ORIGIN OF ACTION: SOCIAL JUSTICE CIVIC LEARNING

A thesis presented

by

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Abstract

Students can undergo changes in their personal perspectives through experiential learning (Kolb, 1984). Experiential Learning Theory allows for transformative learning, as researchers discover which factors contribute to a change in point of view. Many students gained knowledge through experiential learning in their communities during the fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course. This dissertation qualitatively studied a sample of students in this course to determine the degree to which social justice service-learning, as an example of Experiential and Transformative Learning Theories (Kolb, 1984; Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Mezirow 1981, 1997, 1998, 2000), represented civic learning pedagogy. Research questions focused on understanding how students’ civic perspectives were influenced by their participation in social justice service-learning pedagogy. Findings revealed that prior learning generated appeal to participate in the content of social justice service-learning and consideration of students’ civic perspective; involvement in effectively facilitated social justice service-learning on campus and off asked students to contemplate their civic perspectives; institutional and cultural factors positively impacted social justice service-learning. The results of this study can help future civic learning course designers to make effective choices, thereby increasing their ability to facilitate a civic perspective for their students. Critical/social justice service-learning is referred to as social justice service-learning in this dissertation, given that educators seek to achieve social justice through this form of pedagogy.

Keywords: experiential learning, transformative learning, social justice education, civic learning
Dedication

This work is dedicated to my wife, Alix, and daughter, Colette. Their support, patience, and sacrifice allowed for the completion of this doctoral thesis.
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Chapter I: Introduction

Civic learning in higher education has been recognized for many years as necessary for a productive and well-informed citizenry (Barber, 1985, 1992, 2004, 2012; Boland, 2014; Conant, 1945; Harkavy, 2006; Mitchell, 2015; Nagda, Gurin, & Lopez, 2003; Smith, 1994; Soltan, 2014). Musil (2009) acknowledges the widespread definition of civic learning in higher education as personal and social responsibility developed through civic knowledge and engagement. A commitment by higher education to a civic mission can result in an academic pedagogy that encourages learners to provide service to their communities. However, many in higher education see the process of developing citizenship as less than academically rigorous (Butin & Seider, 2012; Enos, 2015; Pedersen, Meyer, & Hargrave, 2015). As a result, questions arise about the appropriateness of civic learning on American college and university campuses (Bok, 2006; Harkavy, 2006; Theis, 2016; Veysey, 1970 [1965]). Currently, colleges and universities are responsible for developing learning experiences that foster local and global awareness (Barber, 2012; Boland, 2014; Braskamp, 2011; Enos, 2015; Tarrant, Rubin, & Stoner, 2014). Therefore, post-secondary educators must facilitate effective pedagogy for civic learning through social justice and service-learning (Astin & Sax, 1998; Bringle & Clayton, 2012; Butin, 2007, 2010a, 2010b; Butin & Seider, 2012; Eyler, Giles, Stetson, & Gray, 2001; Enos, 2015; Jacoby, 2009, 2015; Levine, 2007, 2013; Mitchell, 2007, 2008, 2015; Mitchell et al., 2015; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Steinberg, Hatcher, & Bringle, 2011; Yorio & Ye, 2012).

Given their ability to provide civic learning on college and university campuses, institutions of higher education are positioned to foster learning experiences for students as engaged citizens in their communities. Campus Compact, a nationwide network of colleges and universities committed to civic engagement in the United States, supports facilitation of students’
civic knowledge and participation within students’ communities. Campus Compact is a national membership organization of 1,100 post-secondary institutions committed to nurturing productive community partnerships through community-based learning as part of higher education curricula (Campus Compact, 2015). The President’s Declaration on the Civic Responsibility of Higher Education (Campus Compact, 2007 [2000]) states,

Colleges and universities have long embraced a mission to educate students for citizenship. But now, with over two-thirds of recent high school graduates and ever-larger numbers of adults enrolling in post-secondary studies, higher education has an unprecedented opportunity to influence the democratic knowledge, dispositions, and habits of the heart that graduates carry with them into the public square. (p. 1)


Social justice service-learning, an example of experiential learning and type of civic learning, is “real-world” pedagogy. Social justice education combined with service-learning, facilitates an understanding of privilege and oppression structurally and historically, to help learners develop the capacity to take action against injustice (Adams, 2012, 2014; Bell, 2007; Gurin, Nagda, & Zuniga, 2013; Kliwer & Zacharakis, 2015; Storms, 2012). Service-learning combines academic knowledge with service activities and reflection, to encourage eventual

**Problem of Practice**

Student disaffection with traditional democratic processes, indicated by poor voter participation among 18 to 29 year-olds (Colby, Beaumont, Ehrlick, & Corngold, 2007; Sax, 2004), is a surprise to some in the United States. The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) reported that 19.9 percent of 18 to 29 year-olds voted in the 2014 elections, recording the lowest youth turnout rate ever in a federal election (Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, 2014). However, in
the 2012 presidential election, 45 percent of registered 18 to 29 year-olds voted. The 2012 voter turnout was better than 2014 but was down from 51 percent, during the 2008 presidential election (Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, 2014). The declining trend in civic participation among 18 to 29 year-olds in recent federal elections is troubling and contributed to the formation of a United States Government Task Force on civic learning.

In 2012, the United States Department of Education (USDOE), the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), and the Global Perspective Institute (GPI) developed a task force to evaluate civic learning in higher education. This group provided recommendations to the USDOE and called on higher education “to embrace civic learning and democratic engagement as an undisputed educational priority…That will require constructing educational environments where education for democracy and civic responsibility is pervasive, not partial; central, not peripheral” (The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012, p. 6). *A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy’s Future* is rooted in the idea that the United States is experiencing a “civic recession.” Currently, the United States Government, higher education, and others involved in education and public life are being asked to facilitate civic learning and democratic engagement as part of college and university experiences (Mitchell, 2015; Saltmarsh, Hartley, & Clayton, 2009; The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012). However, colleges and universities have been slow to incorporate civic learning on campus (AAC&U, 2007; Hartley & Hollander, 2005; Saltmarsh et al., 2009; The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012). As a result, in 2014 the President of the United States, Barack Obama, called for talks about civic learning and service, to advance the work of the 2012 Task Force.
During the fall of 2014, President Obama announced the need to explore “new strategies to tighten the link between civics and service with higher education” (Obama, 2014, p. 7). In October of 2014, the White House assembled a “Civic Learning and National Service Summit” in partnership with the Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts University, to investigate civic learning and its role in education. The 75-member summit organized their findings into seven statements about civic learning. These statements included recommendations that higher education support democracy through community engagement and that civic learning move from “elective and available to pervasive and expected” (Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts University, 2014, p. 2). The group recommended that civic learning be measured and assessed through continued collaboration among scholars, practitioners, educators, community partners, and policymakers to “prioritize specific actions at the campus, collaborative, state, and federal, levels to advance civic learning and engagement in democracy” (Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts University, 2014, p. 3). The Summit’s recommendations direct higher education towards civic knowledge and participation as civic learning.

The United States Department of Education, as a member of the National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement (2012), and the White House’s Civic Learning and National Service Summit (2014) identify civic learning as a priority and a feature of quality education for today’s global society. Civic learning during post-secondary education is recognized as equal in importance to degree attainment and to workforce preparation in the United States (Lumina Foundation, 2014; United States Department of Education, 2012). Existing literature documents the acceptance in higher education of experiential learning as job preparation (Bailey, Hughes, & Moore, 2004; Moore 2010; Moore, 2013), but post-secondary


Higher education currently provides experiences necessary to fulfill individual Americans’ economic interests. However, post-secondary learning does not engage all its
students in preparation for public service and civic leadership (Barber, 2012; Bok, 2006; Butin & Seider, 2012; Enos, 2015; Pedersen, Meyer, & Hargrave, 2015). Students may or may not become anthropologists, authors, or mathematicians, but they will become members of communities. Civic learning in higher education stems from colleges’ and universities’ civic missions, which extend beyond disciplines and departments (Hoy et al., 2012). As a result, post-secondary education must position itself to impact society by facilitating experiential social justice service-learning as civic learning (Alder & Goggin, 2005; Braskamp, 2011; Battistoni, 2000, 2002; Butin, 2007; Furco & Root, 2010; Harkavy, 2006; Jacoby, 2009, 2015; Levine, 2007, 2013; Marullo & Edwards, 2000; McCarney, 2013; Mitchell, 2007, 2008, 2014, 2015; Mitchell et al., 2015; Pompa, 2005; Quin, 2009; Sleeter, 2014; Thompson, 2014; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004).

Reeve College

Reeve College (a pseudonym) is located in the northeastern part of the United States. For more than 200 years, Reeve has provided a liberal arts education, which recognizes learning within and beyond the classroom. In addition to its undergraduate programs, Reeve provides learning opportunities for students through a language school, schools abroad, a school of English, a school of the environment, and an institute for international studies. Reeve College accepts fewer than 20 percent of its undergraduate applicants, resulting in a student body of just over 2,500.

Reeve’s Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course explores social issues through theory and “real-world” application. The class aims to apply Reeve principles locally to some of the world’s most complex social problems. The Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty class facilitates civic responsibility and experiential learning through social justice
service-learning pedagogy as an example of civic learning. As Reeve College looks to further its efforts in civic learning, they can end the “civic recession” by broadening their use of experiential social justice service-learning pedagogy.

All courses, through their pedagogy, should inspire their students towards action. Interest in civic learning, among many college and university students, has led to events of social justice on campuses. However, academic curricula do not always support these efforts (Butin & Seider, 2012). Students may assist in coordinating services in a homeless shelter but are often not taking courses exposing them to the issues underlying homelessness. As a result, participation in campus-supported programs and service in communities may only be temporary (Hartley & Hollander, 2005). Social justice service-learning at Reeve provides experiences for students at a homeless shelter while supporting their understanding of poverty and their civic perspectives. Classroom and community learning combine to support students’ future civic actions.

Reeve College developed an academic cluster, for which the entry into the cluster is the Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty class. A cluster is a series of courses from various departments, in which issues of poverty and privilege comprise the theory of the course but are also applied to Reeve’s communities. Reeve’s gateway course into this academic cluster asks students to consider privilege and poverty through topics such as food security, education, and health care. Through various philosophical and religious frameworks, students develop perspectives on what an ethical society owes people living in poverty. Individuals consider their civic perspectives through readings, class conversations, writings, and semester projects. Reflection informs development of personal moral positions on privilege and poverty, leading to action during the semester projects. As examples of social justice service-learning, semester
projects allow students to connect the somewhat theoretical course readings and conversations with experiences of real people.

This study identified the transformation of students’ civic perspectives through experiential social justice service-learning pedagogy as an example of civic learning. Perspective transformation as an indicator of personal attitudes and behaviors strongly correlates with an individual’s actions (Brown, 2013; Butin & Seider, 2012; Kraus, 1995; Levine, 2013; Mitchell et al., 2015; Stevens-Long, Sharpire, & McClintock, 2012). Identifying the factors that contributed most to transformative learning experiences (change in civic perspective) as students perceived them is valuable for replicating experiential pedagogy as a type of civic learning at Reeve College and elsewhere. This study identified the conditions that best facilitate opportunities for perceived transformations in students’ civic perspectives through social justice service-learning as an example of civic learning.

Significance of the Problem

As the 20th century began, only 4 percent of Americans attended post-secondary schools (Veysey, 1970 [1965]). As of 2013, 66 percent of students, a reduction from 70 percent in 2009, who successfully finished high school pursued post-secondary schooling (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). The number of students enrolling in higher education is projected to increase in the coming years. The National Center for Education Statistics (2014) determined that the total enrollment in post-secondary schools increased 45 percent from 1997 to 2011, and projections indicate that enrollment will increase another 14 percent, to 24 million, by 2022. Higher education will continue to serve a greater percentage of 18 to 29 year-olds in the United States, making it potentially significant in stopping the “civic recession.”
Education in the United States reinforces inequities for populations of marginalized students (Banks, 2010; Boland, 2014; Freire, 1994 [1970]; Nagda et al., 2003). However, education has the ability to empower all students through recognition, understanding, and challenging societal inequities. Higher education, through social justice service-learning, provides experiences for students to become agents of social change. As more students enroll in higher education, the racial and ethnic distribution of America’s colleges and universities has changed as well. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2013), from 1976 to 2011 post-secondary enrollment of Hispanic students grew from 4 to 14 percent. The enrollment of Asian/Pacific Islander students increased from 2 to 6 percent over this time, the percentage of Black students rose from 10 to 15 percent, and the percentage of American Indian/Alaska Native students grew from 0.7 to 0.9 percent, from 1976 to 2011. During this time, the percentage of White students decreased from 84 to 61 percent. Furthermore, the National Center for Education Statistics (2014) projects that by 2022, post-secondary enrollment will increase by 7 percent for White students, 26 percent for Black students, 27 percent for Hispanic students, and 7 percent for Asian/Pacific Islander students. The diversification of higher education reflects larger societal changes domestically and abroad. As a result, colleges and universities in the United States must engage with the diverse communities that construct the world today; civic learning provides an opportunity for students to be deeply involved with United States and global diversity and to become civic-minded citizens. Experiences that require students to question their perspectives, facilitated through activities in and out of the classroom, present opportunities to engage their civic minds.

As of 2011, the number of first-year college and university students involved in volunteer or community service doubled, from 17 to 34 percent. Nearly 88 percent of first-year college
students reported participating in volunteer work while in high school as well, an increase from 70 percent in 1990 (Hurtado & DeAngelo, 2012). There is a need for students attending post-secondary education to engage with their communities (Boland, 2014; Tarrant et al., 2014). The Personal and Social Responsibility Inventory (PSRI), provided to 24,000 students at 23 colleges, universities, and military academies in the United States during 2007, recognized that students desired a “stronger emphasis” on providing for the greater community during their post-secondary experiences. In this survey, responses showed that 44.8 percent of first-year students strongly agreed that their college/university fostered awareness of social, political, and economic issues in the United States. The inventory also found that 43.3 percent of first-year students strongly agreed that knowledge of local and global issues was promoted on campus, and 22.9 percent of seniors supported the same assertion (Dey, Barnhardt, Antonaros, Ott, & Hopsapple, 2009). Given that less than 50 percent of the first-year and senior students surveyed in 2009 recognized their college or university’s commitment to service, despite the demand for civic knowledge and participation on college and university campuses, higher education must prepare students to be civic-minded participants in local and global action.

Many colleges and universities have established, as a goal of higher education, greater global understanding for their students. Civic learning, for a local and global citizen, consists of knowledge about complex issues locally and globally and from various perspectives, with a desire to act for the social good (Colby, Ehrlick, Beaumont, & Stephens, 2003; McCarney, 2013; Mitchell et al., 2015; Soltan, 2014; Thompson, 2014). Higher education aims to develop local and global citizens and to encourage students to recognize the interconnectedness of the world. Civic learning, civic knowledge, and participation can encourage students to consider the local and global implications of their actions. Experiential learning provides students opportunities to
learn in local and global communities through various activities, including ethnographic
research, overseas study experiences, service-learning, and social entrepreneurship (Butin, 2012;
Colby et al., 2003; Enos, 2015; Mitchell, 2015).

Although many students participate in volunteer work (Hurtado & DeAngelo, 2012),
some students arrive on college and university campuses not fully understanding their personal
and social responsibility to societal issues. Complex social problems require students to
recognize their personal worldviews and those of less privileged communities in order to address
societal inequities (Enos, 2015; Hurtado, Ruiz, & Whang, 2012). Higher education therefore has
a responsibility to educate its students for academic, economic, and social pursuits, locally and
globally, through experiential learning as a type of civic learning (Gould, 2011; Soltan, 2014;
Torney-Purta, Cabrera, Roohr, Liu, & Rios, 2015).

Reeve College offers experiences for service-learning, but they may or may not include
issues of social justice connected to service in communities, as part of the courses’ content. The
limited number of courses facilitating service-learning at Reeve neglects a vital component of
civic learning. Nonetheless, the college’s Privilege and Poverty academic cluster facilitates
learning experiences characteristic of social justice service-learning. If the fall of 2015
Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course’s learning approaches foster
opportunities to change students’ civic perspectives, they can serve as model pedagogy for civic
learning at Reeve College.

The content of the fall of 2015 Privilege and Poverty course facilitated social justice.
Semester projects provided students with service experiences through social justice topics
outside of Reeve College but in its greater community. Reeve’s gateway course into the
Privilege and Poverty academic cluster facilitated social justice service-learning, to develop
students’ social justice perspectives through experiences of civic learning. The evidence that experiential social justice service-learning represents civic learning makes it reasonable to assume that this service-learning be included as part of all civic learning at Reeve College.

**Document Organization**

First, the introduction presents the problem of practice and significance of the study. The study’s research questions follow the introduction. My positionality, as the researcher, is then presented in an effort to acknowledge biases and prevent premature judgment of findings throughout the study. Next, Experiential Learning Theory and Transformative Learning Theory as the lenses for this study are presented as the theoretical framework supporting the investigation. Dewey and Kolb were selected as sources for the study’s examination of experiential learning and Experiential Learning Theory as pedagogy. This study’s theoretical framework incorporates Mezirow and Kiley for their presentation of Transformative Learning Theory and its potential to modify students’ civic perspectives through experiential social justice service-learning. A literature review follows the theoretical framework and presents relevant sources on experiential learning, social justice education, civic learning, and social justice service-learning. The research design is then introduced, based on the theoretical framework and a review of pertinent literature. An analysis and evaluation of the research data are then presented, followed by a discussion of the study’s research findings.

**Research Questions**

A qualitative study was conducted to determine the extent to which social justice service-learning, through an experiential and transformative framework, possesses characteristics of civic learning. This study identified participants in a social justice service-learning course at a global liberal arts college. The significance of the study is its examination of social justice
service-learning pedagogy and its representation of civic learning in terms of experiential pedagogy and changes in students’ civic perspectives.

Central Question: How do past participants in Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty class describe their learning journeys in social justice service-learning?

Sub-questions:

● For participants who identify transformative learning (change in civic perspective), how do they describe themselves as they begin their learning journey?

● For participants who identify transformative learning (change in civic perspective), how do they describe their change in civic perspective?

● For participants who identify transformative learning (change in civic perspective), what factors enabled this change?

Positionality Statement

As a secondary teacher and administrator of curriculum, I recognize that students’ engagement and academic success require various types of learning strategies, support, and learning experiences that are connected to their lives. Graduate work in curriculum and instruction trained me to engage students in learning and to construct pedagogy, through the philosophies of John Dewey, David Kolb, Carol Ann Tomlinson, Howard Gardner, and Bernice McCarthy. Today, I read the works of Dan Butin, Barbra Jacoby, Rick Battistoni, Peter Levine, David Thornton Moore, and James Zull to further my understanding of experiential pedagogy. As I evaluate civic learning, these researchers’ opinions inform my work.

Students who do not possess or adhere to White, upper-class values find that their attitudes do not exist in the structures (policies, procedures, and programs) of schools (Briscoe,
My strongly held belief regarding the structures of society and their influence on schools can potentially alienate members of my community. Redefining the “master narrative” requires that learning be extended into communities, beyond existing pedagogy, towards the reconstruction of dominant beliefs as the structure of education (Fennell & Arnot, 2008; Freire, 1994 [1970]; Giroux, 2011; hooks, 1994).

Community-engaged pedagogy contrasts with the traditional “banking model” (Freire, 1994 [1970]) of teaching and learning that is prevalent in the academy. Education must be transformed into a collaborative process of constructing knowledge among students, teachers, and community members, rather than students being told what information to learn (Giroux, 1983). The formation of pedagogy that reflects communities requires the restructuring of school structures to reflect their communities. “Border crossing” (Butin & Seider, 2012; Giroux, 1992; Hayes & Cuban, 1997; Kiely, 2005), defined as a change from the known to unknown, occurs as students, teachers, and community members question the dominant group’s norms for who controls, defines, and determines access to knowledge and power. Experiential social justice learning through service in communities provides an opportunity to reconsider the master narrative. Research and experiences with students lead me, as a scholar-practitioner, to explore Experiential Learning and Transformative Learning Theories through social justice service-learning as a type of civic learning.

