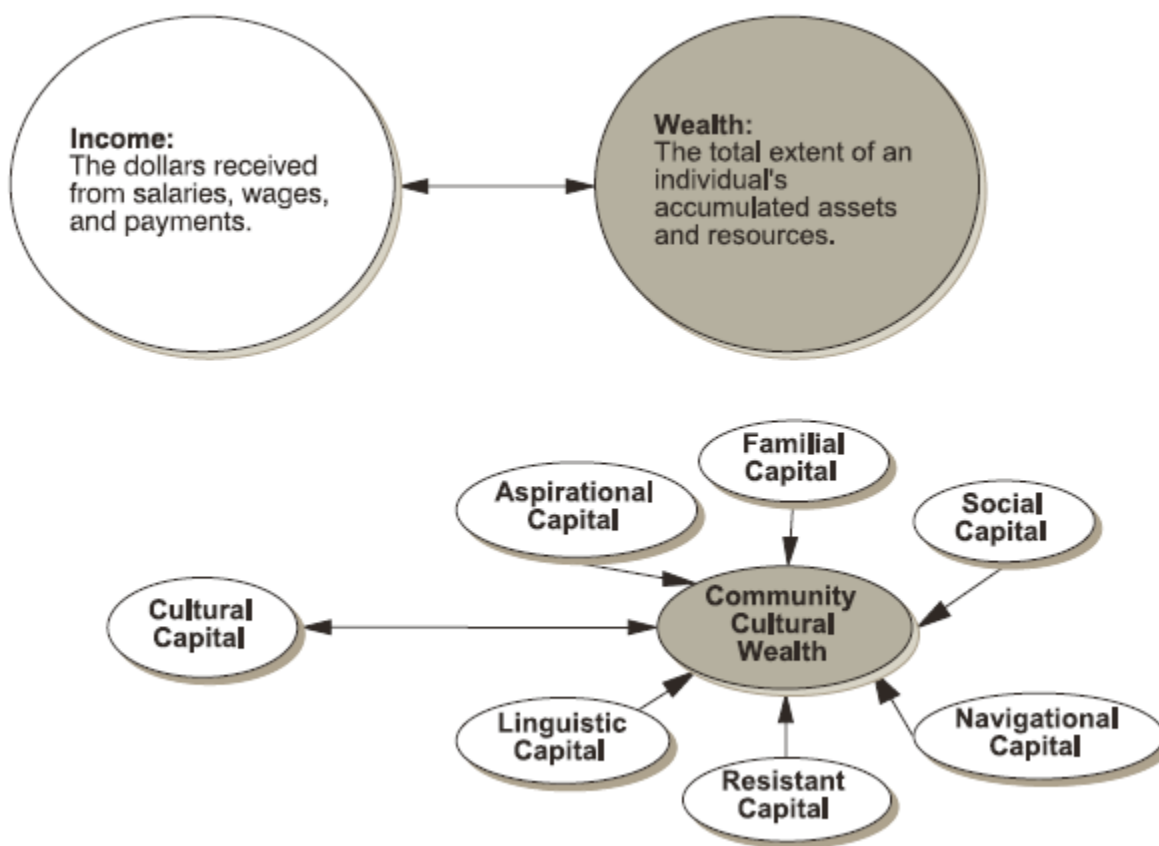


Figure 2. *Community cultural wealth* (Oliver & Shapiro, 1995; Yosso, 2005)

courses (e.g., legal advocacy, mentoring, tutoring, childcare, gardening, etc.) and also through the relationships developed within the program. In this way, aspirational capital was activated through involvement in service-learning. Several participants expressed a desire to utilize their degrees and careers to serve in their communities, and the connections participants made in their communities through service-learning still were strong several years post-graduation from DCC. Linguistic capital was activated for the bi-lingual participants in this study, but also for Students of Color who felt they were able to better communicate and understand children and adults in the community because they were of the same race and cultural background. Service-learning facilitated sites in which an expression of the participants' languages and styles were heard, utilized, and embraced for the betterment of the community, including advocacy and care for others.

Participants drew heavily upon their familial capital, acknowledging their shared experiences of the racialized and classed People of Color within the community. Service-learning empowered this set of participants to employ their familial capital. For example, familial capital was employed by: Leah as she worked to promote and inform the educational consciousness of others in her family and community; Christian, as he walked beside and cared for others who had lost family members to disease; Kimber as she shared her culture with children; and Nashville as she cared for children in a community center.

Service-learning also enabled participants to view their social capital as both skillsets and assets. Several participants described having the advantage in social awareness, social maturity, time management, and life skills as a direct result of their service-learning experiences. Repeatedly, participants referred to the ways in which the service-learning director had served as a form of social capital by connecting them to community sites in which to serve, as well as

connections with other administrators and student peers on campus. Social networks, as a result of the service-learning community and their individual service-learning experiences, also enabled participants to activate navigational capital as they learned to navigate community college, coursework, graduation, persistence through graduation at a four-year institution, and a future career. Two participants acknowledged service-learning's role in their ability to navigate to graduate school.

Sometimes participants used their community connections and opportunities through service-learning as a form of resistance capital where they could resist systemic Whiteness (Cabrera, Franklin, & Watson, 2017) in their communities by connecting their coursework and service-learning experiences with their backgrounds. For some participants, this resistance capital was activism. Kay reflected on how her work in a community garden at an under-funded elementary school served as a form of activism in that community for the children and families who benefitted from the community garden and work of the volunteers. Amina spoke out to a group of all-White individuals on a leadership board at a non-profit organization when they kept referring to the beneficiaries of the program as "they": "I let everyone know that I was "they." She did this in hopes of increasing awareness amongst the board members in how they were viewing the recipients of the organization's services, and also in how they were referring to those People of Color whom they were serving. Participants protected, mentored, tutored, and cared for children; represented and educated those in the community at the mercy of the legal system; and participated in fund raising for those who were suffering. These Student of Color scholars, being educated to work toward social and racial justice, were therefore engaged in a transformative resistant capital (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) to transform oppressive systems and practices in society.

Congruence with Existing Literature

The findings from this study align with the current service-learning literature that emphasized students who are actively involved in service-learning on their college campuses are more likely to be engaged, and more likely to graduate (Bringle et al., 2010; Eyler, 2002; Keen & Hall, 2009; Lockeman & Pelco, 2013; Mungo, 2017; Reed et al., 2015). This study also aligned with the literature that found Students of Color experience service-learning courses differently due to their race and cultural differences (Chesler & Scalera, 2000; Coles, 1999; Green, 2008; Mitchell & Donahue, 2009; Pearl & Christensen, 2017).

Each participant in this study perceived and identified specific ways in which their racialized experiences were different than White students' service-learning experiences. Grounded in a critical perspective and the service-learning literature, this finding was not surprising; and it aligned with Verjee's (2005) work on the racialized experiences of Women of Color in service-learning courses. The study's findings also aligned with Chesler and Scalera's (2000) work which found that service-learning resulted in "potentially powerful learning experience[s]" (p. 19) for Students of Color – especially when they engaged "to challenge and transform racist and sexist aspects of community life and community agencies/institutions" (p. 18). In addition, Leah's attribution of service-learning contributing to her ability to find jobs aligned with Kodama's (2015) work which revealed meaningful service-learning experiences assisted in job placement in the community for Students of Color.

The service-learning director and this service-learning program, including the instructors within the service-learning courses, appeared to follow the recommendations and guidelines for best practices within service-learning. According to the literature, this includes student's ability to choose to participate in service-learning (Bringle et al., 2010); and an intentionality of

connection between course content, pedagogy, and community service (Lake et al., 2015; Meens, 2014; Phillips et al., 2013). Because each participant chose to participate in service-learning independently of a requirement; and because each participant chose their service-learning sites of their own volition, participants described these service-learning experiences as deeply meaningful and personal. Some participants (Christian, Kimber, Nashville, and Amina) were able to directly connect relevant course content and learning with their service-learning experiences.