**Potential Biases**

As a professional, I have a bias towards experiential learning and opposition to education that is confined solely to traditional lecture practices inside a classroom. As an educator, I facilitate experiential learning, for students and colleagues, as a pedagogical structure of my school. Machi and McEvoy (2009) state that an individual’s bias can never be absent from one’s
position; therefore, it is important that the bias be managed. As I worked through my problem of practice, I was reminded that the positionality of my experiences potentially marginalizes students, educators, and community members. I tried to position my perspective as a researcher, teacher, administrator, and community member towards those who do not see experiential learning as “rigorous” and believe that current pedagogy is “good enough.” As I explored my problem of practice, I worked to recognize this perspective as I conducted my work as a research practitioner.

**The Projection of My Own Experience**

It is my responsibility, as a teacher and administrator, to analyze the ways in which the dominant culture influences the structures of society and its schools. My positions as a teacher, administrator, community member, and researcher are assets to my work. My positions, however, are also my weaknesses; I embody multiple forms of the dominant ideology in the United States. As a White, heterosexual, college-educated, middle-class male, I represent privilege in the United States. My journeys abroad as a college student required that I consider my positionality and rethink the intersectionality of my race, class, gender, culture, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and faith/religion in order to recognize my own bias and privilege.

Fennell and Arnot (2008) discuss intersectionality and the context in which someone lives, in order to determine concepts of self. Features of experiential and transformative learning include the recognition of positionality, through experiences, to critique the dominant classes’ ideology through reflection and action (Freire, 1994 [1970]; Kolb, 1984; Mezirow, 1981, 1997). I represent positions of the dominant class and have experienced a lack of capital when I studied and worked in South Africa. Through reflection, my experiences of otherness provided
opportunities to consider my positionality. Through my positionality, I work to preserve my neutrality as a research practitioner.

My experiences and biases, along with work in my communities, provide me with the belief that pedagogy that examines culture, poverty, class, race, ethnic background, sexual orientation, and faiths/religions, to redefine power in society and its schools is possible. I must use my position of power and capital to work with faculty, staff, students, and my communities to understand the magnitude of privilege and the effects of developing experiential social justice pedagogy as civic learning. My positionality and those of the literature I read may bias my perspective by encouraging only positive feelings for the formation of experiential social justice pedagogy as civic learning. Therefore, as I examine experiential pedagogy as a method of academic learning and a study of society, I will recognize my beliefs and question their validity.

**Theoretical Framework**

This visual shows how a learner moves through an experiential learning event and may go through a transformation. This visual also displays the theories constructing the framework for this study.

**Experiences Transforming Learning**

Dewey (1938) presented a “philosophy of education based upon a philosophy of experience” (p. 75) and formed one of the earliest positions for a more experiential mindset in the delivery of education. Dewey (1916a, 1916b, 1938) described the role of an educator as an innovator and facilitator of active experiences conducive to learning. Dewey’s (1938) education through experience prompted many educators to develop the new skills required to bring this vision to life. Dewey (1938) outlined experience-based education and offered considerations for how it may take place. Kolb (1984) used Dewey’s work to construct the theoretical foundation for experiential learning and asserted that learners must understand an experience in order to transform it into knowledge. Kolb (1984) stated that the “simple perception of experience is not sufficient for learning” (p. 41) and that learners must use the features of experiential learning (experience and reflection) to later transform new learning into action. For Kolb, transformation in learning occurs through action and reflection from an experience.

Experiential learning, designed to personalize experiences for a learner, explores concepts discussed in the classroom in real-world settings and defines such exploration as pedagogy (Boland, 2014; Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Tarrant et al., 2014. Dewey (1938) established experiential learning as a method to develop personal meaning of the world through experience.
Dewey (1938) emphasized experiential learning as a process connected to students’ lives through action, to turn learning into knowledge, and as the epistemological base for Experiential Learning Theory as pedagogy (Chan, 2012; Dewey, 1938; Durie & Wyatt, 2013; Kolb, 1984; Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Experiential activities to form pedagogy can bring classroom curricula into contact with settings outside of a school (Bailey et al., 2004; Moore, 2010, 2013).

The fundamental assumption of experiential learning is that humans learn and develop through personal adaptations, reflections, and constructing meaning from experiences (Chan, 2012; Dewey, 1916a, 1916b, 1938; Kolb, 1984). Experiences, occurring mentally and through one’s physical environment, find application in life through reflection. Reflections become learning as they are fixed to memory and existing knowledge (Dewey 1916a, 1916b, 1938; Kolb, 1984). Kolb (1984) builds on Dewey’s (1916a, 1916b, 1938) theory that experience provides thought processes to form knowledge. Kolb (1984) describes, as examples of new learning, a cycle of learning in which experience (concrete or conceptual) and reflection are transferred into actions. Kolb (1984) cites reflection upon actions as a process necessary to transform experiences into knowledge. Kolb develops his theory of experiential learning from the work of Lewin, Dewey, and Piaget.

Lewin proposed learning as a four-stage cycle, as shown in Figure 1 (Kolb, 1984, p. 21).
Lewin identified concrete experiences as opportunities for observations and reflections. Lewin believed that observations, incorporated into one’s memory, would become ideas and later actions (Kolb, 1984). Dewey recognized experiences, observations, and actions as places for learning. Figure 2 is a visual representation of Dewey’s model of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984, p. 23).

Dewey (1938) identified observations of surroundings, knowledge from experiences, judgment through observation, and recall from experiences as methods for learning. Through the learner’s translation of intended and unintended outcomes, a plan of action based on reflection forms the foundation for Dewey’s experiential learning. Piaget described learning as a
combination of experiences, reflections, and actions forming the development of thought (Kolb, 1984). Figure 3 represents Piaget’s learning process (Kolb, 1984, p. 25).

![Figure 3. Piaget’s Model of Learning and Cognitive Development (Kolb, 1984, p. 25)](image)

Piaget described learning as a cycle in which individuals and their environment interact to construct learning through experiences, similar to the ideas of Dewey and Lewin. Piaget recognized the role of experiences in the world and the interaction of events in the formation of knowledge (Kolb, 1984).

Lewin, Dewey, and Piaget recognized learning as a process resulting from and continually being altered by experiences. Kolb (1984) recognized Lewin’s, Dewey’s, and Piaget’s work and identified concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation as his principles of experiential learning. According to Kolb (1984), learners must engage in new experiences, reflect on and observe the experiences, integrate their observations into logical ideas, and use these thoughts to solve problems. Kolb’s Experiential Learning Theory is portrayed in Figure 4 (Kolb, 1984, p.42).
In experiential learning, learners move from concrete experiences to reflective observation and from abstract conceptualization to active experimentation, to construct meaning. Experiential learning creates events and integrates them into students’ lives, making them relevant in the effort to build knowledge (Dewey, 1938; Bailey et al., 2004; Bruner, 1996; Kolb, 1984; Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Moore, 2010, 2013; Nagda et al., 2003). The result of experience and reflection is knowledge, generated through personal actions, transferred to recall, and later fixed to memory. Experiential learning accounts for the individual, as a student gains knowledge through experience and reflection leading towards eventual experimentation (Kolb, 1984; Moore, 2010, 2013). Reflection through experiential learning, to gain knowledge, is more than experience for the sake of experience; it is experience to learn.

Learning by doing, not simply doing but understanding what is being done as a natural outgrowth of a student’s personal experience, is experiential learning (Bailey et al., 2004; Dewey, 1938; Kolb, 1984). Experiential learning is as concerned with an individual’s metacognitive process (an understanding of one’s thinking) as with an assessment of outcomes.
from one’s actions (Kolb, 1984; Moore, 2010, 2013). Experiential learning captures all of a learner’s relevant life experiences to facilitate learning and to create knowledge (Chan, 2012; Dewey, 1916, 1938; Freire, 1994 [1970]; Kolb, 1984; Nagda et al., 2003).


1) A disorienting dilemma, 2) self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt or shame, 3) a critical assessment of assumptions, 4) recognition that one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared, 5) exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions, 6) planning a course of action, 7) acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans, 8) provisionally trying new roles, 9) building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships, 10) a reintegration into one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s new perspective. (p. 22)


Mezirow’s (1981, 1997, 1998) critical reflection focuses on what is learned from experience by applying personal insights to one’s life. Through changes in roles and personal experiences, opportunities are created for self-reflection and “transformation” (Nohl, 2015). Perspective transformation plays an important role in adult learning theory because it allows for critical reflection. Through reflection, humans become aware of their closely held beliefs and their impact on behavior (Freire, 1994 [1970]; Nohl, 2009). The development of perspective(s) is the result of personal experiences and recognition of multiple points of view. The three domains
proposed by Habermas (1981) and further defined by Mezirow enhance facilitation of experiential learning.

Dewey (1938) presented experience as a means to construct knowledge in school. Kolb (1984) defined experiential learning as a theory through which pedagogy is developed for practitioners. Mezirow’s (1997) Transformative Learning Theory recognizes, as a component of experiential learning, experiences in which a learner must re-evaluate previously held assumptions through critical reflection. Dewey (1938) and Kolb (1984) state that learners must not be passive receivers of information but actively engaged in the creation of their own knowledge. Dewey, Kolb, and Mezirow’s theories involve experience directed towards the construction of knowledge and new worldviews leading to “experimentation” through actions in real-world settings.

**Transformative Learning Through Service Experiences**

personalizing the other, processing, and connecting, as a learner’s perspectives transform through experiential service-learning.

Kiely (2005) begins his transformative learning process with contextual border crossing, which is the crossing of physical borders and socially constructed borders. Mezirow (2000) recognizes boundary crossing as a disorienting dilemma in which events are difficult to explain because of what is already believed. Border crossing, a change from something familiar to unfamiliar, presents an experience allowing one to examine one’s realities by performing service in a community (Kiely, 2005). Kiely (2005) identifies dissonance, one’s preexisting reality and its contextual factors, as a means to undergo personal transformation. This is a deeper analysis of Mezirow’s idea of self-examination. Kiely (2005) recognizes differences between “low and high” impacts on one’s reality from service experiences, resulting in short-term or long-term changes. High-intensity dissonance is identified as leading to true transformation of perspective, resulting from service experiences.

Personalizing the other requires students to assess their position(s) in life. Personalizing the other fosters real-world representations of previously abstract concepts through service experiences directed towards personal transformation (Kiely, 2005; Mezirow, 2000). Development of perspective through service experience in communities provides the opportunity for personal transformation. Individuals develop as critical thinkers and problem-solvers, questioning theory and practice by processing one’s reality towards perspective transformation (Kiely, 2005). New roles, relationships, actions, knowledge, and skills for implementing new strategies occur individually and as a group, through reflection as an outcome of processing, individually and/or collectively, through service experiences (Kiely, 2005; Mezirow, 2000).

Connecting happens as students attain understanding through their relationships with their
community, peers, and faculty. Connections among participants in service experiences foster border crossing (Kiely, 2005). As a result, students broaden their understanding of themselves and the world in which they live.


**Summation**

Dewey and Kolb propose Experiential Learning Theory for course design. Mezirow and Kiely present Transformative Learning Theory as a method through which to view the transformation of perspective resulting from experience. Experiential Learning Theory, defined as experience, reflection, conceptualization, and experimentation, provides an opportunity for learners’ transformations through interactions with people and places, and these transformations can serve as lenses through which to view civic learning at Reeve College. This study examines social justice service-learning as experiential pedagogy, an example of civic learning, and the factors contributing to students’ perceived civic perspective transformations at Reeve College.
Chapter II: Literature Review

A review of the literature on experiential learning, social justice education, civic learning, and service-learning was conducted. The potential for civic learning to increase civic participation among students in higher education has led many educators to experiential learning. A benefit of service-learning as an experiential learning initiative is that it provides an understanding of communities and academic work, as students collaborate in class and off campus (Boland, 2014; Chan, 2012; Jones, LePau, & Robinson, 2013; Mitchell, 2007; Yorio & Ye, 2012).

Experiential learning, however, may fall short of realizing the benefits found in the research. Often, service-learning, as a widely adopted curricular and instructional practice in the United States, does not go beyond assistance through service (Butin, 2007, 2008, 2010b; Mitchell 2007, 2008). Social justice in combination with service-learning presents opportunities to form relationships with communities off campus and thereby to address underlying inequities and societal injustices in the United States (Butin, 2007, 2008, 2010b; Mitchell 2007, 2008).

Various researchers and practitioners write about and implement social justice service-learning, providing an interpretation of its pedagogy. This review will focus on the social justice service-learning model put forth by Mitchell (2007, 2008), a leading expert on this type of service-learning. Mitchell (2007, 2008), in her seminal works, identifies four essential components of successful social justice service-learning: attention to the political foundations of social matters, questioning the distribution of power in society, development of productive relationships between post-secondary institutions and their communities, and creation of social-change agents.
This literature review consists of four sections. The first section provides an overview of experiential learning. Experiential learning is the core of service-learning in education and is therefore important to establish as the necessary pedagogy for social justice service-learning. This is followed by a discussion of social justice education, which needs to be associated with service-learning. The identification of essential characteristics for civic learning and social justice service-learning, with an emphasis on higher education, completes the review.

This literature review is organized to build a theoretical model that supports the data collection and analysis for this study. The experiential learning literature presents the overarching concept of Experiential Learning Theory, which offers important guideposts for social justice education, civic learning, and service-learning. Experiential Learning Theory and Transformative Learning Theory provide the lenses for this study’s examination of change in perspective through social justice service-learning pedagogy, which provided students at Reeve College a time-bound civic learning experience.

Experiential Learning Theory as a curricular design tool can provide the greatest insight into factors contributing to personal transformation in students’ civic perspectives. This study explores social justice service-learning in the experiential literature, as an example of civic learning. The research investigates social justice service-learning to uncover a frame of reference, in which students begin their learning journey, and an end point, which may represent a new, more self-aware point of view on issues in communities forming students’ civic perspectives. The experiential learning, social justice education, civic learning, and social justice service-learning literature are reviewed to identify characteristics forming experiential social justice service-learning as civic learning pedagogy.
My examination of my problem of practice, through an analysis of pedagogy and students’ experiences, will evaluate classroom and experiential learning as examples of civic learning. The aim of this literature review is to determine the extent to which social justice service-learning represents civic learning pedagogy that supports an Experiential and Transformative Learning Theory framework.

**Experiential Learning: Supported by Communities**


Forms of experiential learning outside of the classroom include service-learning (academic learning combined with service in communities), cooperative work experience (arranged work experience by school and employer leading towards an occupational goal), internships (coordinated experiences allowing students to participate in the workplace for a period of time), apprenticeships (on-the-job training to gain a license to practice in a regulated profession), job shadows, and various paid or unpaid work (Bailey et al., 2004; Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Moore, 2010, 2013).
Experiential learning combines education within and beyond the classroom to design learning experiences (Bailey et al., 2004; Bettez & Hytten, 2013; Durie & Wyatt, 2013; Jacoby, 2009, 2015; Kolb, 1984; Moore, 2010, 2013). Learning organized around interests and academic goals allows students to personalize opportunities for knowledge and skill practice in authentic and relevant settings (Bruner, 1996; Butin, 2010b; Butin & Seider, 2012; Dewey, 1938; Kolb, 1984; Moore, 2010, 2013). Skills and content learned in school and applied in the real world can be used to comprehend instructional manuals, perform accounting tasks, and conduct community-based research, as examples of experiential learning (Bailey et al., 2004).


Experiential learning recognizes communities as places to teach reading, writing, arithmetic, critical thinking, and problem solving, as well as mechanics, plumbers and electricians (Bailey et al., 2004; Dewey, 1938; Durie & Wyatt, 2013; Freire, 1994 [1970]). However, learning through experiences was and is not conducted only for job preparation. John Dewey (1938) wrote that “the fundamental point in the psychology of an occupation is that it maintains a balance between the intellectual and the practical phases of experience” (p. 83). Dewey (1938) insisted that teaching and learning be carefully designed and implemented to
extend learning beyond the experience itself and to allow experience and reflection to teach the learner. Experiential learning involves constructing and transforming knowledge for individual use (Dewey, 1916a, 1916b, 1938; Kolb, 1984; Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Moore, 2013). Experiential learning provides opportunities for students to reflect and act, thereby constructing knowledge in and out of the classroom (Kolb, 1984; Lennon-Dearing et al., 2008; Moore, 2010).


Experiential learning outside of the classroom accesses the attributes of local communities (Butin, 2007; Colby et al., 2007; Freire, 1994 [1970]; Furco & Moley, 2012; Giroux, 2011; hooks, 1994; Mitchell, 2008). Experiential learning exposes students to the challenges and rewards of their communities through experience, reflection, and action as a means to construct knowledge (Enos, 2015; Jones et al., 2013; Parker et al., 2009). Students’ and

**Social Justice Education: The Formation of Pedagogy**


The intent of social justice education is to empower individual students by providing equitable opportunities to learn, to inform about the experiences of oppressed groups, to form community relationships, to address institutional inequities in society through experiences, and to critically reflect in order to engage in social action (Adams 2012, 2014; Carlisle et al., 2006; Gurin et al., 2013; Hackman, 2005; Keehn, 2015; Kumashiro, 2000, 2004; Mitchell, 2007, 2008;
Social justice education asks educators to consider communities’ social, cultural, and economic factors in combination with students’ learning experiences (Boland, 2014; Dover, 2013; Freire, 1994 [1970]; hooks, 1994; Nagda et al., 2003; Tarrant et al., 2014). Social justice education is teaching and learning that is relevant to students’ lives by accessing their lived experiences (Boland, 2014; Dover, 2013; Ross, 2014). Social justice education is transformative learning as students both reflect on and challenge via action the experiences of oppression (Alhadeff-Jones, 2012; Boland, 2014; Gurin et al., 2013; Keehn, 2015; Mezirow, 2012; Nagda et al., 2003; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012; Sleeter et al., 2005; Storms, 2012; Taylor & Snyder, 2012). Social action encourages students to acknowledge their values and to seek greater equity and justice for oppressed groups in society (Carlisle et al., 2006; Grant & Gibson, 2013; Mitchell, 2008; Sleeter et al., 2005; Storms, 2012).

Oppressed groups in the United States have less access to resources than the dominant group has (hooks, 1994; Sleeter, 2014; Webster & Coffey, 2011). Therefore, it is necessary to provide students with the ability, through education, to challenge societal inequities to create a more just society (Banks, 2010; Kumashiro, 2000, 2004). Social justice education allows students to become agents of change (Bettez & Hytten, 2013; Grant & Sleeter, 2010). Experiential learning and social justice education engage learners, in their communities, in search of social justice directed towards possible social action (Butin, 2007; Kliewer & Zacharakis, 2015; Mitchell, 2007, 2008, 2015; Sleeter et al., 2005). Social justice education increases students’ commitment and confidence to take social action that challenges societal inequities (Nagda et al., 2003; Nelson-Laird, Engberg, & Hurtado, 2005).

Social justice education recognizes structures as systems of power and privilege in society (Banks, 2010; Giroux, 1983; Kumashiro, 2004; Sleeter et al., 2005; Sleeter, 2014;
Webster & Coffey, 2011). The identification and examination of societal inequities allow people to recognize oppression as an opportunity for social change. Effective social justice education identifies power, privilege, oppression, self-reflection, and empowerment for social change (Hackman, 2005; North, 2008). Communities included in educational settings can provide learning opportunities focused on issues of social justice, which challenge oppressive structures in society (Freire, 1994 [1970]; hooks, 1994).

Communities represent societal norms through their structures that support or challenge inequities. As a result, communities present opportunities for dialogue regarding oppression and social justice (Rogers, Mosley, & Kramer, 2009). Communities provide the environments necessary to engage in learning and empower individuals to confront oppression through activism. Communities can promote connections, rather than competition, between people, thus constructing communal norms around shared ideas (Kumashiro, 2000, 2004). The ability to share and collaborate in community-based learning provides the trusting relationships that are necessary to challenge societal inequities and to sustain social change directed towards equity and social justice (Bettez & Hytten, 2013; Butin, 2007; Jacoby, 2009, 2015; Kumashiro, 2000, 2004; Mitchell, 2008).

Social justice education assumes that all dimensions of the educational process are culturally relevant, responsive, and accepting. Social justice education is a comprehensive effort to integrate attitudes, values, content, and actions into all aspects of society (Adams 2012, 2014; Dover, 2013; Ross, 2014; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012, 2014; Sleeter et al., 2005). Social justice as education seeks to redefine the structures of schools and communities through culturally relevant and responsive education as an act of equity (Dover, 2013; Hackman, 2005; Nagda et al., 2003; Sleeter, 2014). Social justice education acknowledges oppressed peoples and those left out of
American education altogether (Kumashiro, 2000, 2004). Pedagogy as social justice education identifies inequities through individual and group experiences in communities.

Social justice education as pedagogy helps students to access experiences through the realism of race, culture, class, poverty, ethnicity, sexual preference, and faiths/religions of oppressed people in communities. Recognition of the dominant ideology and the development of its pedagogy as an example of how privilege creates structural inequities are imperative in order to eliminate oppression and achieve social justice. The dominant group possesses the power to hire, to fire, to determine social norms, and to maintain the structures of society at large. Humans develop their understanding of who they are through the contexts of their experiences. Through personal stories, lived oppression is recognized and can be challenged through experiential learning and social justice education as pedagogy.

**Civic Learning: For Today’s Students**

Education for citizenship in higher education is essential to the development of well-informed students who can think critically about society’s issues and, in turn, make important contributions to society (AAC&U, 2007; Barber, 1985, 1992, 2004, 2012; Battistoni, 2000, 2002; Campus Compact, 2007 [2000], 2015; Enos, 2015; Gould, 2011; Harkavy, 2006; Levine, 2007, The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012; Torney-Purta et al., 2015). Since the formation of Harvard College in 1636, an objective of colleges and universities has been to involve students in their communities (Smith, 1994). The oldest institute of higher learning in the United States, Harvard University, remains committed to its civic mission. In 2007, Harvard revised its general-education curriculum to include civic learning directed towards development of socially responsible students who participate in civic action (John Harvard’s Journal, 2007).
Dewey (1954 [1927]) stated that democracy “…must begin at home, and home is the neighborly community” (p. 213). Dewey’s focus on the importance of education fostering democracy and engaging local communities provides a perspective through which to view civic learning in higher education. Dewey (1990 [1910]) believed that learning occurs best when collaborative efforts are used to solve real-world problems. Collaboration and problem solving through partnerships in communities focused on universal issues (poverty, health care, housing, hunger, and education) provides real-world learning opportunities as civic learning (Barber, 2012; Bringle & Clayton, 2012; Butin, 2010b; Butin & Seider, 2012; Enos, 2015; Jacoby 2009, 2015; Harkavy, 2006; Mitchell, 2015; Mitchell et al., 2015). Dewey’s perspective on civic responsibility and education continues to be a central tenet of civic learning in higher education.

Levine (2007) identifies civic learning as a “behavior that influences public matters, which, in turn, include the commons, the distribution of private goods, and decisions about what action to prohibit or promote” (p. 7). Levine (2007, 2013) also recognizes civic participation as a characteristic of civic learning through involvement in community affairs nationally and locally. Westheimer and Kahne (2004) note a difference between a citizen involved in civic action for the sake of partaking and a citizen focused on social justice efforts as civic learning. While both types of citizens are involved in solving society’s problems, justice-focused individuals work to expose inequitable structures and practices to solve societal dilemmas. Westheimer and Kahne (2004) recognize that engaged justice-oriented citizenship must be included as features of civic learning. Service-learning as the basis for community experiences, in its traditional or social justice form, positively impacts students’ civic values (Lewis, 2004; Vogelgesang & Astin, 2000).
Jacoby recognizes (2015) civic learning through engagement as students “acting upon a heightened sense of responsibility to one’s communities through both political and non-political means” (p. 4). Campus Compact (2015) also recognizes civic learning through civic engagement as a combination of individual and organizational elements in which individuals form habits that allow them to access knowledge and abilities to improve communities. The Carnegie Foundation (2015) explains civic learning through community involvement as “…collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity” (How Is “Community Engagement” Defined? section, para. 1). A Crucible Moment (2012) recognizes “collective action” as a characteristic of civic learning and civic participation through “moral discernment and behavior,” “navigation of political systems,” and “compromise, civility, and mutual respect” (p. 4). The American Association of Colleges & Universities (2007) includes, as features of civic learning, actions of personal and public importance that are beneficial to the individual and society in order to gain civic knowledge, skills, and values.

Saltmarsh (2005) understands civic learning to have three parts. The first is civic knowledge (knowledge from course content and communities), the second is civic skills (socially focused problem solving and civic action), and third is civic values (social justice, civic participation, and inclusion). Torney-Purta et al. (2015) identify civic competency (knowledge and skills) and civic engagement (motivations, values, and participation) as the main elements of civic learning.

As these examples demonstrate, civic learning has many definitions and characteristics (Adler & Goggin, 2005; Holland, 2001; Jacoby, 2009, 2015; Levine, 2007). With somewhat
varied definitions of civic learning, students develop civic habits differently through curricular and co-curricular programs on college and university campuses in the United States. However, common attributes of civic learning include facilitating meaningful action to improve one’s communities, building the capacity and desire to make a difference, advancing students’ civic knowledge, and civic participation as a means to transform people’s perspectives (AAC&U, 2007; Braskamp, 2011; Campus Compact 2015; Colby et al., 2007; Cress, Burack, Giles, Elkins, & Stevens, 2009; Gould, 2011; Carnegie Foundation, 2015; Hatcher, 2011; Harkavy, 2006; Jacoby, 2009, 2015; Lough, McBride, & Sherraden, 2009; Levine, 2007; Saltmarsh, 2005; The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012; Torney-Purta et al., 2015). Civic learning therefore consists of civic knowledge and engagement as elements of personal and social responsibility.

The development of citizenship has been an established goal and practice of higher education in the United States (Barber, 1985, 1992, 2004, 2012; Boland, 2014; Conant, 1945; Dewey, 1916a, 1916b, 1954 [1927]; Harkavy, 2006; Nagda et al., 2003; Smith, 1994). Education for civic learning must provide students with experiences, as civic engagement, so that they can understand and navigate issues and their underlying conditions, to better understand the world locally and globally (AAC&U, 2007; Bringle & Hatcher, 1995; Cress et al., 2009; Carnegie Foundation, 2015; Enos, 2015; Furco, 1996, 2002; Gould, 2011; Harkavy, 2006; Jacoby, 2015; Levine, 2007; Morton, 1995; Ropers-Huilman, Carwile, & Lima, 2005; McCarney, 2013; Mitchell et al., 2015; Saltmarsh, 2005; Steinberg et al., 2011; The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012; Thompson, 2014; Torney-Purta et al., 2015; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Civic learning in the United States and global contexts holds the potential to provide students with the knowledge and skills to be socially responsible citizens.
Civic learning requires a sense of responsibility to one’s communities and an understanding of America’s interdependence as a diverse democracy in an increasingly interconnected world (Enos, 2015; Gould, 2011; Saltmarsh, 2005; Torney-Purta et al., 2015). The opportunity to participate as a member of such a world occurs on college campuses and in students’ communities. Occidental College facilitates learning about social issues through community engagement opportunities, bringing classroom learning into contact with lived experiences (Occidental College, n.d.). Collaborative partnerships are fostered through research programs and curriculum-based experiential learning, as examples of civic pedagogy. Similarly, Project Pericles at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute engages students in social responsibility and participatory citizenship through educational programs in the classroom and in the community (Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, n.d.). Swarthmore College also provides students with experiences in community-centered learning. Faculty from a range of Swarthmore disciplines offer various community-focused courses. Students bring their civic experiences into their courses, providing a deeper understanding of its content (Swarthmore, n.d.). Civic knowledge and participation include academic work that supports active experimentation in communities, as civic learning.

Civic learning prepares individuals to partake in social change to promote social justice locally and globally. Participation in communities to transform self and society exists through service-learning as a type of civic pedagogy. The formation of structures and systems (policies, procedures, and programs) connecting individuals with communities through reciprocal partnerships occurs through service-learning as an example of civic learning (Butin, 2010a, 2010b; Butin & Seider, 2012; Campus Compact, 2007[2000], 2015; Enos, 2012; Hollander, 2012; Hoy et al., 2012; Jacoby, 2009, 2015; Keene & Reiff, 2012; Levine, 2013; McCarney,
Social Justice Service-Learning as Civic Learning: Perspective Transformation


Social justice education in colleges and universities can be expressed through service-learning. Temple University and the University of Pennsylvania foster community partnerships in an urban environment. Students at these universities engage in conversations about inequity and partake in service throughout the city of Philadelphia. Temple University’s Inside-Out Program is an academic course in which prison inmates and Temple students learn together, exchanging ideas on issues of social significance (Temple University, n.d.). The Netter Center for Community Partnerships at the University of Pennsylvania combines academics with community engagement to address societal challenges through the development of civic knowledge and community participation (University of Pennsylvania, n.d.). Social justice and service-learning, when combined, provide opportunities to acquire knowledge through participation in communities.
Service-Learning. Morton (1995) provided one of the earliest descriptions of service-learning: service as charity, project-focused work, and service towards societal change. Kahne and Westheimer (1996) later recognized differences among types of service-learning. The authors identified service-learning as charity or giving, service towards the development of civic knowledge and perspective, and service-learning connected to the classroom in order to analyze the origin of societal challenges. Bringle and Hatcher (1995) and Furco (1996) provide two of the most commonly cited definitions of service-learning. Bringle and Hatcher (1995) identify service-learning as a course-based experience providing credit in which students

(a) participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and
(b) reflect(s) on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility. (p. 112)

Furco (1996) developed a model to help explain the unique attributes of service-learning compared to other forms of community-based experiential learning, as illustrated in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Distinctions Among Service Programs (Furco, 1996, p. 3)
On the left side of Figure 5, Furco identifies community service and volunteerism, for individual or organizational benefit, as charitable work. The opposite side represents field education and internships to serve the needs of students. The bottom level of each side of Figure 5 does not typically require any commitment or connection to pressing social issues or stated learning goals (Furco, 1996). The middle level of Furco’s model represents greater commitment by the learner and community partner towards identification of service concerning mutually desirable needs (Jacoby, 2015). In the center of Figure 5, above the four examples of community-supported learning, is service-learning. Furco (1996) states,

service-learning programs are distinguished from other approaches to experiential education by their intention to equally benefit the provider and the recipient of the service as well as to ensure equal focus on both the service being provided and the learning that is occurring. (p. 12)

Service-learning is designed to address underlying issues impacting a community, while deepening the academic content of a course and preparing students for civic engagement as civic learning (Bringle & Clayton, 2012; Enos, 2015; Jacoby, 2009, 2015; Levine, 2013; McCarney, 2013; Mitchell et al., 2015; Thompson, 2014; Yorio & Ye, 2012).

A frequently stated goal of service-learning is to “prepare students for active democratic engagement” (Jacoby, 2015 p. 240). Service-learning pedagogy provides experiences for students to participate in civic and political endeavors while learning the historical and crucial role of democratic engagement. Service-learning provides students with opportunities for citizen-centered learning in which students and communities deliberate about shared ideas and strategies to best serve a common good (Levine, 2007, 2013). Democratic engagement experienced as service-learning is a time to reflect on experiences, as higher education prepares students for
active citizenship (Bringle & Clayton, 2012; Bringle et al., 2015; Jacoby, 2015; Mitchell, 2014, 2015; Mitchell et al., 2015; Saltmarsh et al., 2009).

Service-learning in higher education continues to gain recognition as researchers acknowledge different attributes for various community experiences (Bringle & Clayton, 2012; Bringle et al., 2015; Butin, 2006, 2007, 2010a, 2010b; Enos, 2012, 2015; Hollander, 2012; Hoy et al., 2012; Jacoby, 2015; Keene & Reiff, 2012; Mitchell, 2008; Morton, 2012; Seider & Novick, 2012; Yorio & Ye, 2012). Service-learning researchers and practitioners identify differences in the rationale for participating in service-learning, leading to different outcomes. Community service is identified as the basis for traditional service-learning, while critical or social justice service-learning is recognized as serving mutually beneficial problem solving between students and their communities questioning societal inequities (Adams, 2014; Butin, 2007, 2010a, 2012; Gurin et al., 2013; Keehn, 2015; Long & Campbell, 2012; Mitchell, 2008).

Community service involves activities that exist outside the curriculum. Service-learning connects academic work to service through specific curricular and instructional practices. Students’ service in their communities and academic content, formed as a process, comprise the course (Bringle & Clayton, 2012; Butin, 2012; Enos, 2015; Jacoby, 2015; Yorio & Ye, 2012). Service-learning, as a transformative pedagogy, with or without social justice, engages the academic work of a college or university in its communities (Alhadeff-Jones, 2012; Butin, 2012; Enos, 2015; Gurin, 2013; Keehn, 2015; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012). Students’ perspectives about service connected to their learning distinguish service-learning from social justice service-learning (Adams, 2014; Boyle-Baise & Langford, 2004; Butin, 2007; Donahue, 2000; Gurin et al., 2013; Keehn, 2015; King, 2004; Marullo & Edwards, 2000; Mitchell, 2008; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000).
Many researchers connect service-learning with civic learning, representing an increased sense of students’ social responsibility and citizenship skills through civic engagement (Benson et al., 2007; Butin & Seider, 2012; Butin, 2010b; Colby et al., 2007; Dorn, 2011; Jacoby, 2009, 2015; Levine, 2013; McCarney, 2013; Mitchell et al., 2015; Plante et al., 2009; Thompson, 2014). The classification of social justice service-learning as different from traditional service-learning is necessary to attain social justice through service-learning (Brown, 2013; Butin, 2007; Mitchell, 2007, 2008; Tinkler, Tikler, Gerstl-Pepin, & Mugisha, 2014). The facilitation of learning identified through service experiences must challenge learners’ perspectives, to be considered social justice service-learning. The combination of social justice service-learning with community input emphasizes the reciprocity of experiences, which is not present in traditional service-learning (Brown, 2013; Butin, 2007, 2012; Marullo & Edwards, 2000; Mitchell, 2007, 2008; Tinkler et al., 2014). Social justice service-learning aims to address the underlying causes of community problems, which often result from inequitable structures in society (Butin, 2007, 2010b; Carlisle et al., 2006; Marullo & Edwards, 2000; Pompa, 2005; Mitchell, 2007, 2008; Morton, 1995; Webster & Coffey, 2011).


Figure 6. Traditional vs. Critical Service-Learning (Mitchell, 2008, p. 52)

Figure 6 represents traditional service-learning, with its charitable efforts, as different from social justice service-learning. The figure displays the collaboration that occurs through

Butin (2007) and Westheimer and Kahne (2007) position social justice service-learning as an approach to service-learning that has the greatest potential to achieve social change. Mitchell (2008) identified social justice service-learning as “working to redistribute power amongst all participants in the service-learning relationship, developing authentic relationships in the classroom and in the community, and working from a social change perspective” (p. 50). Social justice service-learning asks those engaged in service to “uncover the root causes that perpetuate the needs addressed by their service sites” (Mitchell, 2007, p. 105), instead of marginalizing those who receive services. Mitchell’s (2008) identification of social justice service-learning as different from traditional service-learning recognizes the outcomes for the two forms of service as charity in contrast to social justice.

Social justice service-learning as pedagogy aims to challenge social injustices through service in participants’ communities. This requires authentic relationships in the classroom and community, to deconstruct systems of power and privilege resulting in inequities (Daigre, 2000; Mitchell, 2008). The elimination of societal inequities created through social institutions (Butin,
2007, 2010b; Enos, 2015; Jacoby, 2015; Webster & Coffey, 2011) becomes the purpose of social justice service-learning. Social justice service-learning aims to provide service while not abusing the power, resources, and abilities of those in the position to serve (Mitchell & Donahue, 2009; Mitchell, 2015). An objective of social justice service-learning as pedagogy is to eliminate inequitable systems and structures of society (Mitchell, 2008; Mitchell & Donahue, 2009; Pompa, 2005). Social justice service-learning provides skills and resources for service recipients and expands their capacity and access to community capital (Jacoby, 2015; Marullo & Edwards, 2000; Mitchell, 2008).

Mitchell (2008) describes traditional service-learning as “service without attention to systems of inequality” and a social justice approach as one that is “unapologetic in its aim to dismantle structures of injustice” (p. 50). Students and community members are engaged in analyzing the systems of society in order to recognize leverage points for social change, to overcome societal inequities. Civic learning requires social justice service-learning pedagogy to create reciprocal campus-community partnerships in which community issues and concerns are truly as important as intended academic outcomes.

Classroom-based learning and service in communities designed to encourage students to question and act on social inequities are qualities of social justice service-learning as civic learning and are unique to this community-based form of experiential education (Butin, 2003, 2007, 2010b, 2012; Carlisle et al., 2006; Colby et al., 2007; Furco, 2002; Furco & Moely, 2012; Gurin et al., 2013; Jacoby, 2009, 2015; Keehn, 2015; Marullo & Edwards, 2000; Mitchell, 2007, 2008, 2014, 2015; Morton, 1995; Pompa, 2005; Webster & Coffey, 2011). This contrasts to other forms of community-based learning such as cooperative education, extension service placements,
field education, internships, and practicums generated primarily for students’ personal benefit (Battistoni, 2000, 2002; Butin, 2007; Furco, 1996; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004).

Social justice service-learning provides pedagogy through the community as a “text” to be examined and compared to the content of a course (Battistoni, 2000, 2002; Bell et. al., 2000; Bringle & Hatcher, 2009; Furco, 1996, 2002; Harkavy, 2006; Jacoby, 2009, 2015; Jones et al., 2013; Marullo & Edwards, 2000; Pedersen et al., 2015; Steinberg et al., 2011; Zlotkowski, 1996). Social justice service-learning as pedagogy questions social realities through service-learning experiences and requires critical analysis of social issues in participants’ communities (Butin, 2007, 2010b, 2012; Carlisle et al., 2006; Furco, 2002; Marullo & Edwards, 2000; Mitchell, 2007, 2008, 2014, 2015; Morton, 1995; Pompa, 2005; Soltan, 2014; Webster & Coffey, 2011).

Social justice service-learning pedagogy develops questions, processes unsettling ideas, and clarifies values, to be explored critically in order to solve societal dilemmas (Boland, 2014; Butin, 2007, 2012; Chan, 2012; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Jones et al., 2013; Mitchell, 2007, 2008, 2014, 2015; Plante et al., 2009; Ropers-Huilman et al., 2005; Soltan, 2014). Reflection as a characteristic of social justice service-learning pedagogy can stimulate cognitive processing and perspective transformation, to reveal the complexity of issues necessitating authentic problem solving (Eyler, 2002; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Jones et al., 2013; King, 2004; Mitchell, 2007).

Social justice service-learning pedagogy asks students to participate as activists within their communities and to address structural injustices. Service in communities engages students and enhances their classroom experiences through real-world application. Experiences extend, question, and reinforce the curriculum through social justice service-learning pedagogy. Participants in service-learning have time to reflect on the complexity of their service as they

Service-learning in post-secondary education allows collaborative efforts to create the structure and focus for service directed towards an identified social justice goal within a pedagogy (Butin, 2007, 2010b, 2012; King, 2004; Mitchell, 2007, 2008, 2014, 2015; Ropers-Huilman et al., 2005). Examples of social justice education as service-learning in higher education include lobbying city officials for accessible emergency housing for those not able to secure their own, working in area schools to support learners in need of assistance and understanding the structural factors impeding their success, and constructing houses with those who will reside in the homes upon their completion, both domestically and abroad, while examining characteristics of poverty (Fay, 2008; King, 2004; Mitchell, 2007, 2015). Linking theory to practice allows classroom experiences to connect communities and students through identified issues and service in their communities (Bringle & Hatcher, 1995, 2002; Butin, 2010a, 2012; Fay, 2008; Furco & Root, 2010; King, 2004; Mitchell, 2007, 2008).
Examples of social justice service-learning appear across America in higher education. Boston University offers service-learning and social justice education through various classes offering academic credit (Boston University, n.d.). Elon University requires all students to participate in experiential learning. Elon students engage in experiences, domestically and abroad, directed towards a goal of eventual action as global citizens (Elon University, n.d.). Many of the experiences that Elon students partake in throughout North Carolina and the world examine societal inequities and how they can be rectified. Macalester College offers over 60 courses with civic engagement components (Macalester, n.d.). Macalester students partake in learning, teaching, and problem solving in their communities off campus to better understand societal challenges in Minneapolis. A combination of theory and practice through service appears on many college and university campuses throughout the United States.