Unexpected Findings

In the service-learning literature, researchers have explicated the need for service-learning participants to share their experiences with others so students will engage in meaning-making out of their service-learning coursework. However, the literature describes this more from a pedagogical perspective, as something instructors should incorporate into their courses (e.g., assignments which require students to share their experiences via paper or presentation) (Bloomquist, 2015; Bringle et al., 2010; Maddux & Donnett, 2015). I was surprised that each participant wanted me to know how much they had shared their experiences with others independent of a required setting (i.e., their personal lives); and how much they believed in service-learning as an important piece of their educational experience.

Based upon my literature review, there was a need for more studies to examine Students of Color *a priori* through a critical lens. Therefore, I intentionally structured this study within a critical frame. My initial qualitative analysis was designed as an *a priori* approach to data coding, after the initial *in vivo* coding. However, once I completed my *in vivo* coding, I was attempting to place participants' codes within the tenets of Critical Race Theory, and found myself reaching. For example, a racialized experience could easily demonstrate Whiteness as

Property or The Permanence of Racism if I interpreted participants' meaning in those ways; but, something more obvious emerged. I began to see that participants' exact language mirrored Yosso's (2005) various forms of cultural capital, and even explicitly aligned with the ways in which she described them. Participants were using words such as "dream come true;" and described how service-learning experiences pushed them to overcome significant life difficulties to succeed. Those are Yosso's (2005) same words when describing aspirational capital. Christian clearly stated his service-learning experiences in teaching language helped his teaching and tutoring skills, which is *exactly* how linguistic capital is discussed within CCW. Participants were bound to their cultures and families, and utilized those bonds as strengths when serving in their communities in ways that were unique to them as Students of Color.

Service-learning helped participants navigate to graduation, and also provided them with valuable resources and connections on campus they attributed to their graduation. The social network of the service-learning program was multifaceted, and served participants well during their time at DCC and beyond in the community. During my interview with Amina, her ability to articulate her resistant capital was so powerful, I could not help but become emotional as I listened to her describe her ability to speak about ignorance and racism. When I decided to code to CCW, the experiences were tangible forms of capital, which had been directly expressed by the participants in their own language. This discovery is what enabled me to use a theoretical frame true to CRT, as it is a descendent of CRT, while also feeling that I was honoring and representing my participant voices well.

Interconnectedness of CCW

Yosso (2005) presented CCW as a concept in which various forms of capital are positioned around the core concept of cultural wealth. In her model, these forms of capital are

presented as disparate. However, within my qualitative findings, I noticed several times these modes of capital seemed to interrelate, and even seemed to “feed” off of one another. For example, service-learning activated participants’ cultural capital, but it also served as a pathway toward graduation. Leah shared how service-learning served as a form of aspirational capital by providing her with the tool of time management; therefore contributing to her belief she could succeed in college as a first-generation college student and mother. In addition, she mentioned how service-learning served as a “route” – or literally, pathway. This example of aspirational capital could be categorized as a form of navigational capital as service-learning helped provide a pathway to graduation.

Kay shared:

With my family, we did a lot of inner-city literacy programs. I think for my mom, looking back now, [it was] obviously low-cost childcare, but also it was important to keep us always learning and growing and that is something that impacted me. I [volunteered] a lot with [children’s literacy programs] growing up, so it’s just as important to me, instilled in me to be a part of my community, and then helping other people. Being [Black] is an ingrained part of me...to be able to reach out and help other African Americans, especially young people, to have another positive example of someone doing something was important to me. It was important to me to see that, and now that I am grown it is important for me to be that.

This narrative illustrated the ways in which Kay’s mother instilled familial capital, and modeled ways in which she could later activate her own social capital by “reaching out” to others. Kay utilized her service-learning experiences to activate what could be considered as the familial and

social capital she brought with her *into* the experience, as well as what was cultivated *through* the experience.

Amina's life-story and shared experiences in service-learning also displayed how Yosso's (2005) theory should be more interconnected. She expressed:

I wanted to give back because so many people had helped me anonymously. [She and her professor] just started another organization here in this city for the families of offenders because we found that the victims and their families were being assisted, but the families of offenders who do violent crimes, their families kind of go into hiding and are alienated by the communities because of what their children or family members have done. So we're trying to get them to come out and talk and feel comfortable with what happened, and just have somewhere to go that's a safe place.