Collaboration among schools and communities develops meaningful relationships and new curricula and experiences necessary for social justice service-learning pedagogy. Activism and reflection on experiences in the context of participants’ communities characterize social justice education. Recognition of privilege and positions of power in communities enables reflection on lived experiences, perspective transformation, and activism, as social justice service-learning questions society’s structures (policies, procedures, and programs) and oppression. Partnerships between schools and communities that acknowledge the assets and needs of communities as social justice service-learning can form the pedagogical structure of schools through Experiential and Transformative Learning Theories directed towards civic knowledge, values, and engagement through social activism as civic learning pedagogy.
Challenges to Implementation

Although experiential learning as service-learning occurs on many college and university campuses to create connections between on- and off-campus communities, questions arise as to how service-learning will serve those involved in its work. Should service-learning exist in higher education to simply deepen the understanding of a course’s content, to explore local and global communities to develop civic understanding, or should service-learning be used for both purposes (Butin, 2010b)? Regardless of intent, service-learning connects academic work with service as experiential pedagogy.

A challenge for service-learning is to ensure that its intentions do not result in the exploitation of those less fortunate. Service-learning as acceptable experiential pedagogy in higher education must not abuse its opportunities for servant leadership. The extent to which service-learning perpetuates and reinforces privilege and experiences of dominance for students involved is a concern for social justice and service-learning researchers (Dostilio, 2012; Hartman, 2013). Social justice service-learning requires that its facilitation be mutually beneficial and therefore establish itself outside of service-learning (Butin, 2007, 2008, 2010b; Mitchell, 2007, 2008).

Social justice education by nature recognizes injustices. Social justice education can be understood to criticize the existing state of society. This makes many people uncomfortable as they consider their beliefs and actions. Some people in the United States criticize a pedagogy that promotes an agenda to move students towards an ideology that seeks equity and justice in society (Bialystok, 2014). Social justice education must prepare students to understand the theory and principles of justice and how they are formed in society (Kliwer & Zacharakis, 2015).
A challenge for those participating in social justice is the reluctance to acknowledge personal involvement in oppression and privilege (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2014). Not all forms of social justice education provide the content and curriculum necessary to support theories of justice for public discourse (Kliewer & Zacharakis, 2015). Recognition of experiences with injustice requires participatory curricula to “unpack” personal involvement. Acceptance of one’s participation in oppression and privilege can result in restorative actions and creation of mutual understanding. Social justice education must promote a shared philosophy of justice and equity understood through knowledge and participation in private and public spaces (Kliewer & Zacharakis, 2015).

Civic learning through knowledge and participation result from an individual’s ability to reflect (Mitchell, 2014, 2015). Experiences through classrooms and service in communities are tied to learners’ ambitions, intrapersonal abilities, and desire to act (Mitchell et al., 2015). Although there have been great attempts, since the inclusion of service-learning in higher education, to include democratic principles, these attempts have not always been a priority (Battistoni, 2000; Hartman, 2013; Saltmarsh & Hartley, 2011). Students not engaged in academic and community experiences with opportunities for critical reflection on civic understanding do not develop civic-minded habits (Dostilio, 2012). Levine (2013) recognized that to develop civic learning through service-learning, student involvement must include collaborative relationships that require deliberation in the civic realm.

Currently, higher education has a limited number of civic activities facilitating experiences that allow students to create their own civic perspectives (Theis, 2016). Civic learning in higher education often provides a passive role for students. Students often simply work within traditional environments, amassing facts and making expert arguments while trying
to attract and align themselves with those who hold similar perspectives (Theis, 2016). Work in and outside of a classroom does not typically serve to attract different perspectives or interests.

Civic learning also does not currently provide all students with opportunities to reach potential solutions through shared decision making, so that they recognize a different role for citizenship (Theis, 2016). More typical on college and university campuses is the formation of groups that mirror those created by society, which perpetuates the present problems of democracy (Theis, 2016). Civic learning must foster the formation of civic identity by facilitating experiences that allow students to address societal dilemmas in increasingly “complex roles; to invest deeply in an issue that creates connection and a sense of belonging; and to create community on and off campus that builds critical awareness necessary to take action in constructive ways” (Mitchell, 2015).

The pedagogy of service-learning supports process as content (Butin, 2012), as learning experiences engage students in classrooms and their communities. Service-learning moves teaching and learning from traditional environments into spaces not familiar to many scholar-practitioners. A challenge of service-learning as experiential pedagogy is that demands can exhaust and even overwhelm (Butin, 2012) the best intentions of scholars and practitioners in higher education, as learning relies on experiences outside of the classroom. Service-learning programs need to determine the extent to which teaching faculty should be asked to facilitate pedagogy that does not possess a predetermined curricula or set of standardized measures (Butin, 2012) but relies on the principles of Experiential and Transformative Learning Theories.

A challenge for those facilitating transformative learning is the identification of moments in which a change occurs for a learner through experience. Newman (2012) criticizes transformative learning for its use of seemingly insignificant events as “transformative” if an
individual’s perspective changes significantly. The outcomes of Transformative Learning Theory appear to be accepted by most theorists; however, scholars do not completely agree on the strategies used to produce such changes (Cranton, Stuckey, & Taylor, 2012). Transformative learning through experiences thus requires purposeful pedagogy informed by Experiential Learning Theory.

The methods used to facilitate changes in perspective through Transformative Learning Theory are also perceived as a challenge. West (2014) recognizes that individuals whose psychosocial and emotional capacities are not “available” due to oppression or poverty may have a skewed understanding of lived experiences. As a result, the ability to question and transform one’s perspective based on such disequilibrium may not be possible (Taylor & Cranton, 2013). Another challenge is the unpredictability of when learners’ experience a change in perspective. Transforming one’s ideas is highly personalized and often evolves at different rates making it difficult to identify and examine (Alhadeff-Jones, 2012).

Students’ abilities to analyze moments of transformation are also a challenge (Ettling, 2012). Transformative learning relies on factors that are not always evident in the steps commonly taken to design education (Hullender, Hinck, Wood-Nartker, Burton, & Bowlby, 2015). Some teaching faculty and students find the variable learning conditions within an experiential learning environment highly problematic. As a result, transformative experiences may not be recognized due to the uncomfortable nature of this pedagogy. Therefore, transformative moments must be explored to identify their key characteristics in experiential pedagogy (Hullender et al., 2015).
Summation

Experiential and Transformative Learning Theories as the theoretical lenses for this study support social justice service-learning through experience, reflection, and activism as civic learning pedagogy. Personal reflections on experiential learning are opportunities to assess inequities in the context of communities, to transform perspectives, and to express one’s beliefs through activism as social justice service-learning. Experiential learning provides the context for recognition of the dominant ideology, through social justice education. Service-learning is a vital component of civic participation and democratic engagement as civic learning in higher education (Benson et al., 2007; Butin, 2010a; Colby et al., 2007; Levine, 2013; McCarney, 2013; Mitchell et al., 2015; Saltmarsh et al., 2009; Thompson, 2014). The Association of American Colleges & Universities (2007, 2013) promotes the inclusion of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to develop as a critical thinker and engaged citizen, through experiential learning as service-learning pedagogy.

Service-learning is the most widely used curricular and instructional strategy supporting civic learning and democratic engagement in higher education (Levine, 2007; The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012). Experiential learning through social justice education provides reciprocal collaborative partnerships between colleges and universities and their communities. Reflection on service-learning experiences allows students to identify societal inequities in an effort to achieve social justice. Experiential learning and social justice education provide students with personal experiences and opportunities for reflection, with the potential for a change in civic perspective, through transformation and experimentation, as students become community activists questioning injustice.

Students need to acquire the knowledge to connect local and global events, recognize injustices, and document their impact on the systems that perpetuate inequities. They also need civic skills, motivation, and the commitment to persist when they are moved to participate through public actions. In addition, students need to develop intercultural competencies to work with others they may not have encountered before, to construct a more just society. As higher education recognizes civic learning for its students, social justice service-learning is its most
effective pedagogy (Astin & Sax, 1998; Eyler et al., 2001; Butin, 2007, 2010a, 2010b; Butin & Seider, 2012; Jacoby, 2009, 2015; Levine, 2007; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Steinberg et al., 2011). Combined to form the theoretical frame for this study, Experiential Learning Theory and Transformative Learning Theory provide the opportunity to study civic learning in terms of social justice service-learning. Post-secondary education must facilitate a civic mission to engage civic learning to prepare its citizens to be members of a democracy and global society.

This study’s research questions explore how students experience and reflect on their civic perspectives through social justice service-learning. This qualitative instrumental case study accesses students’ perspectives through their voices as past participants in social justice service-learning at Reeve College, as an example of civic learning pedagogy. An instrumental case study provided the best method to gather data for this study. The specific case, the fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course, was under study to determine its effects on a specific phenomenon: students’ changes in civic perspectives. The following chapter describes the research methodology, which develops an inductive process to analyze the findings and answer the main research question concerning students’ experiences in social justice service-learning as an example of civic learning pedagogy.
Chapter III: Methodology

This research study was conducted using a social constructivist paradigm. Ponteotto (2005) writes that researchers can recognize the meaning of life experiences by considering participants’ experiences. This researcher gained an understanding of students’ social justice service-learning experiences in the fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course, to better understand participants’ civic perspectives.

The constructivist paradigm provided the greatest potential to hear students’ stories about perceptions, via experiential pedagogy, and to discover a possible change in their civic perspectives. Creswell (2013) and Guba and Lincoln (1994) write that a researcher becomes immersed in the world of a study’s participants. The interactions I had with the study’s participants, through a social constructivist paradigm, provided an understanding of social justice service-learning experiences (Creswell, 2013).

Higher education recognizes theory and practice linking schools and communities through experiential learning and social justice pedagogy (Butin, 2006, 2007; Enos, 2015; Jacoby, 2015; Mitchell, 2007, 2008). Educators can impact social change by encouraging students to expose inequities and to take action to build a just society, as civic learning (Alder & Goggin, 2005; Braskamp, 2011; Battistoni, 2000, 2002; Butin, 2007; Campus Compact, 2015; Carnegie Foundation, 2015; Furco & Root, 2010; Harkavy, 2006; Jacoby, 2009, 2015; Levine, 2007; Marullo & Edwards, 2000; McCarney, 2013; Mitchell et al., 2015; Quin, 2009; Sleeter, 2014; Thompson, 2014; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Experiential learning through a transformative framework positions education and society to consider inequities through experiences, reflections, and actions as examples of civic learning. A qualitative case study was
implemented to determine the ways in which social justice service-learning, through Experiential and Transformative Learning Theories, possesses characteristics of civic learning pedagogy.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine social justice service-learning pedagogy and its characteristics of civic learning. The central research question explored in this qualitative case study is as follows: How do past participants in Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course describe their learning journey in social justice service-learning? The central research question was addressed through Experiential Learning Theory and Transformative Learning Theory, which are the two lenses for this study. The research question enabled the exploration of student-perspective transformation resulting from social justice service-learning as an example of civic learning pedagogy.

**Rationale for Qualitative Case Study Design**

Qualitative studies as research tools support investigation of an issue experienced by humans in an authentic context (Creswell, 2013). In qualitative research, “researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (Merriam, 2009, p. 5). Using a bounded case methodology, I implemented a single instrumental case study, as a qualitative tool, to analyze Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). The bounded case research approach included locating various sources to develop a detailed understanding of the case. Miles and Huberman (1994) define a case as a phenomenon under examination in a bounded setting. Qualitative research is designed to explore the meaning of a phenomenon (Stake, 1995). Case study as a form of qualitative research provides the opportunity for analysis within a context and through the use of various data sets (Yin, 2014). The use of curricular documents, student artifacts, class observations, and
interviews provided opportunities to compare data, to make generalized assertions about the pedagogy of Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course and its potential to serve as a model for civic learning.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain a better understanding of students’ civic perspectives as a result of having experienced social justice service-learning through civic learning pedagogy at Reeve College. The students’ perspectives determined the degree to which social justice service-learning is civic learning pedagogy. Therefore, individual student experiences were investigated in this research. The objective for this study was to examine how students developed subjective meaning from their experiences in the Privilege and Poverty course, resulting in perspective transformation through experiential social justice service-learning as an example of civic learning.

Yin’s and Stake’s Perspectives

Yin and Stake are case study researchers who propose different approaches to case methodology. Yin (2009) presents a postpositive position, and Stake (1995) proposes a constructivist perspective. Yin (2014) supports the use of a theory, concept, or framework to determine the utility of a study during analysis. Stake (1995) promotes the use of a theory, concept, or framework if the researcher desires, but does not require one (Boblin, Ireland, Kirkpatrick, & Robertson, 2013). Yin (2014) describes case study as explanatory, exploratory, or descriptive, while Stake (1995) discusses case study as intrinsic, instrumental, or collective. These different approaches to case research will be used together in this study.

Yin (2014) describes a descriptive case study through which an intervention or phenomenon is examined in a real-life context. This study describes social justice service-learning as the intervention and students’ civic perspectives as an outcome of civic learning and
the study’s phenomenon. This study’s “case” is a social justice service-learning course as an example of civic learning. Students’ civic perspectives resulting from perspective transformation exemplify the social phenomenon for this instrumental case study. As an example of civic learning, Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary *Privilege and Poverty* course provided a contemporary phenomenon in a real-life context (Yin, 2014), creating the setting for this case study. Stake (1995) identifies an instrumental case study as a means for understanding a phenomenon, towards the understanding of a case. An instrumental case study was used in this research to understand how social justice service-learning, as the case, resulted in a change in civic perspective as the case’s phenomenon. An instrumental case study (Stake, 1995) was used because this research described a specific phenomenon within a descriptive case (Yin, 2009). The focus of this research is students’ perspectives resulting from their social justice service-learning experiences as a form of civic learning pedagogy.

Case study methodology examines the real-life events of human relationships through experiences (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). Case study methodology is appropriate for Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary *Privilege and Poverty* course since the course is bounded in time and activity (Creswell, 2003; Yin, 1994, 2014; Merriam, 1988). As a qualitative research method, case study suits experiential understanding through various realities and ongoing interpretations by the researcher (Stake, 1995). Yin, Stake, and Creswell’s approaches to case study research support a case’s ability to adjust to an array of research questions and settings. Case study research provided the opportunity to examine phenomena in depth and in context, allowing participants to share their stories (Crabtree & Miller, 1999). A case study approach provided information (Merriam, 1988; Yin, 1989) from individuals with direct experience of the phenomenon under study (Martin, 1995; Patton, 1990).
**Participants and Sampling Strategy**

The voices of an identified population were required for this study. Therefore, a criterion sampling strategy was used to select participants for individual semi-structured interviews as part of this study (Creswell, 2013). This method of purposeful sampling allowed me to recognize and select appropriate participants and to gain the most useful information for this study (Patton, 2002). According to Creswell (2008), “In purposeful sampling researchers intentionally select individuals and seek to learn or understand the central phenomenon” (p. 214). In this study, there is one case to be studied: the fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course. The criterion to participate in this study was past participation in Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course.

**Recruitment and Access**

Participant recruitment began after Northeastern University’s and Reeve College’s Institutional Review Boards (IRB) approved the study’s application for IRB approval. I sought approval from the academic director of the Privilege and Poverty cluster and from the professor of the Privilege and Poverty gateway course, Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty. One individual holds the roles of academic advisor for the academic cluster and instructor of the Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty gateway course (Appendix A).

The advisor/course instructor approved the study, provided access to the site, and encouraged participation in the research study (Creswell, 2012). The academic cluster’s advisor/professor was given full disclosure regarding the nature of the study. Details on the purpose of the research, the commitment of time and resources required of participants in this study, and the potential findings and benefits realized by participating in this study were provided to the advisor/professor of the cluster’s gateway course. The cluster advisor/professor
had opportunities to ask clarifying questions, discuss concerns and potential conflicts, and request modifications to the study design prior to its start. The advisor of the academic cluster/professor of the course raised no concerns, and I sought IRB approval from Northeastern University and Reeve College.

Past participants in Reeve College’s Privilege and Poverty courses were eligible for this study. As a result, an email/letter invitation to known alumni, 34 in total, from the fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course was sent by the academic advisor/professor of the course to establish participants willing to be in this study. An email invitation that included the participant letter (Appendix B), approved by the Northeastern University’s and Reeve’s IRBs, outlining the aims of the study, without revealing the “transformative” characteristics sought, was sent to the 34 alumni. The email initiated contact with alumni and required permission and consent to participate, including a generic description of the objectives of the study. The emailed letter described my objective to improve the design of courses through civic learning and how these changes might increase learning. I conducted follow-up communication with students who agreed to participate in the study, in order to schedule interviews. The target number of qualitative interviews with students from the fall 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course was between six and eight students.

The selection of willing participants was established to schedule 60-minute face-to-face interviews (Seidman, 2006, 2012). I received waivers of written consent (Appendix C) to record and verbally conduct the interviews from the participants in this study. Communication with interviewees occurred to ensure that they understood that the interviews would be recorded. The interviews were later transcribed to form the primary data set for analysis in this case study. I included a preliminary review with interviewees of the research process, to reiterate that the
interviews were voluntary and to request to record and transcribe the participants’ responses to the interview questions. Only after I shared the written consent form and received verbal affirmation did recording of the interviews take place (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

At the conclusion of the interviews, I notified participants that the interview had ended, and stopped recording, providing time for participants to inquire about the questions posed during the interview protocol. Seidman (2006) states that “every aspect of the structure, process, and practice of interviewing can be directed toward the goal of minimizing the effect the interviewer and the interviewing situation have on how the participants reconstruct their experience” (p. 22). An interview protocol, to guide the gathering of information during the interview, was used during the interview process (Appendix E). A qualitative interview protocol elicited data to illuminate the research question. In addition, a protocol was used for notes to be taken during the formal interview in order to fully capture the experience (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Seidman, 2006, 2012). The interview structure was developed to allow interviewees the ability to make sense of their experiences as well as ensure reliability of the study (Seidman, 2006, 2012).

**Data Collection**

Data collection in this study required accessing participants through criterion sampling, gaining permission from participants, recording information digitally and in print, storing data, and accounting for any ethical issues that may arise throughout the study (Creswell, 2013). Yin (2014) defines a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon happening in a real life context especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly evident” (p.16). Curricular documents and student artifacts, class observations, and interviews with the selected participants from the fall of 2015
Religion/Interdisciplinary *Privilege and Poverty* course provided the methods of data collection for this study. The first phase of data collection involved a document review of accessible curricular and student artifacts, the second phase included observations from class experiences, and the third phase consisted of individual semi-structured interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). An analysis of the fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary *Privilege and Poverty* curriculum and student artifacts made up the first phase of data collection. The second phase included a review of class observations from the same course. The final phase included individual student interviews with past participants in the class and formed the primary dataset for this case study.

**Curricular Documents:** Analysis of curriculum documents, including course syllabus, handouts, readings, and student-volunteered work products, from Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary *Privilege and Poverty* course, was conducted as a preliminary source of information to identify the course’s main themes and foci. The analysis was also conducted to examine social justice and service-learning as a type of civic learning. These findings were used to address the research questions as well as to support and document social justice experiential learning as civic learning pedagogy designed for students in the fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary *Privilege and Poverty* course. The inclusion of social justice service-learning in the course identified social justice as a point of focus in the classroom and in the community. This information was used to help illustrate social justice education as civic learning as well as the potential for student-perspective transformation through experiential learning. The curriculum documents for examination were collected from the instructor. Student artifacts were also analyzed during this phase of data collection. Students voluntarily provided me with journal responses and final exam essays produced through the course’s design. These documents became
part of this dataset and, in conjunction with curricular documents, provided information to assess the research questions for this study.