This example has a bit of familial capital (her own family experiences), social capital (helping families of offenders), aspirational capital (maintaining a hope for a better, safe place for these families and herself despite adversity), and resistant capital (utilizing service-learning for social justice and advocacy). As a result of some of the ways in which capital overlapped, I found myself thinking of Yosso's (2005) theory in a less rigid manner, and more in a student development theory model: just as the individual grows, capital also grows (i.e., within life, service-learning, education, experiences, etc.).

Contributions to the Literature

The findings from this study contribute to the literature by illuminating possible ways in which service-learning experiences contributed to participants' educational, personal, and career aspirations; as well as participants' graduation. Prior studies have suggested that service-learning is beneficial for Students of Color and their graduation (Mungo, 2017; Pearl &

Christensen, 2017); however, without mixed-methods findings from Students of Color who participated in service-learning and then graduated, it is difficult to make clear connections between the service-learning experiences and higher education pathways. The findings in this study suggest that these students attributed their graduation and career aspirations in large part due to the experiential knowledge they gained within service-learning at DCC. Service-learning inspired them to give back, lift others as they climbed, aspire, navigate, connect, and resist in an institution that often makes Students of Color feel as if they do not have a place of belonging.

Implications for Practice and Policy

The purpose of this study was to explore if service-learning involvement affected the graduation of Students of Color within a community college; and how enrollment in service-learning courses affected the graduation of this student population. This section offers implications for practice and policy that may help individuals create service-learning programs and courses that inspire, encourage, and support Students of Color as they work toward graduation from both two- and four-year institutions.

In Yosso's (2005) words, "a CRT lens can 'see' that Communities of Color nurture cultural wealth through at least six forms of capital such as aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant capital" (p.77). This study acknowledges the foundation of CRT and CCW which recognizes that People of Color throughout history have shared their cultural capital with each other to mobilize and enrich communities to create access and equity for themselves in education, legal systems, and other types of institutions. This work also recognizes that Communities of Color are places with significant strengths, cultures, and values; and that the experiences of People of Color within those communities are anything but monolithic. Rather than exploiting and co-opting People of Color for their strengths as so often

has been done both historically and contemporarily within institutions designed for White students, Yosso (2005) explained: “community cultural wealth involves a commitment to conduct research, [to] teach and develop schools that serve a larger purpose of struggling toward social and racial justice” (p. 82). This can be addressed through the design and implementation of policies and practices.

For practical implications, the findings from this study illuminate the importance of service-learning pedagogy and programming to be culturally supportive, even while students are learning new skills, knowledge, and course information. Directors of service-learning programs and professors are encouraged to reach out personally to students involved in service-learning courses and identify what each student’s specific aspirations and goals are within the course, and also more broadly, higher education. In doing so, Students of Color may be provided additional social capital within the community of the college, as well as within the community as a whole; and can be paired well with service-learning sites that will help them reach their desired goals for education. Student of Color graduates from service-learning courses and programs should be enlisted to share with other students the importance of service-learning involvement, and how it personally helped them aspire and achieve their educational goals. This could provide an additional sense of belonging (Booker, 2007; Nichols, 2008; O’Keefe, 2013) and purpose for Students of Color on college campuses, as well as provide a way to navigate course selection and paths to graduation.

Additional examples of Student of Color experiences should be promoted with other Students of Color so that they can learn about service-learning opportunities, even if personal circumstances and situations outside of the college setting make it difficult to serve. Marketing materials should be designed to share statistics of Student of Color graduates who have

completed service-learning and have graduated from two- and four-year institutions, and also courses in which they enrolled to participate in service-learning. Being exposed to these individuals and hearing their stories can demonstrate to others in this population what can be achieved, and the multiple ways in which these experiences changed and helped them. Directors of service-learning programs should continue to intentionally foster and build relationships with site directors in the community to be able to provide the maximum choice of sites in which students could serve.

Due to the complex nature of service-learning and the innumerable differences between individual students' experiences, there is no simple way to illustrate the ways in which service-learning influences success in courses, graduation rates, or future success in a career. However, having more voices of Students of Color to represent their own experiences will increase the chances that one voice may be heard by another student who feels connected to some piece of a shared background, culture, race, and experience and now sees the possibility that they, too, can have a positive service-learning experience that assists in the path to graduation. It is also important, considering the lack of diversity among participants in this study (i.e., two Asian, four African American/Black participants), for practitioners to consider ways in which individual students' experiences are acknowledged and valued, without assuming they have a monolithic experience.

From an institutional or programmatic perspective, the intentional structure and design of service-learning programs should focus on ways in which service-learning sites could better embrace Students of Color. As these Student of Color participants found, service-learning sites were not always competent regarding issues of race and culture. Service-learning directors should reach out to potential service-learning sites and offer cultural competency and/or cultural

humility workshops or trainings, such that any Student of Color who serves at that site perhaps would be less likely to experience racism and ignorance. Particularly at non-profit organizations whose clientele primarily include People of Color, these types of trainings could benefit not only the Students of Color who serve at these sites, but also the community members who receive the services of these organizations. This type of training could even be led by Students of Color service-learning scholars to further promote belongingness for other Students of Color who may have experienced abrasive environments on their college campuses (Verjee, 2005) and within their service sites. Policy could be changed such that cultural competency trainings were required prior to the partnership between the colleges and community sites to better ensure compliance; and this could also provide a type of safety mechanism should a Student of Color have a negative or racialized experience within a particular site.

To better the cultural competency of both service-learning programs and service-learning sites, initiatives could be designed to build strong relationships between service-learning programs and the campus offices of diversity and inclusion. This would provide an ever-present resource for service-learning instructors, service-learning directors, service-learning staff, and service-learning students. This would also assist in the pedagogical strategy of moving service-learning as general volunteerism more toward intentional critical service-learning (Blum & de la Piedra, 2010; Bocci, 2015; Caspersz & Olaru, 2014, 2017; DeLeon, 2014; Hirschinger-Blank et al., 2013; Jones & Kiser, 2014; Meens, 2014; Taggart & Crisp, 2014). Strong partnerships between the diversity programs, service-learning programs, and the community could also address and educate around issues related to intersectionality, which the literature addresses as a critical component to Student of Color experiences in higher education (Crenshaw, 1991; McCoy & Rodricks, 2015; Verjee, 2005). Students' various identities as Students of Color and first-

generation college students could be embraced, valued, and promoted as the campus culture and service-learning sites turned away from deficit-based perspectives.

Future Research

My research questions targeted Students' of Color experiences at a specific community college who had participated in a service-learning program and subsequently graduated using CRT and Yosso's (2005) CCW to explore the types of capital students carried with them throughout their experiences. Studying this specific population illuminated the six types of community cultural wealth Student of Color service-learning graduates possessed and attributed to their success. These findings can serve as empirical evidence to support the further exploration of Students' of Color experiences within service-learning courses and programs. Further research could also expand on this work to include more Students' of Color experiences within populations that were not examined within the qualitative phase of this study, such as Pacific Islander, Native American, and Latinx student experiences. For example, Latinx Student of Color experiences could be examined through CCW to identify ways in which *la familia* (Yosso, 2005) may have contributed to their familial capital differently than other Student of Color populations. This was one service-learning program at one community college, but further research should include all types of service-learning programs at both two-year and four-year institutions.

Future studies should identify specific ways in which service-learning experiences contributed to career choices and pathways; and graduate or professional school aspirations. Student of Color service-learning participation, resistance, and activism could also be explored using various social change models (i.e., Kouzes & Posner, 2014) and student development theories (i.e., Chickering, 1969; Hernandez, 2016). Utilizing information from this study may

also lead to research with varied data collection methods, but the same target population and intentional design of the CRT and CCW framework. A future research project could be designed using information presented in this study to generate surveys with the responses to be examined using quantitative methodologies. Distributing surveys may produce a larger response rate amongst Student of Color service-learning graduates, and could produce a larger dataset which could be explored. Many of the participants in this study referenced early life or high school experiences that led to their decisions to enroll in service-learning courses, and a longitudinal study could examine the pathways of Students of Color to, during, and post service-learning experiences.