Course documents and student artifacts were compared with students’ perceptions from their interviews to check for consistency between the course curriculum and students’ experiences. My literature review revealed features of civic learning as a pedagogical structure in higher education, which provided principles to assist in understanding the curricular intentions of social justice service-learning as civic learning pedagogy at Reeve College. The elements used in the curriculum design of the fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course were also used to form a list of practices used to compare the written and taught curriculum. Student artifacts provided further evidence of students’ experiences with the course’s design. A preliminary analysis of the course was conducted using curriculum documents and student-produced artifacts as a data set.

Observations: Direct observation is useful in providing additional information to a case (Yin, 1989). Observations of classes in the fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course provided another data set for this qualitative study. Observations were useful in evaluating the use of social justice and service-learning as it related to civic learning in a class setting. Observations included technical information such as date, time, and place, as well as descriptions of activities related to social justice service-learning as civic learning in the observation protocol (Appendix D). The protocol was designed to note the presence of social justice experiential learning as civic learning in the classroom.

Observations gathered from direct experience in the fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course provided insights into how the curriculum appeared to students in a classroom setting. Creswell (2013) states that observation is
one of the most effective data-collecting tools in qualitative research. Observing the interactions of group members “in the field setting” (Creswell, 2013, p. 166) provided insights to better understand the interrelationships among students and an instructor’s practices. Direct observation of the topics discussed in the classes provided information regarding the extent to which elements of civic learning emerged through the curriculum in a classroom environment. These observations also provided supporting evidence to the participants’ interview responses.

**Interviews:** Rubin and Rubin (2012) explain that through “…interviews, researchers explore in detail the experiences, motives, and opinions of others and learn to see the world from perspectives other than their own” (p. 3). Qualitative interviews provided access to those experiencing the phenomena in the environment in which it occurred. The examination of individual interviews helped me construct a cohesive representation of various pieces of evidence (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Participant interviews lasted 60 minutes and were conducted at Reeve College during a time of day and location chosen by the participants.

The primary dataset of individual interviews was used to explore the transformation of individual civic perspectives resulting from social justice service-learning as an example of civic pedagogy. Individual, uninterrupted interviews were appropriate for this study as they revealed beliefs about class and community experiences. In addition, semi-structured and unstructured interviews are usually associated with qualitative research methods (Seidman, 2012). Semi-structured interviews are carefully planned and provide a repertoire of possibilities, based on an interview protocol that includes two types of questions: open-ended and theoretical (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010). Semi-structured interviews were used in this study because they are “sufficiently structured to address specific topics related to the phenomenon of study, while leaving space for participants to offer new meanings to the study focus” (Galletta, 2013, p. 24).
Therefore, semi-structured, 60-minute interviews with six student participants were carried out by me and represent the primary data set for this study.

Yin (2009, 2014) points out that interviews are among the most important data sources in case study and qualitative research. Therefore, interviews represented the primary source of information for this study’s analysis due to their importance in identifying participants’ perceptions regarding social justice, experiential service-learning, and students’ civic perspectives. Curriculum and student artifacts do not always demonstrate an instructor’s desired learning outcomes. Therefore, it was important to identify the participants’ perspectives from learning experiences in their own words.

An interview was also conducted with the professor of the course to confirm the curricular intentions of the course’s design (Appendix F). The interview with the professor contributed to my understanding of student responses captured from the primary interviews. The “professor” interview addressed the raw data gathered, to justify and reinforce the emergence of categories and themes during data analysis. All interviews for this study were recorded using an electronic recording device and were transcribed verbatim into a Word document.

To focus the interviews on the purpose of the study and to maintain accuracy, an interview protocol was designed (Appendix E). Interview questions were constructed according to the following broad areas:

1. The learner’s starting frame of reference (perspective);
2. The impact of the experiential learning (social justice service-learning) event;
3. Influences of course elements (design and content) on learners;
4. Identifiable changes in the learner’s frame of reference (perspective).
To access learning experiences and student perceptions, a behavioral approach supported the development of the interview protocol. A behavioral model provided an account of experiences, enabling participants’ voices to emerge as they recalled their experiential learning projects (Creswell, 2012). The participants’ reflections on the effects of their experiential semester projects identified transformative factors, through an inductive analysis of the collected data. This analysis was used to discover the participants’ transformative experiences and required open-endedness in the interview approach and protocol. The identification of transformative factors through an inductive analysis of data, rather than an identification of transformative characteristics by application of a set of pre-established codes, provided the study’s findings. The intent of the interviews was maintained by not using terms such as “transformation” or “transformative learning” during the interview questioning.

Specifically, questions about the participants’ experiences in experiential social justice service-learning and civic perspectives represented the qualitative interview protocol (Appendix E). I designed the questions in the interview to better understand the participants’ perspectives about social justice and their civic perspective through course experiences. The students’ semester projects combined social justice topics through experiential learning in communities and were the focus of the participant interviews.

The data collection in case studies originated from an extensive collection of sources. Yin (2014) supports the use of six examples of evidence for review during data analysis. The six types include documents, interviews, participant observations, and artifacts. The qualitative methods used in this case study allowed for the investigation of social justice, experiential learning, and civic learning at Reeve College through the perspectives of an advisor/professor of an academic cluster and students from the cluster’s gateway course Religion/Interdisciplinary
Privilege and Poverty. The students’ experiences provided stories of experiential learning as examples of transformative learning and a type of civic learning pedagogy. The ability to gather evidence from curricular documents and student artifacts, observations, and interviews allowed the research questions and ideas to emerge through inductive analysis (Merriam, 2009).

Data Analysis

Document and artifact reviews and observations provided a backdrop for the data collection and analysis of interviews as the primary source of evidence for this study. Data collection required more than interviews; it required using “…multiple forms of data to build the in-depth case or the storied experiences” (Creswell, 2013, p. 176). Documents and artifacts, observations, and interviews were analyzed to provide context and understanding for coding.

Creswell (2013) describes data analysis as a spiral, with characteristics to organize data, read and write memos (writing notes while deciphering data and transcripts), form initial codes, describe a case and its context, classify and interpret data into codes and themes (codes to categories and themes), and visually represent data. Miles and Huberman (1994) discuss three steps in the analysis of transcripts: a descriptive step in which a researcher explains the transcript, an interpretive step in which a researcher identifies main categories, and a pattern step in which a researcher develops and labels representing associations. This study’s transcriptions will be examined using first- and second-cycle coding.

The coding strategies used in this study were In Vivo and Pattern coding, which I used to identify personal interpretations within the data. The first-cycle coding was represented by In Vivo, and the second-cycle coding was Pattern coding. These two approaches to data coding were selected as they aligned with the study’s theoretical framework.
First-cycle coding identified key words or phrases, and second-cycle coding provided the opportunity to reconfigure the codes prior to identification of themes (Saldana, 2013). In Vivo aimed to “…keep the data rooted in the participant’s own language…” (Saldana, 2013, p.7). Pattern coding recognized repeating patterns documented in the data (Saldana, 2013). I used these coding processes to categorize and identify themes from the data, to propose the study’s claims.

The use of data resulted in the development of codes, categories, themes, and assertions during data analysis (Creswell, 2013; Saldana, 2013; Stake, 1995). When researchers document a code or theme in different sources of data, the process of triangulation is evident, and greater validity is provided to the study’s conclusions (Creswell, 2012, 2013). Creswell and Miller (2000) write that “triangulation is a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study” (p. 126). Analysis of data to recognize similarities and differences among cases, as themes, resulted in generalizations applied across various settings. Categorical aggregation as a “…collection of instances from the data, hoping that issue-relevant meanings will emerge” provided possible generalizations for the theory investigated (Creswell, 2013, pp. 199-200).

Yin (2014) writes that identification of patterns showing the relationship between categories is established through holistic analysis (single unit of analysis) as a researcher studies the entirety of a case towards development of claims. A single-case holistic analysis confirms, challenges, or extends a theory involved with a case (Yin, 2014). The themes from this case allowed for comparison to published literature, theories, concepts, and frameworks, resulting in possible assertions as a result of this study. The single instrumental case design of this study does not lend itself to generalizations to the larger population but, rather, to consideration of the
complexity in this case (Creswell, 2013). The findings are transferable to other institutions seeking to develop and facilitate civic learning pedagogy. This study provides insight into civic learning course design through social justice service-learning as reviewed through documents and artifacts, course observations, and semi-structured interviews with students and their professor.

**Trustworthiness**

Qualitative research often provides puzzles that need to be examined. The process of conducting case study research is time consuming and can demand large amounts of resources (Harling, 2002). Qualitative researchers attempt to provide a depth of knowledge that derives from extensive work in the field through personal interactions with participants. As a result, questions about reliability and trustworthiness ensue based on a researcher’s proximity to a study’s subjects. In addition, an analysis of data leading to generalizations and external validity is heavily scrutinized in qualitative research (Denzin, 2009).

Qualitative research is often portrayed as lacking trustworthiness and reliability. Many view it as appropriate for discovery but not for verification as a real science (Denzin, 2009). According to Stake (1995), qualitative researchers must reach “substantive validation…understanding one’s own topic, understandings derived from other sources, and the documentation of this process in the written study” (p. 248). Data analysis requires a qualitative researcher to use various sources and techniques leading to generalizations (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Creswell, 2013; Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2009, 2014). Baxter and Jack (2008) compare the use of multiple data sources to piecing together a large puzzle. The use of each bit of data helps a researcher to understand the entirety of a study’s phenomenon.
Crabtree and Miller (1999) write that a study’s trustworthiness and reliability lie in the ability for another individual, with the exact same experiences as the researcher, to conclude the same findings as those of the researcher, in order to determine the study’s accuracy. Member-checking and seeking the opinion of others is an act directed towards securing trustworthiness (Creswell, 2012). In this study, the participants reviewed the data for accuracy, to ensure the study’s credibility (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). Member-checking, or “respondent validation” (Merriam, 2009), was used with the participants to verify the findings from those who contributed to the understanding of the case. This involved sharing transcriptions of interviews with participants and providing opportunities to clarify and/or qualify the accuracy of the transcripts. Participants were asked to consider whether the interpretations represented their learning experiences and whether the descriptions in the report were accurate (Creswell, 2012).

I also used peer review to provide an external check of the research, as questions were posed about research methods and my interpretation of data. Individuals conducted peer review to provide an external check of the research process, by asking hard questions about methods, meaning, and interpretations of the study. Methodology was vital to the study, but equally important were my logical reasoning and problem solving, leading to the study’s reliability and trustworthiness (Harling, 2002). Researchers with knowledge of experiential learning, social justice, and case research were identified to read and comment on the data collected in this study. Individuals kept me honest by playing the “devil’s advocate,” as they understood the research methodology and Experiential and Transformative Learning Theories (Creswell, 2013; Guba & Lincoln, 1985). As a result, peer review provided validity and trustworthiness to the study.

To analyze the accuracy of the findings, this qualitative investigator used member-checking, peer review techniques, triangulation, and clarification of my bias. Creswell (2013)
describes triangulation as a process of verification of evidence from different individuals (participants and peers), types of data (transcribed interviews and field notes), or methods of data collection (documents, artifacts, observations, and interviews) to support the findings and their relative themes. Triangulation is a validity tool through which researchers make use of various sources to validate evidence, to ensure the study’s reliability, transferability, and trustworthiness (Creswell, 2013).

Researcher bias was also established at the study’s outset in order to limit its influence on the study and its findings. My familiarity with the academic cluster, the course under examination, and some of the participants did not result in predetermined conclusions. Although the literature shows that researchers impact studies in many ways, such as through the choice of design and the direction of the study, this researcher took specific steps to minimize such effects. Ensuring the validity of the research is critical for assessing its quality (Creswell, 2012). To that end, Creswell (2013) recommends these steps: member-checking, peer review, triangulation, and clarification of researcher bias, to ensure the trustworthiness of the research findings.

Reliability and Validity

The reliability of the research was determined by its ability to yield similar results if repeated in comparable settings. A thorough documentation of the procedures followed the collection and analysis of the data; the checking and rechecking of its correlations added to the study’s reliability (Guba & Lincoln, 1985), or the degree to which others could confirm the results.

The study’s external validity was related to the degree to which the results could be transferred to other settings (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). To achieve this validity, research was gathered from the participants and reviewed until I identified repetitive patterns in the data.
(Merriam, 2009). This identification occurred when results from the data collection revealed no new information. Researcher clarifications about the context and the methodology from this study enabled me to check the possibility of transferability (Creswell, 2013).

Attention to research details was essential to minimize the potential threat to internal validity. A possible threat to this study was my location outside of the research site. I was an outsider to higher education and to Reeve College. I experienced the culture of the college through on-site interviews and observations but was unaware of all cultural aspects of the institution. Therefore, I lacked an understanding of the attitudes and interactions among professors, campus life, and students. As a result, accessing the research site and understanding its culture was a challenge for me. I had extreme difficulty trying to locate willing participants for this study after the course had ended. Students left for winter break and, upon return, began the January term. The culture of January term, a one-month study of a particular topic at Reeve College, presented me with an intense challenge. As a result, the role of the investigator as an outsider required multiple attempts to access participants for this study, which I had not anticipated. This was a drawback to the study’s initiation and potentially impacted the study’s internal reliability.

Researcher bias was another threat to internal validity and is explicitly addressed in this study. This investigator acknowledges in the positionality statement, “past experiences, biases, prejudices, and orientations that have likely shaped the interpretation and approach of the study” (Creswell, 2013, p. 251). To minimize the threat of research bias, my positionality regarding experiential learning was made apparent throughout the study. Another potential threat to this study’s validity was the participants’ bias regarding experiences working in experiential pedagogy. Steps were taken to address this potential threat, including the use of follow-up and
probing questions during the interview process and the triangulation of data. To further minimize
the threat to internal validity, member-checking, peer review, triangulation, and
acknowledgement of researcher bias were utilized in this study.

**Researcher Bias**

The potential for researcher bias was acknowledged throughout the study and was
expected to create awareness about the importance of suppressing pre-judgment and the
dominance of personal opinion. Therefore, the use of theory and the results of previous studies
provided neutrality in the analysis of the data. Member-checking insured that the data were used
accurately in context. In addition, the analysis of documents and student artifacts, including
participants’ experiences resulting from the Religion/Interdisciplinary *Privilege and Poverty*
curricular model, were incorporated. The participants’ experiences revealed their perspectives
from the written, taught, and learned curriculum.

**Protection of Human Subjects**

Protection of human subjects was ensured throughout the entire study. Permission to
conduct the research was submitted to the Northeastern University and Reeve College
Institutional Review Boards and included all the necessary information about the research: goals,
significance, methods, and participants (Creswell, 2012, 2013). No participants were contacted
and data were not collected until written approval from the Institutional Review Board office was
obtained from Northeastern University and Reeve College. Protection of human subjects was
addressed in the research during the collection, management, and presentation of the data.

To protect the privacy of research participants and improve the confidentiality of the
research, data were managed using secured data storage and by providing pseudonyms for all
participants. Any information that may identify participants remained confidential. Furthermore,
limiting access to identification data enhanced privacy and confidentiality. As the researcher, myself and the principal investigator, were the only people who had direct access to the data. In addition, a list of participants with their pseudonyms was stored in a separate location from the data. All the data stored on paper were placed in a locked cabinet, and all electronic data were stored on password-protected computers. Audio recordings were labeled with participants’ pseudonyms and kept until transcribed and then safely destroyed. All data used in this study were safely destroyed after a reasonable time following their use.

**Summation**

The aim of this case study research was to identify and illustrate the key features of Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary *Privilege and Poverty* course that contribute to civic learning. Criterion sampling prior to conducting individual interviews with students was carried out in order to access those who had direct experience with the course. Additionally, an analysis of relevant pedagogical and program documents, course artifacts, class observations, and participant interviews assisted in defining this instrumental case study. The fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary *Privilege and Poverty* course provided the case in order to examine students’ perceived civic perspective transformation as the study’s phenomenon. This case study identified the degree to which social justice service-learning through Experiential and Transformative Learning Theories represented the most effective civic learning pedagogy. Furthermore, this study provides recommendations to improve the design and facilitation of civic learning courses at Reeve College and elsewhere.
Chapter IV: Results of the Research Data

The data collected for this qualitative case study are presented in this chapter. The purpose of this research study was to determine the degree to which social justice service-learning, through Experiential and Transformative Learning Theories, resulted in students’ perspective transformation and represents an example of civic learning pedagogy. As part of the research, insight into students’ starting and ending perspectives through community-focused service-learning were the specific areas of concentration. The data collection process for this study included observations of classes, a review of course documents, student-produced artifacts, and semi-structured interviews with willing student participants from the course.

Throughout the data collection process, I reviewed observation notes, student responses during interviews, artifacts produced by students, and documents forming the curriculum, as each reflected the theoretical framework and research questions. In doing so, I was able to identify several points to further explore; this reflection and the data collection that followed provided a deeper understanding of students’ experiences in Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course.

This chapter begins with a recent history of experiential learning at the study site, Reeve College. This is followed by an overview of the data collection process and a discussion of the findings from this study.

Research Questions:

The following questions guided this qualitative case study:

Central Question: How do past participants in Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course describe their learning journey in social justice service-learning?
Sub-questions:

1. For participants who identify transformative learning (change in civic perspective), how do they describe themselves as they begin their learning journey?

2. For participants who identify transformative learning (change in civic perspective), how do they describe their change in civic perspective?

3. For participants who identify transformative learning (change in civic perspective), what factors enabled this change?

The Study Site, the Course, and its Participants

Reeve College has supported experiential learning for decades. The college recognized experiential learning in its latest strategic plan, completed in 2006, as it continues to pursue its vision and mission. The strategic plan identifies a database to support service-learning projects from community partners and alumni, and increased funding for student internships are cited as experiential learning objectives. Reeve considered participation in experiential learning for all students prior to graduation. An article in the school’s newspaper stated that Reeve’s Educational Affairs Committee (EAC) established a work group to discuss whether experiential learning should be a graduation requirement, or whether to include this option as a distribution requirement. Although experiential learning was never made a condition of graduation, it exists in various forms on Reeve’s campus. ReeveCORE, a program supporting academic credit, relies on experiential learning. Other opportunities such as the Solar Decathlon, Environmental Studies, FoodWorks, and Reeve Entrepreneurs provide graduation credit through experiential learning.

Community service has also long been a part of Reeve College’s commitment to its students and communities; an office of community service has existed on campus since the
1980s. Reeve remains committed to service and experience in their communities through membership in the Campus Compact. In 2006 and again in 2015, Reeve was recognized by the Carnegie Foundation for its efforts in community engagement. The Carnegie Foundation acknowledged Reeve’s teaching, learning, and research initiatives connected to its communities. Reeve College exhibits a commitment to work within its communities through experiential learning.

Community engagement happens when students and faculty can explore classroom content within Reeve’s surrounding communities. Academic courses connecting content in Geography, Art and Architecture, Education, Biology, and Psychology facilitate experiential learning through community engagement. Students can also work directly with community partners through the Office of Community Engagement, as an example of community connected learning. Through the Office of Community Engagement, Privilege and Poverty, Reeve’s curricular initiative in experiential learning and civic responsibility, is facilitated as an example of social justice service-learning and civic learning pedagogy. To facilitate mutually beneficial relationships for community partners and students, the Office of Community Engagement supports dialogue between course instructors and individuals at the service-learning sites.

Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty, the gateway course to the Privilege and Poverty academic cluster, is recommended for students during their first or second year at Reeve College. The course is only offered during the fall semester and provides a study of inequities locally and abroad, through history, economics, sociology, philosophy, theology, and other areas. In the course, students examine privilege and poverty as well as their origins and impact on individuals and humanity. Students reflect on and discuss the ethical implications of citizens
living with substantially less wealth than others, and whether the privileged have an obligation to those in poverty.

Various readings, discussions, presentations, writings, service-learning experiences, guest speakers, visual materials, and documentaries provided the following objectives for the fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary *Privilege and Poverty* class: recognition of normative assumptions embedded in “our” usage of the terms “inequality,” “privilege,” and “poverty;” an introductory understanding of the insight that interdisciplinary study lends to definitions and assessments of “inequality,” “privilege,” and “poverty;” an ability to critique and/or apply a range of ethical frameworks for assessing individual and social responsibility to persons living in conditions of poverty.

Students developed an understanding of inequity through various curricular documents. A few of the readings about privilege and poverty in the United States included David K. Shipler, from *The Working Poor: Invisible in America* (2004); Robert Rector and Rachel Sheffield, from “Air Conditioning, Cable TV, and an Xbox: What Is Poverty in the United States Today?” (2011); and selections from Reinhold Niebuhr’s *Moral Man and Immoral Society*” (1932). A guest speaker was also included in the study of inequality, through a presentation and discussions of poverty and privilege. The speaker was a professor of economics and discussed domestic and global understandings of inequality and its measurement. Readings, discussions, documentaries, role-plays and guest speakers were also included in this class, as they related to race, class, or something else influencing privilege, poverty, and power.

Four of the readings about “privilege” and social responsibility included Garrett Hardin’s “*Lifeboat Ethics: The Case Against Helping the Poor*” (1974); Peter Singer’s *Practical Ethics* (1979) and his “*Famine, Affluence, and Morality*” (1972); John Rawls’s 1967 “*Distributive*
Justice” (Freeman, 1999). The film Inequality for All (2013) and a guest speaker were included to help students understand privilege. A past president of Save the Children and Executive-in-Residence at Reeve College discussed the roles of non-governmental organizations through a comparative look at privilege and poverty locally and globally.

An understanding of inequality and religion was developed through various selected texts from the Hebrew and Christian Bibles; John R. Schneider’s The Good of Affluence (2002); Walter Rauschenbusch’s A Theology for the Social Gospel (1917); and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Economic Justice for All (1986). In addition, an understanding of the causes and consequences of poverty and privilege were developed through student-led discussions of the film A Place at the Table (2013); Pope Francis’s Laudato Si’ (2015); and Robert D. Putnam’s Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis (2015).

While enrolled in this course, students also experienced social justice service-learning off campus. A focus of this study was the students’ semester projects. Students participated in semester projects to connect the theory from readings and discussions with specific experiences of privilege or poverty in the county. The Director of Community Engagement and the course professor provided opportunities in service-learning in partnership with organizations in the county surrounding Reeve College. Through these social justice service-learning experiences, students in the fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course moved outside their “normal” experiences as Reeve College students to examine privilege and poverty within their off-campus communities.

This research study focused on six students from the fall of 2015 Privilege and Poverty course. Although titles of programs have changed, the Office of Community Engagement, once the Alliance for Civic Engagement, has long provided opportunities in experiential learning as
service-learning within communities at Reeve College. The fall of 2015
Religion/Interdisciplinary *Privilege and Poverty* course, the focus of this research, is where the participants for the semi-structured interviews were recruited due to their experiences with the “content” of the course. The semester projects were examples of experiential learning centered within the communities of the county through social justice service-learning. The participants for this study consisted of five women and one man. The six participants reflected 17 percent of the total enrollment for the course. Table 1 provides information on the participants’ general background and experiences with the course:

Table 1: Demographics of Study Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Year of graduation</th>
<th>Year and semester enrolled in Privilege and Poverty: The Ethics of Economic Inequality</th>
<th>Semester Project for Privilege and Poverty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cathy</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Fall of 2015</td>
<td>Charter House Volunteer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerry</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Fall of 2015</td>
<td>ReeveCAM Volunteer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patty</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Fall of 2015</td>
<td>HOPE Volunteer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharon</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Fall of 2015</td>
<td>Charter House Volunteer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anne</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Fall of 2015</td>
<td>Open Door Clinic Volunteer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynn</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Fall of 2015</td>
<td>Reeve Foods Volunteer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Collection and Analysis

In order to develop a thorough understanding of students’ experiences as part of social justice service-learning, several forms of data were collected and analyzed over a three-month period. Observation notes, documents forming the curriculum, artifacts produced by students, and semi-structured interviews with students provided the data for this study. I also kept field notes throughout the research process.

Student Interviews. I interviewed six students individually using a semi-structured interview protocol. Interviews were conducted at a time and location of the participants’ choosing, and at their request and convenience. All six interviews were conducted at a café in the student center on the Reeve campus during times of the day when students were not scheduled for classes. I drew from a total of three main questions, with several sub-questions depending upon responses to the primary research questions, and used an Interview Protocol (Appendix E) to record students’ responses. Interviews with students lasted approximately 60 minutes.

Privilege and Poverty Class Observations. Classes were held twice a week, Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 3:00 to 4:15. The course began at the start of the fall semester, on September 16, and ended on December 18, with submission of a final paper as the exam. During the observations, I used an Observation Protocol (Appendix D) to record students’ discussions, the topics discussed, activities engaged in, and time spent discussing various topics. These observations provided an opportunity to see the curriculum “in action,” as members of the class interacted with each other, deliberating on issues of privilege, poverty, religion, economics, education, health care, social justice, and service-learning experiences (semester projects).

Artifact and Document Analysis. In addition to conducting observations and interviews, I examined various curriculum documents. Artifacts were also reviewed when voluntarily
provided by students. The artifacts provided were generated from the course design and included journal reflections, final papers, and pictures from students’ semester projects. Documents reviewed included the course syllabus, individual assignments, and assigned readings. In the presentation of themes, identified through the interviews and class observations, verification of each theme was supported by a variety of curricular items. Artifact and document analysis provided information used to address the research questions and to support and document research findings.

**Data Analysis.** Once interviews were recorded, I transcribed the interviews in a Word document, closely reviewed all transcripts, and became familiar with the data. Member-checking was performed using the interview transcriptions. All participants were provided copies of their interview transcripts to ensure that their words and thoughts were accurately transcribed. Once all participants had expressed satisfaction with the content of their interview transcripts, I began to code and analyze the data to identify themes.

Data were analyzed using first- and second-cycle coding methods. First-cycle coding involved In Vivo as the initial coding procedure. In Vivo coding captures the actual language of the research participant (Saldana, 2013). I then created Word documents for each interview question and recorded interview responses in these documents. This allowed me to view and begin to discern various categories within the collected data. To cluster and categorize topics, I searched the documents to identify the frequency of specific words and phrases. I then created a list of categories. Interview transcripts, class observation notes, course documents, and artifacts analysis notes from the fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course were reread and recoded several times to condense the data and determine its most prominent points. These categories were then regrouped, resulting in a decreased number of categories (Creswell,
2013). Following this process, I organized the categories by research question. This provided insight into how the data aligned with the overarching research questions framing this study.

To further organize the data into themes, Pattern coding was used for second-cycle coding (Saldana, 2013). Pattern coding recognizes repeating patterns in the data. Saldana (2013) describes second-cycle coding as the reorganization and reanalysis of data for the purpose of developing a condensed list of categories and themes. Once Pattern coding was completed, I conducted a preliminary analysis of the condensed categories, interpreted the categories, and developed themes that emerged from this coding process. Pattern coding of the data aligned the study’s theoretical framework to possible transformation of students’ civic perspectives as identified through the study’s research questions.

**Findings From the Research Data**

To gain an understanding of students’ experiences as members of the fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary *Privilege and Poverty* course, I conducted semi-structured interviews with six members from the course. Additional sources of data were course artifacts and documents, and class observations.

**Significant Themes.** Six significant themes emerged from the analysis of the data collected. Through research question one, *for participants who identify transformative learning (change in civic perspective) how do they describe themselves as they begin their learning journey?*, the following themes emerged:

1. Theme One: Prior learning generated appeal to participate in Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary *Privilege and Poverty* course and resulted in experienced participants and a change in civic perspective.
2. Theme Two: Cultural factors positively impacted students driven to succeed through social justice service-learning work in Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course.

Through research question two, for participants who identify transformative learning (change in civic perspective) how do they describe their change in civic perspective?, the following themes emerged:

3. Theme Three: Participation in the content of Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course resulted in a gradual change in students’ civic perspectives.

4. Theme Four: Participatory off-campus community learning as part of Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course led to a broader understanding of community and a change in civic perspective.

Through research question three, for participants who identify transformative learning (change in civic perspective) what factors enabled this change?, the following themes emerged:

5. Theme Five: Institutional factors positively impacted social justice service-learning in Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course.

6. Theme Six: Participation in effectively facilitated social justice service-learning through Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course led to a change in civic perspective.

The findings from the analysis of these data, organized thematically by research question, are presented in the following section.
Research Question One:

Data from research question one, for participants who identify transformative learning (change in civic perspective), how do they describe themselves as they begin their learning journey?, resulted in the development of two themes. Data from multiple sources, the sub-themes and themes that emerged from the data, and the theoretical framework were used as lenses for this study and are illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2: Participant Data, Research Question Two

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quote</th>
<th>Sub-Themes</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Theoretical Framework</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comfortable there because I had been there before (2/4/16).</td>
<td>Comfortable there before</td>
<td>Prior learning</td>
<td>Kolb (1984) identified concrete experience (CE), reflective observation (RO), abstract conceptualization (AC), and active experimentation (AE) as his principles of experiential learning. Students who previously participated in experiential learning bring their experiences to class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing outside of my normal routine. Wasn’t something that I hadn’t heard before (1/25/16).</td>
<td>Normal routine before</td>
<td>Prior learning</td>
<td>The result of experience and reflection is knowledge, generated through personal actions, transferred to recall and later fixed to memory. Experiential learning accounts for the individual, as a student gains knowledge through experience, and reflection towards eventual experimentation (Kolb, 1984; Moore, 2010, 2013).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previously I helped a lot of my friends (1/27/16).</td>
<td>Previously helped</td>
<td>Prior learning</td>
<td>Learning by doing, not simply doing but understanding what is being done as a natural outgrowth of a student’s personal experience, is experiential learning (Bailey et al., 2004; Dewey, 1938; Kolb, 1984). Students gain knowledge through prior service work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My opinions really didn’t change during the semester because I do feel such a</td>
<td>Already</td>
<td>Prior learning</td>
<td>Experiential learning captures all of a learner’s relevant life experiences to facilitate learning and to create knowledge (Chan, 2012; Dewey, 1916, 1938; Freire, 1994 [1970]; Kolb, 1984; Nagda et al., 2003).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
connection and a need to help out already (2/3/16).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The discussion we had at the end of the semester where everyone was sharing their experiences, where everyone was talking about their different levels of engagement in their semester projects. People made me think about things that I never thought about (1/29/16).</td>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td>Cultural factors</td>
<td>Communities provide the experiences and the opportunities for reflection through Experiential Learning Theory. Experiential learning represents the real world through the context of communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whenever the opportunity presented itself I would say yeah I’ll do that (2/4/16).</td>
<td>Opportunity</td>
<td>Cultural factors</td>
<td>Learning through experiences was not, and is not, with the goal of job preparation. John Dewey (1938) wrote that “the fundamental point in the psychology of an occupation is that it maintains a balance between the intellectual and the practical phases of experience” (p. 83).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Theme One: Prior learning generated appeal to participate in Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course and resulted in experienced participants and a change in civic perspective. Throughout the analysis of the interview
transcripts, it was evident that prior civic knowledge and civic participation created conditions for a change in students’ civic perspectives. The students interviewed arrived on Reeve’s campus prepared to study social inequities and take civic action. Students reported that specific coursework and exposure to civic engagement at Reeve College provided greater understanding of the importance of social justice and civic responsibility.

The students’ interest in social justice and service in communities resulted in ongoing work in civic engagement and enrollment in courses discussing issues of social justice. A desire to study social justice generated appeal among many students to participate in Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty. Moreover, the participants’ personal experiences with inequity provided a stimulus for the study of social justice and action through service. The importance of service work as a responsibility of citizenship motivated students to participate in their semester projects. These beliefs connected to the students’ prior learning and created conditions for a change in their civic perspectives as a result of participation in the Privilege and Poverty course.

Previously. Students’ personal experiences with inequity, poverty, or oppression prior to arriving at Reeve College contributed to their civic perspectives. Jerry stated, “I think the project I carried out is hugely important. I think that my carrying out this project aligns with this class, and because I have witnessed firsthand and experienced inequality where I am from.” He continued, “I have learned the importance of inequality which is what drove me to do ReeveCAM. Because the overarching goal of ReeveCAM is to lessen [inequality] gap.” Jerry went on to note that as a ReeveCAM volunteer, he has “definitely seen issues of inequality and poverty in a different setting,” having grown up in New York City. Jerry sees himself positively impacting social change through his work with ReeveCAM.
Patty added, “I think that a lot of people in the class come from poverty and so this wasn’t new to them, but I think even if you come from [poverty] it’s important to see other people who are sometimes struggling.” Sharon exclaimed, “I think my perspective is very different from others just because I do come from that background.” Sharon went on to note that, “I grew up with my parents warning us that we might be homeless, we lived in subsidized housing, and our management was really racist. There was always [being evicted] looming over our heads.” Sharon continued,

I think for me growing up I would volunteer at a homeless shelter and it was very much out of selfishness. I wanted someone to be there for me if [going homeless] ever happened, and so I knew that the first step for me was to help out.

These words show that prior learning from personal experiences with inequity, poverty, or oppression led to a change in students’ civic perspectives and a desire to make a difference.

**Before Already.** Prior experience with social justice influenced students’ civic perspectives. Cathy said,

Being someone who is graduating so soon, the information in the class wasn’t something that I hadn’t heard before in another class. I think as someone who takes other classes around social justice, and since this is an intro. course, it’s not saying anything that’s too radical that you might not get in another upper level class in another department.

Cathy added, “If anything [the class] really just reaffirmed what I already believed.” Patty remarked that “A lot of the stuff we talked about [in class] I already knew. I feel I have talked so much about privilege and poverty in different aspects [while a student].” Patty added, “This is what I am interested in and so I have already spent a lot of time thinking about it and learning about it.” As the gateway course into the *Privilege and Poverty* academic cluster, the
Religion/Interdisciplinary *Privilege and Poverty* course explored social justice through poverty and privilege. Cathy, as a senior, and Patty, in her junior year, had experiences “before already” at Reeve College focused on issues of social justice.

**Comfortable There.** The students interviewed reported experience with service at Reeve College. Students with service experiences acknowledged a level of comfort working outside of the Reeve College campus. Civic participation is a type of civic learning pedagogy directed towards examination of one’s civic perspective. Members of the Religion/Interdisciplinary *Privilege and Poverty* course spoke of their work in service and a deep connection to its importance. Students reported a positive feeling about their ability to contribute to their semester projects as part of the Religion/Interdisciplinary *Privilege and Poverty* course.

All the students interviewed expressed positive feelings working through their service experiences. Students reported that prior learning helped them to overcome feelings of trepidation that many may associate with off-campus service experiences. Anne stated,

> I started working at the Open Door Clinic before the class started. I was involved there starting in the fall of 2014. But, I was abroad in the spring of 2015 so going back to do the semester project was really the first time I had been back, so I was getting back into the groove of it. But, it felt different volunteering versus going for this project.

Cathy stated, “The times that I cooked dinners, were things that I was doing anyway. I was going in three days a week, there was nothing outside of my normal routine, it was just kind of the normal thing that I do.” Cathy continued in the interview, saying she “had previously done a lot of work with Charter House” and that she wants to be a social worker.

Sharon remarked that the demographic that chooses to take *Privilege and Poverty* “tends to be people who have done community service for a long time.” Sharon continued, “I was pretty
comfortable doing [community work] since I had already volunteered there over the summer.”

Sharon added,

I think that because I have served community dinners in the past I was more comfortable with the people than maybe my classmates would have felt. I think that is the hardest part about community service in general is that you have to feel comfortable around [people being served]; otherwise this kind of social divide becomes obvious, or manifests itself in some sort of way.

Anne explains, “I also really liked it because I know a lot of the organizations in town just from a previous job that I had organizing community engagement orientation trips.” Lynn mentioned that she was already volunteering with Reeve Foods when the Privilege and Poverty course began and that she “sort of saw [the course] as a way to highlight and enrich what I had already been experiencing with Reeve Foods.” Patty added, “The community engagement trips I plan for the Febs. [orientation for new students] and those planned in the beginning of the year are such a great thing because you go to all these organizations and you see what they do.” Cathy stated that she is “the head of relations between students [at Reeve College] and the Charter House.” Anne added, “I organized community engagement orientation trips and we had a trip about the health disparities in Reeve and the county, as its theme, and [students] work with the Open Door Clinic for a lot of it.”

Cathy, Anne, and Sharon noted that they felt “good” about their ability to contribute in their semester projects because they had already worked at service sites for at least a year prior to beginning their semester projects. Prior learning through personal experiences before enrollment at Reeve College, exposure to social justice on campus, and previous participation in service work led to civic perspective transformation for these “experienced students.”
Theme Two: Cultural factors positively impacted students driven to succeed through social justice service-learning work in Reeve College’s fall of 2015

Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course. My analysis of semi-structured interviews, Privilege and Poverty class observations, and course document analysis revealed that the use of the community as a place for learning created conditions in which students could demonstrate their confidence and abilities academically, socially, and civically to make a difference. It was clear that part of the culture at Reeve College established a strong sense of professionalism, one where all members of the course felt responsible for their and others’ learning. The culture that exists on campus at Reeve College positively influenced the collaborative work necessary to engage in service-learning off campus.

**Culture Influences the Approach to Experiences.** Students undertook their work with enthusiasm and focus to make a difference in their communities. Students also felt they were valued in their service experiences as well as in the classroom. A culture that encourages students to be successful and to make a difference exists on the Reeve College campus. Sharon noted that her desire for a connection to her community motivated her to take the class. Cathy noted that she is “still volunteering,” even after the course ended. Patty also enjoyed her experience so much that she continues to volunteer at HOPE even though she doesn’t have to. The desire to be successful through the “work” of the course motivated the students interviewed to maintain their service responsibilities beyond the required amount of time.

Anne said about her semester project,

When I did the farm visits, it took me a little bit to get into. But once I did it, I kept going back as much as I could. This was a little harder because those visits are Wednesday mornings from 9:00-1:00, I didn’t have class [during that time], so it was mostly just if I
didn’t have other stuff going on then I could definitely go. Once I started doing [farm visits] I tried to go as much as possible, because I loved going to the farms and seeing where people worked. It put me very much in their shoes as opposed to them coming to us.

Anne also stated in her interview, “I honestly really love going [to The Open Door Clinic], I still go there.” Lynn mentioned, “I have been with Reeve Foods for over four months, and I am still volunteering today, it is cool to see how experimenting and trying new things actually makes a difference.” A culture to be successful with focus and motivation led the students interviewed to seek change through their semester projects.

Sharon mentioned in her interview about wanting to change the direction of the Charter House: “I do want to do that because I think the way they are serving dinners right now is inefficient and does create this divide.”

Patty stated,

Maybe that’s something I realized over the course of the semester. One thing about HOPE is that they are helping to overcome poverty’s effects, but I don’t see the overcoming so much. I see new faces because there are so many people, but I also see the same faces coming back often. Sometimes I wonder how much overcoming is there. How much barely floating is there going on? That is one thing that I realized over the course, I am seeing the same people.

Patty went on to note that the purpose of a non-profit is to provide services necessary at that moment, but then to eventually stop. Patty described, “It also made me think about what are the gaps in the system that prevent HOPE from putting itself out of business? I wondered, why is HOPE and the services that HOPE offers even needed?” Part of the culture at Reeve College
moved the students interviewed to recognize their service experiences as opportunities to address injustice.

A culture of wanting to be successful provided an environment in which students opened themselves to serve others, sharing their time, abilities, and perspectives; this resulted in productive dialogue around topics of social justice and service in students’ communities. Participants regularly stressed wanting to assist others, which resulted in the development of strong relationships through their service work. The inspiration to provide extended beyond those receiving services and to the organizations serving those in need. A thought echoed by many of the participants and observed in class was the sense that Reeve College and its students have a responsibility, a duty, to use their privilege to help members of their communities.