Another way in which this study could be strengthened would be to control for whether or not cohorts in the study were true first-time students or whether or not they were transfer students from other institutions. One limitation to the current study was that, due to a lack of differentiation in DCC's databases, I was unable to determine how many of these students in the two cohorts were true first-time students, or were transfer students from other institutions. I was only able to differentiate between full-time and part-time students. I was also not able to account for students who transferred out, rather than graduate, to other institutions, which would still be considered a "successful" outcome by institutional standards; however, this study did not focus on transfer students.

Future research should also be conducted between service-learning partnerships to examine Student of Color experiences within those various sites. Are there particular types of courses or service-learning sites in which Students of Color have more positive, salient experiences? Are there particular projects in which Students of Color better relate, or feel a more tangible connection both short-term and long-term? Studies should also examine the

relationships service-learning programs have with their community partnerships to assess for cultural competency and service-learning best practices for service-learning programs, especially considering ways Students of Color can best be supported.

Finally, future research should explore ways in which CCW's various forms of capital are interconnected. Service-learning, just like people, is a complex phenomenon. To present cultural capital in discrete, disparate categories may be too simplistic. I found myself trying to re-conceptualize Yosso's theory based upon my study's findings. I created a figure to help me visualize these findings, and explore possible ways in which Yosso's (2005) CCW could be presented relevant to this study (see Figure 3). This model is not designed to be exhaustive, and is primarily based upon my conceptualization of cultural capital within this study as presented by my participants. For example, within service-learning experiences, familial capital sometimes fed into participants' linguistic capital (e.g., Kimber teaching students Korean and sharing familial experiences; and Christian teaching a Vietnamese monk English). Participants were activating their familial and linguistic capitals as they utilized service-learning as a pathway (navigational capital) to graduation.

Findings

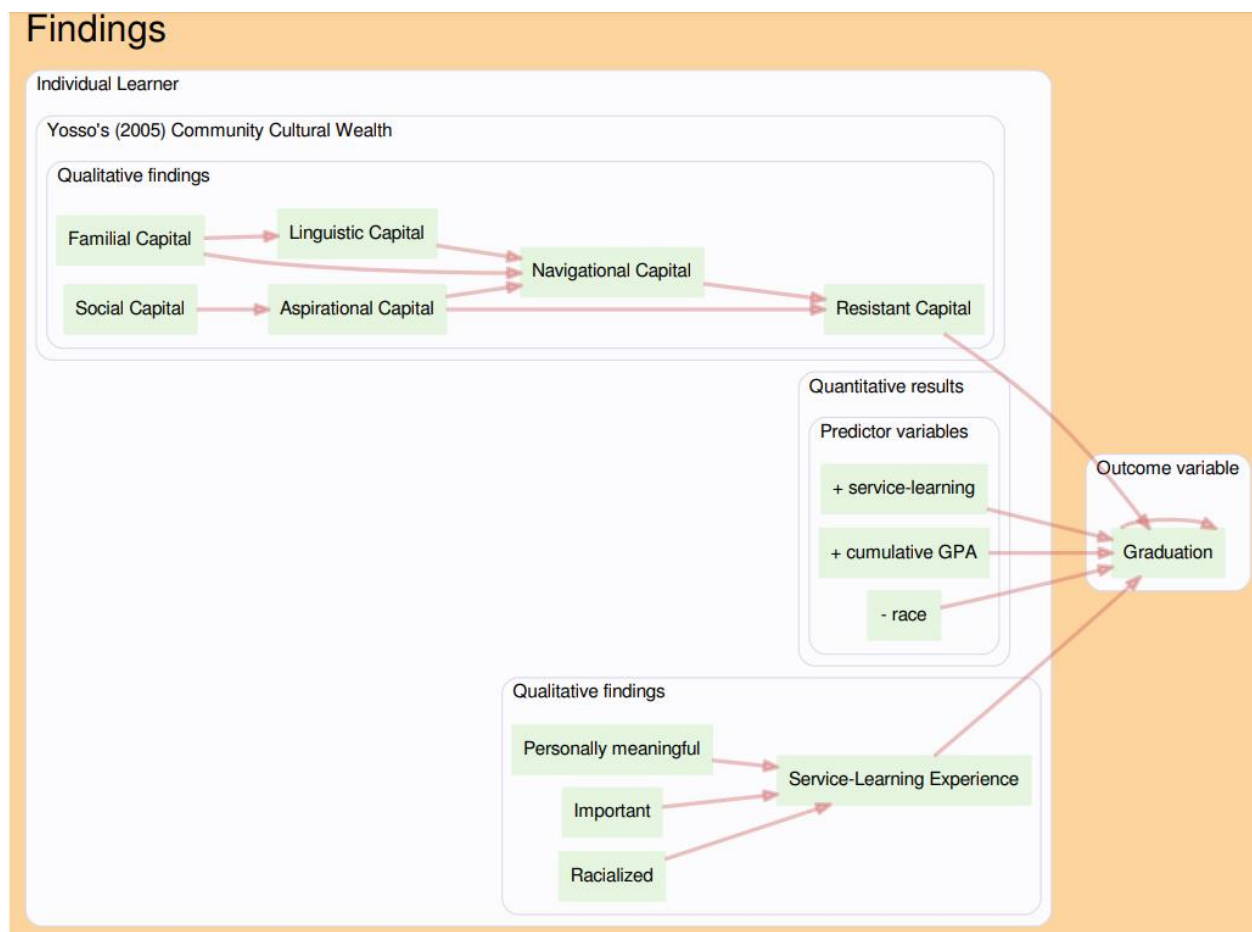


Figure 3. *Conceptualization of Findings*

Graduation for Kimber was also a way to make her family proud, and fight racism within the public-school system (resistant capital) by teaching White and Latinx children about her Korean heritage and culture. Rather than place cultural wealth in the center of the CCW model (see Figure 2), all forms of capital are woven together in dynamic, synergistic, and non-linear processes. Future research should extend this study, and explore various ways in which CCW should be conceptualized with Students of Color in service-learning programs and beyond.

Concluding Thoughts

As a first-generation college student who identifies as a White female, I began this study wanting to explore the reasons why, anecdotally, the Students of Color in my classroom had such rich stories and experiences to share at the end of each semester, compared to the White students in my classroom who sometimes “got it” and sometimes missed the purpose of service to community completely. I believe every student’s story and experiences are unique to them, and those who succeed in college have multiple forms of capital on which they rely in order to succeed, with or without service-learning experiences. However, this study was designed to give voice to Student of Color service-learning scholar graduates, and explore reasons how service-learning experiences influenced their graduation. Learning more about how service-learning influences graduation rates of Students of Color may help motivate other students to reach out to their communities, and in return, will be granted an opportunity to share their knowledge, experiences, and hope with others who also aspire to achieve.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Reliance Agreement

Reliance Agreement

Reviewing Institution:

Name: Pellissippi State Community College

FWA#: IRB Registration#:

Contact Name: Dr. Nancy Ramsey Phone: 865-694-6526 Email: naramsey@pstcc.edu

Special Instructions: Enter any requests for notifications of IRB findings, actions, etc.

Relying Institution:

Name: University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UT)

FWA#: 00006629 IORG #: 0000071

Contact: Kristine Hershberger, CIP Director HRPP Phone: 865-974-7687 Email: kh@utk.edu

Special Instructions: Please notify UT of any unanticipated problems, suspensions, terminations, research misconduct allegations, serious or continuing noncompliance, and study closure. Please supply copies of all approval letters upon request.