**Culture Influences an Attitude to Learn.** The approach to learning embodied by students in Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary *Privilege and Poverty* course resulted in deep learning through experience. Due to the level of commitment students at Reeve College felt towards their learning and that of their classmates, their approach to learning in and out of class was transformative. Lynn commented,

Everyone [in class] had a common goal and understanding that the work we were doing was important. Also, the leadership in Reeve Foods really inspired people to want to get more involved, it’s sort of contagious. It just feels really good to be able to see tangible change.

Jerry reports, “I dove into it right away. I started texting my mentee and emailing him and we started to plan our meetings.” Jerry continued:

I think that I do my best to go above and beyond to ensure that [Jerry and his mentee] get a successful outcome. I guess a little of it has to do with the disappointment I felt about
my first mentee and that definitely manifests itself when I am yelling at [current] mentee at 1:00 in the morning to finish his essays [college application].

Jerry experienced a setback with the first high school student he was assigned to work with, but he did not allow that to deter him from the objectives he set for himself and others through his semester project. This is a testament to Jerry’s desire to learn and the seriousness he devoted to his learning.

Anne stated during her interview,

I tried to be consistent. I tried to go as frequently as I could, which ended up being once a week. I think it’s hard because you have to create this balance of professionalism as an interpreter with also wanting to make a connection with a lot of the farm workers that you’re meeting. You don’t want to be just completely cold and emotionless and just interpret, but you want to make sure you are interpreting to the best of your ability with the most accuracy without cutting things out.

Anne demonstrated the sincerity with which she approached her learning through her semester project, as she recognized the importance of her role and her desire to be professional.

Patty described how her abilities as a Reeve College student were regarded as an asset in her semester project:

I don’t mean for this to sound condescending, but because I am a Reeve College student, people have made remarks, “oh, she is a Reeve College student have her read the paper and review it,” even if it were just [reading over] a PowerPoint. It’s just these things that are passed towards my way, “oh, she is a Reeve College student so give her that to review and look over.” It was interesting and I was more than happy to do it, but I also
felt as if I was not in a position to be telling people how they should change their language in something.

Patty also revealed an approach to her learning that demonstrates the culture at Reeve College, when she described her strategies to be accurate in her role, and her disappointment when making an unintentional mistake. Patty’s dedication to being “right” led her to take many notes as people spoke:

I wrote in my notebook and I have pages and pages of notes because there’s so much [to know] and not wanting to give people false information. One time I did that and I felt really bad. It was just because I misunderstood [a question] and then people came in and said, “Wait she told me…” all I could say was I was sorry. Which makes you feel really bad because you promise someone help and then, [HOPE] has to say, “We actually don’t cover gas for you to get here.”

The students’ dedication to the work facilitated through Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course, with a desire to “participate,” encouraged those who were interviewed to learn through their communities and led to a transformation of their civic perspectives.

**Culture Fosters an Opportunity to Engage.** Students reported a culture of opportunity to engage in their semester projects. Their commitment to engage allowed for the development of reciprocal relationships with community members through their semester projects. This represented an important feature of social justice service-learning. Without students’ unwavering commitment to the opportunities provided through engagement in and out of class, a change in students’ civic perspectives would not have been possible. Anne exhibited her abilities to embody the culture of opportunity as a medical interpreter:
There are a lot of Spanish speaking patients who are migrant farm workers who need healthcare. I went into [working at the Open Door Clinic] knowing it is very diverse, I mean there are a lot of different tasks that go on within it. I told myself, “I am going to try to do as many different kinds of things as possible because I wanted to get the full range of experiences.” So, I interpreted for appointments at Clinic, and I took people over to the lab at the hospital and I went and did farm visits to give flu shots to people. I tried to do a wide range of stuff.

Patty mentioned that she had, “gotten to know and have a bigger connection to the county” and that she started attending “community suppers and the same people you see all the time are there. So, I feel I have gotten so much out of connecting with the county and I think it’s really important.” Lynn commented that through her work with Reeve Foods, “it’s easy to see an impact because of the number of boxes [of local food] we sell and how much money we can help families save. I felt I could tangibly understand my impact as a volunteer helping the county.”

Jerry explained his opportunity to engage as helping him to “build connections with people from the town which is vital.” Jerry went on to state,

I think as college students, we tend to be cloistered in this college bubble. Going out into town once every week, or meeting someone who is not a college student is really refreshing. Their experiences and the things they have to tell and share have definitely helped me learn about Reeve the town in a more qualitative way, and personal way.

Jerry mentioned a “college bubble,” which was recognized by many of the students interviewed. The interviewees noted a lack of interest by many students at Reeve College to connect with their off-campus communities. Patty stated, “I think people come here for four
years and then leave. But, there is a whole community that goes on around and outside of Reeve College that I think it is really important to get to know.” Cathy mentioned,

Because this experience is inherently harder, to volunteer, you have to work to convince people why they should be doing this because I think for some people it’s not obvious, or they didn’t grow up volunteering so they don’t know [the importance]. They’ve never talked to a homeless person for example so it seems really scary [to students who have not had this experience].

Sharon described a conversation that she has with her friends at Reeve College: “I do have a confrontational conversation with a lot of my friends here at the college who feel a little bit guilty because they are so busy they can’t volunteer, but they do want to be ‘that person.’” Sharon continued, reporting that she says to her friends,

I need to go to the Charter House I can’t hang out tonight and they’ll say, “oh you are such a good person (smiles), and why do you do it, just why (smiling)?” And I have to explain. Before this course I would say, WHY NOT I HAVE TIME (authoritative voice) ALSO I WANT TO, but now it is really more that I think it is important for us as a community to come together to preserve the human dignity of others and make sure that doesn’t fall apart.

Although a culture of opportunity to engage through service existed among the interviewed students from Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course, according to these students the desire to participate may not exist for all students at Reeve College.
Research Question Two:

Data from research question two, for participants who identify transformative learning (change in civic perspective), how do they describe their change in civic perspective?, resulted in the development of two themes. Data from multiple sources, the sub-themes and themes that emerged from the data, and the theoretical framework used as a lenses for this study are illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3: Participant Data, Research Question Two

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quote</th>
<th>Sub-Themes</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Theoretical Framework</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This person believes with what I think now, I have someone else to point to who other people think is really smart (1/25/16).</td>
<td>Other people</td>
<td>Participation in the Content</td>
<td>Mezirow (1981, 1997,1998) establishes critical reflection as part of Transformative Learning Theory, further supporting the development of learning through experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other people’s thoughts definitely influence what I learned (2/4/16).</td>
<td>Other people</td>
<td>Participation in the Content</td>
<td>Individuals develop as critical thinkers and problem-solvers questioning theory and practice through processing one’s reality towards perspective transformation (Kiely, 2005). New roles, relationships, actions, knowledge, and skills for implementing new strategies occur individually and as a group through reflection, an outcome of processing, individually and/or collectively through service experiences (Kiely, 2005; Mezirow, 2000).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We talked a little bit about economics and vocabulary and the basics behind privilege and</td>
<td>Talked/Conversation</td>
<td>Participation in the Content</td>
<td>Connections among participants in service experiences foster border crossing (Kiely, 2005). As a result, students broaden their understanding of themselves and the world in</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Poverty and this made for a slow beginning. But, then we dove right into Rawls and some other heavier ethical authors philosophers and thinkers (2/15/16).

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Really big part of the experience is actually becoming rooted in the community (2/4/16).</th>
<th>Rooted in the community</th>
<th>Participation in the off-campus community learning</th>
<th>Connecting happens as students reach an understanding through their relationships with their community, peers, and faculty (Kiely, 2005).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I do come from that background, even in a new community that still kinds of sticks with you, like I need to do something (2/3/16).</td>
<td>Rooted in the community</td>
<td>Participation in the off-campus community learning</td>
<td>Personalizing the other requires students to assess their position(s) in life. Personalizing the other fosters real-world representations of previously abstract concepts through service experiences towards personal transformation (Kiely, 2005; Mezirow, 2000).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This has also helped me build connections with people from the town which is a vital learning application process (1/27/16).</td>
<td>The town</td>
<td>Participation in the off-campus community learning</td>
<td>Mezirow (2000) recognizes boundary crossing as a disorienting dilemma in which events are difficult to explain because of what is already believed. Border crossing, a change from familiar to unfamiliar, presents an experience to examine one’s realities from service in a community (Kiely, 2005).</td>
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</table>
Theme Three: Participation in the content of Reeve College’s fall of 2015

Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course resulted in a gradual change in students’ civic perspectives.

This theme emerged through analysis of semi-structured student interview transcripts, notes from course observations, and document and artifact analysis. The class was moved from its original location to a classroom in the Center for the Arts to accommodate an increase in enrollment. The class met on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3:00 until 4:15 pm. Students attending the Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course connected with their classmates and the course’s content through various means. Students felt comfortable, trusted their classmates, and felt respected in the off-campus community and their class. This provided an environment where transformative learning could occur, as students read, discussed, experienced and discussed, and reflected to create new learning. Students reported having thoughts that modified gradually as a result of listening to their classmates during the class, reflecting on the readings assigned through the course, and experiences in their semester projects.

Other People’s Thoughts Influence Perspective. Classroom interactions increased transformative learning as the course content allowed students to consider their civic perspectives. Cathy stated that her peers “reaffirmed” her beliefs: “Oh, this person believes with what I think now, I REALLY THINK WHAT I THINK (excitement). Now I have someone else to point to who other people think is really smart.” Anne commented, “I think that other people's thoughts definitely influenced what I learned. I can say, ‘yes I agree, or no I don’t agree, and this is why.’ I think that’s really important.” Patty mentioned that the professor of the course really wanted the class to reflect on the course readings and that she wrote in her journal about how
hard it was for her to make connections between the theoretical nature of the readings and her semester project. Patty mentioned that it was her classmates’ thoughts that helped her “find connections working through the theoretical stuff in class.” Jerry spoke to the fact that he has come to learn and has been exposed to many different personal opinions of his classmates on economic, sociological, and religious issues, which have morphed or distorted his opinion on privilege and poverty. Anne spoke of the theoretical aspect and her classmates as well: “the course was very theoretical, I didn’t have as comprehensive a view as I did until the end of the semester, it was very theoretical until the conversations [with classmates] at the very end.” The gradual nature of transformative learning emerged in students’ memories of how their classmates’ perspectives helped to shape and reshape their own perspectives.

**Conversation.** Discussions provided a process through which transformative learning as a characteristic of the content for Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course allowed for consideration of a civic perspective. Jerry mentioned that “the class was primarily discussion based.” Lynn commented, “where we started at the beginning of the course was laying the groundwork and getting the tools we needed to be able to think and talk critically about privilege and poverty.” Anne mentioned, “as we came into class our conversations diverged all (subtle laugh) over the place and we spent a lot of time just talking about how people felt about a certain topic.” Patty mentioned, “[the class] started talking about definitions of poverty, and then we had a professor who is in the Economics Department who does studies on poverty come in and talk about really concrete stuff.” Patty went on to mention that, “[the class] talked about Rawls and his essentially theoretical perspective and I often thought, ‘how do you apply that to the work that HOPE does?’”
Sharon stated, “I guess as all the conversations as they built up, [the professor] starts out with really basic ideas about economics and things, and then having it all come together throughout the semester was really interesting.” Anne stated, 

I think the curriculum itself was good and the class was structured well. I think that the professor was really good at teaching this course for a number of reasons. I think partially because he is really passionate about looking at these issues that we looked at, but also that he is very much an ethicist and philosopher. He is not just going to TEACH (emphasis) us, he wants us to go deep and try to understand and argue and challenge each other.

The nature of discussions, over time, supported an environment for perspective transformation through Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course. 

**Course Readings.** Ideas from the readings allowed for participation in the course’s content, leading to a change in civic perspective. Examples of social justice were not only included in the written curriculum but also emerged through the taught and applied learning experiences. Cathy mentioned that the readings were hard to comprehend fully due to their nature: “I mean a lot of the class was more theoretical.” Anne commented, “we had taken such a wide range of perspectives, and honestly all these theoretical philosophical readings.” Anne went on to mention, 

It was interesting to work on [semester projects] through the perspective of the class because for the most part I felt my direct responsibilities within the organization didn’t really tie in with what we were discussing in class because the class readings were very philosophical.
Anne continued, “but, I think it really forced me to take a moment and think, ‘okay, I’m interpreting medical appointments but WHY (said with emphasis), why do people NEED (emphasis) interpreters, what is really behind all of that?’”

Patty mentioned that for her, “towards the end of the semester we got into theoretical, very theoretical readings by Rawls and the other political philosophers, and the course became totally theoretical for me.” However, Sharon stated that, “By the end there were people in class quoting, well not quoting, but referencing Niebuhr and Rawls, and then Eric Mack all together. It was really nice how that happened.” Sharon further described her processing of the readings through her work serving dinner at the Charter House:

Dignity is a human right and what comprises dignity is different for everyone. So, for the vegetarian forcing him to eat meat might compromise his dignity as a human being.

Seeing those arguments take place without having to cite Rawls was really interesting. That aspect of human dignity that the Catholic Bishops, and Rawls touched upon is just so important and feeds into this idea of empathy that people talk about, being treated the way you want to be treated.

Jerry mentioned learning theories he never knew existed: “John Rawls, I did not know anything about his Libertarian theories, I knew of libertarianism, but I did not know about what it actually was and how it distorts the meaning of many things.”

Students found benefits in the conversations with their classmates about the course readings and, as a result, informed the gradual development of their civic perspectives. One of the most important facets of civic participation in communities is the sharing of experiences that occur through service. In each of the course observations, I recognized discussions about how the “theoretical” connected to students’ work in their communities, informally and formally. Shared
perspectives about students’ home communities, communities on campus, and community sites off campus led to the development of personal understandings of privilege and poverty. The theoretical nature of the course readings provided a challenge when students read in isolation, but when they discussed readings in class and reflected on them in combination with the semester project, they gained a deeper understanding of the concepts of privilege and poverty.

**Theme Four: Participatory off-campus community learning as part of Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course led to a broader understanding of community and a change in civic perspective.**

Experiences in off-campus community-engaged learning provided opportunities for students to apply course readings and ideas in practice. Experiences off campus helped students build the capacity, in the final days of the class, to connect their service-learning experiences to the readings and discussions of privilege and poverty. The move to learn through experiences not included in most courses at Reeve College provided occasions for students to share the application of social justice topics outside of Reeve College. The results of these experiences furthered the possibility of a change in students’ civic perspectives.

**Rooted in the Community.** Off-campus participation in service-learning as a type of civic learning provided the students of Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course opportunities for an applied learning experience in their communities. Anne said, “just being able to connect with people who have fundamentally different lives than I do, but finding that connection through a shared language, or a shared culture, or a shared experience of some kind” occurred through her interactions with the migrant workers in her community. Anne also mentioned finding “a lot of the other volunteers at the Clinic. Most of the medical interpreters are college students, but all other volunteers are
community members because no one [at Reeve College] is a doctor, or nurse or anything like that.” She went on to say that “most of my experiences are pretty similar, but that sometimes you make more of a personal connection with one of the patients while they are waiting for something, and that’s always nice.” Anne represented an individual whose civic perspective was influenced by her deep connection with members of the county’s migrant worker community.

Patty stated that she is “really, really glad that I did a semester project. A big part of Reeve College is that kids come here and have very little connection to the community and then they don’t know what is going on in the community.” Patty felt that her participation at HOPE allowed her to have a better understanding of the challenges the communities outside of Reeve College face. Patty went on to state, “WOW (said with emphasis) HOPE does so much for the community and I think that is so, so, important. The amount of people that use HOPE’s services grows, which is also not good.” Patty’s understanding of people accessing HOPE allowed her to gain a sense of a community in Reeve and the county. Lynn also felt that her experiences through Reeve Foods provided a greater understanding of community: “the way that I think about privilege and poverty in my community and in the world has changed. Also, how I perceive myself and my role in the greater community of the county has changed [as a result of this class].”

Sharon mentioned that her experiences in the community were “interesting because Charter House is largely volunteer based, and not only Reeve College volunteers, but there is also community there. There are a wide array of opinions of the people who do volunteer there.” She went on to describe a situation during her first night serving dinner at the Charter House:

It was really weird for me because there was a lot of conflicting interest among the volunteers. There was a family upstairs and people who stay there for just a night
downstairs. The family upstairs was asking for more food, not the food that they were given, they wanted a different kind of pasta or something and the people downstairs needed to eat and the pasta was for them. One [volunteer] got really stressed out by [the request] and was saying, “Oh my god now we need to ration everything out, they need this and we have a vegetarian downstairs.” Another volunteer was saying “tough luck, who are they to ask for more, they should just be grateful.”

Sharon’s experiences deepened her understanding of the Charter House as a community. At the same time, her recognition of the complexities of the community served by Charter House intensified through these types of experiences.

**Need to Do Something.** Motivation towards community prompted many to participate in Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary *Privilege and Poverty* course, with a desire to change. Jerry commented about wanting to participate in an organization (ReeveCAM) to assist those who would not otherwise have the opportunity to pursue a life in higher education:

I would consider Reeve a pretty affluent community. And even at Reeve you see this firsthand account of disparity that exists between kids whose parents are connected to the college and kids who come from neighboring farming town. There is this gap that exists between these people.

Jerry went on to state,” because a lot of the people in our community are being deprived of this education, I think ReeveCAM does a noble job to introduce people and expose them to higher education.”

Patty said, “it is not just people coming in and helping poor people it’s often people built from the community. It’s a lot of people who once utilized HOPE services who now work for HOPE.” Patty went on to state that her participation in the community of HOPE has led her to
continue to volunteer there. Sharon stated, “It was nice [semester project]. I think it is something that I would have done regardless, but having the idea of something incorporated into the class was a very good move on the professor’s part.” Sharon explained that due to her need to do something for those with whom she shares past experiences, volunteering is a part of her identity. However, Sharon appreciated the ability to volunteer in her community as a component of the course.

**The Town.** Participation in Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course resulted in connections with people in the town of Reeve and its county. Patty spoke of her semester project as being “a better integration into the county and into the community.” Patty went on to say that having her semester project experience “has really opened up my eyes as to what the county is like. Even just taking the bus to HOPE, taking the RCTR [Public Transit], just seeing the same people on the bus, getting to know the bus driver.” Jerry stated, “living in a town such as [Reeve] I’ve learned about personal experiences of other people.” Jerry’s work with ReeveCAM has allowed him to connect with those who live in the communities surrounding Reeve College.

Students were able to immediately apply, in the classroom, their success and lessons learned off campus in the town of Reeve and in surrounding towns. Student frustration and disconnect between the content of the course and their applied learning experiences turned into opportunities to grow, to learn from other students, to understand and gain the confidence to seek justice, with their ability to expose imbalances of power. Too often, traditional classroom practice does not seem completely applicable because students struggle to turn theory into practice in real-world environments. Civic participation allows the content of a class to be
implemented in communities and, when reflected upon, guides conversations as students help one another to develop strategies to challenge injustices locally and globally.

**Research Question Three:**

Data from research question three, *for participants who identify transformative learning (change in civic perspective), what factors enabled this change?*, resulted in the development of two themes. Data from multiple sources, the sub-themes and themes that emerged from the data, and the theoretical framework used as lenses for this study are illustrated in Table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quote</th>
<th>Sub-Themes</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Theoretical Framework</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The academic cluster lets you participate in internships and other community engagement opportunities (2/4/16).</td>
<td>Community engagement Experiential Learning</td>
<td>Institutional Factors</td>
<td>Dewey formed one of the earliest positions for a more experiential mindset in the delivery of education. Dewey (1916a, 1916b, 1938) described the role of an educator as an innovator and facilitator of active experiences conducive to learning. Dewey’s (1938) education through experience prompted many educators to develop the new skills required to bring this vision to life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wish I was a student now to take more of these classes. This is what was really lacking from my Reeve experience. There weren’t as many classes like this as there are now (1/25/16).</td>
<td>More classes Experience</td>
<td>Institutional Factors</td>
<td>Kolb (1984) used Dewey’s work to construct the theoretical foundation for experiential learning and asserted that learners must understand an experience in order to transform it into knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good to acknowledge books/papers and your privilege as</td>
<td>Experiential Learning</td>
<td>Institutional Factors</td>
<td>The fundamental assumption of experiential learning is that humans learn and develop through personal adaptations and reflections,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reeve College student in A.C. and Reeve’s community (1/29/16).