The Officials signing below agree that UT may rely on the Reviewing Institution's IRB as the IRB of record for review and continuing oversight of its human subjects research study described below. This agreement is limited to the following specific study:

Study Information:

Title: Experiences in Service-Learning Programs at a Community College among Students of Color: A Critical Study

IRB#: UTK IRB-19-04957-XP

Reviewing Institution Shanna E. Smith
Investigator:

Reviewing Institution sesmith4@pstcc.edu
Investigator Email:

UT Investigator(s): Shanna E. Smith

UT Investigator(s) Email: sbaker9@vols.utk.edu

UT Investigator(s) Activities: Doctoral Candidate within Higher Education Administration PhD program

Sponsor: Dr. Dorian L. McCoy

Award Number:

The review performed by Reviewing Institution's IRB will meet the human subject protection requirements of UT's Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP)-approved FWA. The IRB of record will follow written procedures for reporting its findings and actions to appropriate officials at UT and will provide relevant minutes of IRB meetings to UT upon request. UT remains responsible for ensuring compliance with the IRB of record's determinations and with the Terms of its OHRP-approved FWA. This document must be kept on file by both parties and provided to OHRP upon request.

Reviewing Institution Signatory Official:

Nancy A. Ramsey

Date: 1-30-19

Name: Dr. Nancy Ramsey

Title: Executive Director of Institutional Effectiveness

Phone: 865-694-6526

Email: naramsey@pstcc.edu

UT Signatory Official:

Robert Nobles

Date: 2/5/2019

Robert Nobles, DrPH, MPH, CIP, Interim Vice Chancellor for Research

865-974-3053 nobles@utk.edu

Appendix B

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Experiences in Service-Learning

1. Tell me about your experiences in service-learning courses.
 - a. How did you become involved in service-learning courses?
 - b. Before college, had you ever participated in service-learning in high school?
 - c. Why did you choose to participate in service-learning in college?
 - d. Was there anyone in your life who influenced you to participate?
 - e. Are there any personal/life experiences that may have influenced your enrollment in service-learning?
 - f. How did your race contribute to your service-learning experiences?
 - g. How did you perceive White students' experiences in service-learning?
2. Did participating in service-learning contribute to your academic success? If so, in what ways, and can you provide examples?
 - a. In what type of course did you enroll in service-learning?
 - b. Where did you complete your service-learning, and in what capacity?
 - c. Please describe the opportunities you have had to share your service-learning experiences with others in either the college classroom and/or personal life outside of college (i.e., paper, presentation, etc.).
 - d. How did service-learning contribute to your ability to continue on in college and/or graduate?
 - e. How did your service-learning experiences differ from other students? Why do you feel your experiences differed?
3. Apart from ways in which service-learning may have contributed to your academic experience, in what ways did you grow or learn personally from participating in service-learning?
 - a. Would you please provide specific examples of your service-learning experience that affected you personally?
 - b. How would you describe your overall service-learning experience?
 - c. What were the biggest "lessons" you took away from your service-learning experience?
 - d. Do you feel that service-learning was more beneficial to you or to the sites in which you served, and why?
 - e. How do you feel your service-learning experience contributed to the community, and why?
4. Anything else you would like me to know?

VITA

Shanna Elaine Baker Smith is from Oak Ridge, Tennessee. She is the daughter of Eric N. and Regina Gail Baker. She graduated from Oak Ridge High School in 2002. After high school, Shanna enrolled at The University of Tennessee at Martin as a University Scholar, where she earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Psychology in May 2006. Upon graduation, she enrolled at The University of Memphis where she earned her Master of Science in Psychology Degree in August 2008. While she was enrolled in the Master's program at The University of Memphis, Shanna actively participated in the Community Outreach Lab, ran by Dr. Theresa Okwumubua, and there discovered her passion working with and advocating for inner-city children and families in Memphis City Schools.

Upon graduation from The University of Memphis, Shanna returned to East Tennessee as a Family Counselor, Clinical Supervisor, then Regional Supervisor with a non-profit mental health and social work organization, Youth Villages, until January 2013. She then returned to higher education in January 2013 when she was awarded a tenure track position teaching psychology at Pellissippi State Community College. She began taking courses at The University of Tennessee Knoxville in Higher Education Administration in Fall 2014. Shanna served as the Program Coordinator of the Behavioral Sciences at Pellissippi State Community College for five years while she was a doctoral student. Currently, Shanna is an Assistant Professor in Communication Sciences and Professional Counseling at The University of West Georgia.