Community


A looking glass to view and explore the issues of privilege and poverty through sociology, economic, religious perspectives (1/27/16).

Participation in effectively facilitated social justice service-learning

Experiences, occurring mentally and through one’s physical environment, find application in life as reflections become learning as they are fixed to memory and existing knowledge (Dewey 1916a, 1916b, 1938; Kolb, 1984).

I realized one night that I don’t feel as comfortable with the people staying at Charter House than I thought I would like to be (2/3/16).

Participation in effectively facilitated social justice service-learning

Kolb (1984) stated that the “simple perception of experience is not sufficient for learning” (p. 41) and that learners must use the features of experiential learning (experience and reflection) to later transform new learning into action. For Kolb, transformation in learning occurs through action and reflection from an experience.

Lenses (government, philosophical) to analyze issues that I was already aware of, more tools to apply in a holistic way (2/4/16).

Participation in effectively facilitated social justice service-learning

Kolb (1984) builds on Dewey’s (1916a, 1916b, 1938) theory that experience provides processes of thought to form knowledge. Kolb (1984) describes a cycle of learning in which experience (concrete or conceptual) and reflection are transferred into actions as examples of new learning.

Theme Five: Institutional factors positively impacted social justice service-learning in Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course.

Throughout the analysis of the interview transcripts, it was evident that institutional factors helped create conditions for successful social justice service-learning at Reeve College.
Students reported community engagement experiences off campus as part of new-student orientation, through membership in specific on-campus organizations, and through experiential learning work groups on campus.

Administrative support for the *Privilege and Poverty* academic cluster provided classroom learning through experiential pedagogy, allowing heavily scheduled college students to gain civic knowledge and civic participation for credit. The professor of Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary *Privilege and Poverty* course provided academic and service experiences as part of the gateway course into an academic cluster exploring privilege and poverty, which was instrumental in creating an environment for transformation of civic perspectives. Institutional factors supported the professor’s facilitation of the *Privilege and Poverty* academic cluster, which created conditions that encouraged students to collaborate with other students, professors, and their off-campus communities, to explore social justice through service-learning as an example of civic pedagogy.

**Community Engagement.** An academic cluster providing community engagement opportunities recognized issues of privilege and poverty. The cluster’s gateway course provided students at Reeve College with experiences in social justice service-learning, with the possibility for the transformation of civic perspective. Anne stated,

> When the semester project started I was really, really excited about it because I’m a very hands on experiential learner and I thought, “WOW (said with excitement) a Reeve course that you get to do community engagement projects as part of the class?” “THAT ROCKS (emphasis).” That was super exciting for me.

Anne goes on to add,
Towards the end of the semester I was still really excited about it, but I think it was, not because, “oh it’s so cool that this is offered,” but because it WAS (emphasis) cool. I also thought, “WOW (emphasis) that was SO COOL (emphasis), I’ve been able to think about all these [social justice topics] and make all of these connections.

Anne later added that “the academic cluster also has [experiential learning].”

Cathy stated that she felt as if

There was a disconnect between my out of class interests, because I would like to become a social worker, and my coursework at Reeve. I do work at Woman Safe and Charter House outside of school and there is a really big disconnect between those experiences and my courses. So, this was a cool class for me to take. In a weird way, it was a way to get credit for what I already do.

Lynn commented that Reeve Foods has many contacts in the community that they use as resources, “Whether it’s the Community Engagement office or talking to the Director of Business Development and Innovation for the county, or collaborating with other organizations in town.” The framework within which the Privilege and Poverty academic cluster and its gateway course exist on the Reeve College campus provides institutional support through acceptance of community engagement paired with academic learning.

**Experiential Learning.** Reeve College supports experiential pedagogy as an accepted practice, acknowledging the privilege of traditional learning and the benefits of applied learning through its communities. Anne stated that she approached her semester project, “very just...experiential…and learning.” She continued, “I was keeping a journal, honestly because I was supposed to, and I think for the [Open Door Clinic] I was just there volunteering. From my point of view it was maybe using different lenses to think about the experiences.”
continued by saying, “I think that this class itself has a really great mixture of academic content with the semester project, which is more experiential and hands-on.” Jerry stated, “the course does a good job of making an amalgam of experiential learning and in class learning in a conventional mode, simultaneously.” Jerry went on,

I know and understand the importance of in class learning. But, I think that to be able to connect what you have learned in class in the community that you live in, and the world that you call your home is of utmost importance. Because it isn’t until we are able to translate the knowledge that we gain in the classroom and put it to good use in our community, that we’ve actually done anything with the knowledge that we possess. This is why I really appreciated this course.

Lynn stated that Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course provided opportunities for

Problem solving in the real-world. The semester project was both hands-on and theoretical in that we were imagining solutions and imagining creative ways to tackle our semester projects. It definitely added a lot of richness to what we were learning about in class and a way to reflect on it in a much easier way.

Lynn went on to add that the course “combines experiential learning with reflecting on yourself and diving into really, really dense ethical readings.” Cathy mentioned that she “liked that it was part of a class because semester projects acknowledge that there are valid things that you can learn outside of a stricter classroom setting.” She also mentioned that she has “been a part of campus discussions about adding experiential learning to the classroom. So, this was kind of a good combination of a class for me to take.” Institutional factors provided experiential learning
as accepted pedagogy towards perspective transformation through civic knowledge and participation in students’ communities.

**More Classes.** The continued emergence of experiential courses combining academic content with experiences in Reeve’s communities develops civic perspectives through applied learning. Anne stated,

I always think that when you put someone out there to actually do something they’re going to learn no matter what it is. They might learn that they hate doing that, but they also might learn that they love doing whatever they’re doing. They might learn academically in the case of this class where you are looking at lenses of theoretical articles about privilege and poverty. And then, actually going out into this place we call home for at least part of our lives and learning about that community you are in at this moment and connecting it to an experience of some kind…you are going to learn.

Jerry recognized his experiences in Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course as the “most interdisciplinary class that I have taken at Reeve.” Jerry also acknowledged the course as “a crucial springboard into life after college because what you learn in a classroom has to be manifested later in life where you are working. This experience of working and learning simultaneously definitely prepares one for life outside of college.”

Lynn stated towards the end of her interview,

I’ve thought about this a little bit, I think [Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty] is the kind of course that everyone at Reeve College should take because it’s a concept, privilege and poverty, that obviously touches our lives in so many ways and there are so many different social problems that you can look at through the lenses of
privilege and poverty. [This course] was a beautiful balance between theory and practice that I think a lot of people should partake in.

Cathy ended her interview by saying,

I wish I was just starting college now in some ways, so I could just take more of these classes. This is what I felt was really lacking from my Reeve experience that there weren’t any classes like this, or as many as there are now.

**Theme Six: Participation in effectively facilitated social justice service-learning**

through Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary *Privilege and Poverty* course led to a change in civic perspective.

The successful implementation of social justice service-learning greatly increased the possibility that students’ civic perspectives would be transformed. Social justice service-learning as pedagogy has made a significant difference in the educational experience of students in Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary *Privilege and Poverty* course and resulted in a stronger sense of their civic perspectives.

**A Looking Glass to View and Explore.** Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary *Privilege and Poverty* course provided learning through readings, discussions, presentations, writings, service-learning, guest speakers, visual materials, and documentaries, for the exploration of privilege and poverty. Patty stated, “I think when talking about privilege and poverty it is really important to not just learn academically what that is, there is a lot that books don’t teach us.” Patty continues with her semester project even though the semester is over: “it was great and I continue to volunteer with HOPE.” Cathy also mentioned that the course was a good mix between in- and out-of-class learning and guessed that the professor “wanted this [semester project] to kind of ground [theory] in reality.”
Jerry stated,

I think a lot of it stems off of the personal opinions that are learned from my classmates and how they are examining things and looking at them. This helped me develop skills in class, to look at things wondering, “how “and “why” my friends were able to pick up certain things from a paper that was read for class. I would often think, “why didn’t I think of that?”

Sharon mentioned the following about her experiences in class:

Going into [the class] I thought it would be more difficult to talk about [poverty] with my wealthier classmates then it actually ended up being. When the professor asked the question at the end of the semester, “do you actually think that you understand what it is to be impoverished?” I expected at least one person in class to say “yeah I understand, I come from a wealthy background and I know what it’s like [to be poor] because I have dealt with such and such a problem.” I don’t want to discredit the trials of what [wealthy classmates] face because they do have problems, and I don’t think it’s fair to compare these to someone else's problems, but they are not the same. That’s kind of what I have dealt with at Reeve at large. A lot of [wealthy classmates] say “oh, but I DO (emphasis) get it, I UNDERSTAND (emphasis) that’s a problem.” But, I think you don’t, (snaps fingers), understand. For my classmates to say, “I don’t understand [poverty] and I don’t think that I ever will,” was...humbling for me and I think humbling for them. Yeah, it made me feel more comfortable.

Lynn reflected that in the course,

I reassessed who I am, what I deserve, and why did I get where I am. I think in the back of a lot of people’s minds we always hope that the reason we’ve come so far is because
we’ve worked for it, and I think that’s part of it, but it’s also just a reminder that “wait I’m so lucky” (slight laugh). I thought a lot about why was I given this opportunity, what am I doing here, where is my life going, how am I going to maximize the amount of change I can make? So, [the course] was very humbling in many ways.

Anne described that her Favorite part of class was towards the end when I got to hear other people’s experiences with their semester projects and presentations. That people were talking about other community organizations they had gotten involved with. Finally, a moment where we were all over the place and now back to one spot, it was cool to hear about people’s experiences beyond what I knew about the organizations.

A new perspective through which to view and explore the world was expressed by the students interviewed. Students’ civic perspectives changed as a result of their semester projects and the course content.

**Lenses Towards Change.** As students’ views through social justice service-learning were altered their civic perspectives were reassessed and applied. Patty mentioned, “I am less judgmental. We have a variety of folks coming through the door and I’m often surprised. Some of them, if I saw them in town, I would have never thought they utilize HOPE's services.” Jerry stated, “It has definitely helped shaped my ideas and influenced my way of thinking and [the class] has definitely helped me progress towards the goal of my liberal arts education, to become an individual who thinks, writes, and speaks well.” He continued:

This class has definitely helped me decide my major. Which will have life altering consequences in the future, I know for a fact (laughs). So, I am anticipating a lot of changes in my life because of this. I am majoring in sociology because I want to study
privilege and poverty through a sociological perspective. I think this class has made me more aware of the issue of privilege and poverty and now I can catch things when I am reading an article. For example, the Flint water debacle in Michigan and how I can tie that into what I have learned in class and how we can brainstorm ideas on how to affect positive change in a place such as that. So, I greatly appreciate the professor’s effort at making this a wonderful kind of experience for students and a classroom education combined with an experiential component.

Lynn talked about a

Really cool moment when Reeve Foods realized that we finally got 501c3 status which changed our tax status as a nonprofit. We also learned in January that we are now able to accept food stamps. We finally felt, WAIT WE’RE REALLY DOING SOMETHING GREAT (emphasis, excitement), it was a really beautiful moment. It took so much work to get there. So, the mini victories were really inspiring. I think experiences such as this and the course in general definitely reshaped the way I think about morals and ethics and our obligation to the greater good in many different ways.

Lynn’s description of the changes she experienced personally and through her semester project exemplifies the impact of participation, including the development of civic perspective, in the social justice service-learning in Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary

*Privilege and Poverty* course.

Sharon stated that through the semester project, her understanding of where her “prejudice stands” was of value. Sharon said,

I think that my realizing that I wasn’t really comfortable [at Charter House] was very shocking to me and really unfortunate because it does mean that I have some sort of
image of something. I don’t know, I don’t like that I don’t feel comfortable around them. There is some sort of social divide that I mentally have. I think that all of us like to think that, [people in poverty] are just like us, and like to think, “of course I would be friends with them and hang out with them on a regular basis.” But, it’s sad to know that that’s not one hundred percent true, for me yet.

Sharon also added, “As I went through the course it became easier for me to explain why [service] is important and I think that is the most difficult part for most people.” Anne described having changed her perspective, while working at the Open Door Clinic, through “connections with people who have fundamentally different lives” than hers.

**Lenses to Analyze.** The ability to analyze occurs through the development of understanding. Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course provides transformative experiences for enrolled students. Patty stated, “it’s great to be learning from papers and authors who write about these things, but I think it is also important to acknowledge your privilege that we all have as Reeve College students, no matter where you come from.” Patty continues:

One of the things we talked about at the very beginning of the year was defining poverty by numbers and that can be really, really hard to do. But, when you put a face to someone and they come in and say, “yes, this is less than my income I really have nothing left at the end of the month when I think about all of my money and where my money goes.”

Jerry stated,

I think I began critically questioning these documents we read for the class which definitely helped shape my mode of reasoning, and has empowered me with these critical thinking skills and a lot of that I manifested in my writing. So, I think that I have been
able to translate my thoughts into words, or transcribe my thoughts into words, in a more effective manner after taking this class.

Sharon stated,

It is always humbling and I think there is something to say about even if you will never become impoverished, proximity to those people is important. Because I think if you talk about a marginalized group without them present, you only marginalize them even more. There is just danger in talking about people without them there.

Lynn stated,

[The class] talked a lot about what one would categorize as privilege, and just being a Reeve College student I am privileged. It really made me zoom out and look at the bigger picture. I think what was most valuable in many ways, because the course forced me to reassess a lot of my personal opinions and thoughts and made me reflect a lot on the experiences I have, and the experiences I had with Reeve Foods. This has been so valuable for me. It has definitely changed how I think about volunteering and our moral obligation in general to better communities and better the earth.

Anne mentioned that her return to work at the Open Door Clinic, while enrolled in the course, was, “different going back, I was looking through a different lens, more mindful than in the past.” The students’ civic perspective transformations resulted from effectively facilitated social justice service-learning, as the participants’ analytical lenses developed during the fall of 2015 Privilege and Poverty course.

Summation

The data gathered from semi-structured interviews, class observations, and curricular documents and artifacts from the Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course were
analyzed to understand the participants’ experiences as part of this social justice experiential learning opportunity. Guiding this research study were the following three research questions:

1. For participants who identify transformative learning (change in civic perspective), how do they describe themselves as they begin their learning journey?
2. For participants who identify transformative learning (change in civic perspective), how do they describe their change in civic perspective?
3. For participants who identify transformative learning (change in civic perspective), what factors enabled this change?

Six significant themes emerged from the data analysis:

1. Theme One: Prior learning generated appeal to participate in Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary *Privilege and Poverty* course and resulted in experienced participants and a change in civic perspective.
2. Theme Two: Cultural factors positively impacted students driven to succeed through social justice service-learning work in Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary *Privilege and Poverty* course.
3. Theme Three: Participation in the content of Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary *Privilege and Poverty* course resulted in a gradual change in the students’ civic perspective.
4. Theme Four: Participatory off-campus community learning as part of Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary *Privilege and Poverty* course led to a broader understanding of community and a change in civic perspective.
5. Theme Five: Institutional factors positively impacted social justice service-learning in Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary *Privilege and Poverty* course.
6. Theme Six: Participation in effectively facilitated social justice service-learning through Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary *Privilege and Poverty* course led to a change in civic perspective.

The first theme emerged from semi-structured interviews and class observations. Particularly evident from the research data was the sense of connection students already had to social justice and service in communities. Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary *Privilege and Poverty* course fostered continued development of social justice through focus on privilege and poverty and a civic perspective. Participants became more experienced in their social justice positions and in their understanding of the importance of social action to improve their communities.

The second theme was evident through class observations and analysis of the interview transcripts. Through my direct contact with Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary *Privilege and Poverty* course, it was evident that cultural factors had a strong effect on the seriousness with which students approached their learning. Students’ motivation to be successful in the work on and off campus allowed for a depth of social justice civic learning only possible when students are equal partners in the classroom and in their work with community partners.

The third theme emerged from the analysis of interview transcripts, course observations, and document analysis. Students repeatedly discussed the importance of their collegial relationships, which allowed an understanding of privilege and poverty and civic perspective to gradually develop. Participants felt they were able to read, converse, and reflect in a supportive learning environment, which allowed their perspectives to change as they related to community
experiences and the course content. As a result, students trusted one another and engaged in honest discussions about their perspectives and work in communities.

The fourth theme emerged from interview transcripts, course observations, and document and artifact analysis. Students’ participation in off-campus experiential learning allowed them to apply theory to real-world settings. These opportunities to learn outside of the classroom led to participatory application of ideas, from class conversations and readings, to realistic settings at Reeve and in the county. Participation in service sites uncovered underlying causes of structural injustices in hopes that students can work to redistribute society’s resources.

The fifth theme emerged through class observations, document analysis, and interview transcripts. It was evident that students benefited from institutional initiatives in their civic perspective development. Institutional factors established conditions for successful social justice service-learning in Reeve’s communities. The institutional factors of Reeve College, particularly the recognition of experiential learning and community engagement, were influential in allowing for the development of Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course and the students’ civic perspectives.

The sixth theme emerged from semi-structured interviews, class observations, and document and artifact analysis. The professor of Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course appropriately facilitated social justice service-learning. The constant emphasis on social justice as privilege and poverty, examined through various pedagogical strategies, provided students with opportunities to examine their civic perspective in and out of class. Additionally, the professor and the participants worked together to recognize privilege and poverty, helping one another understand themselves, as collaborators in successful transformative civic learning.
Chapter V: Discussion of Research Findings

Social justice service-learning as an example of experiential pedagogy has great potential to develop a civic perspective. Service-learning, in its traditional or social justice form, as the basis for community experiences positively impacts students’ civic values (Levine, 2013; Lewis, 2004; McCarney, 2013; Mitchell et al., 2015; Thompson, 2014; Vogelgesang & Astin, 2000). Various researchers connect service-learning with civic learning, representing an increased sense of students’ social responsibility and citizenship skills through civic engagement (Benson et al., 2007; Butin & Seider, 2012; Butin 2010b; Colby et al., 2007; Dorn, 2011; Jacoby, 2009, 2015; Mitchell, 2014, 2015; Mitchell et al., 2015; Plante et al., 2009; Soltan, 2014). The potential for continued development of a civic perspective in higher education is substantial. American colleges and universities are responsible for designing learning that creates local and global awareness through communities (Barber, 2012; Boland, 2014; Braskamp, 2011; Enos, 2015; Tarrant et al., 2014). However, few schools have successfully realized the full benefits of this challenging work (Butin & Seider, 2012; Enos, 2015; Pedersen et al., 2015).

The purpose of this case study was to understand how students experienced a change in civic perspective through social justice service-learning as a form of experiential learning and civic pedagogy. I focused on six members of the Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course at Reeve College, a small global liberal arts college in the northeastern part of the United States. This research study was designed to answer the following questions:

1. For participants who identify transformative learning (change in civic perspective), how do they describe themselves as they begin their learning journey?

2. For participants who identify transformative learning (change in civic perspective), how do they describe their change in civic perspective?
3. For participants who identify transformative learning (change in civic perspective), what factors enabled this change?

**Review of the Methodology**

This qualitative case study investigated how students experienced a change in civic perspective through social justice service-learning as a form of experiential learning and civic pedagogy. During the three-month duration of this study, data were collected using the following methods: semi-structured interviews with willing students from the course, observation of classes, and a review of course artifacts and documents. Data were then coded using first- and second-cycle coding methods to discern categories and themes.

The coding and subsequent analysis resulted in the emergence of six themes:

1. Theme One: Prior learning generated appeal to participate in Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course and resulted in experienced participants and a change in civic perspective.

2. Theme Two: Cultural factors positively impacted students driven to succeed through social justice service-learning work in Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course.

3. Theme Three: Participation in the content of Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course resulted in a gradual change in students’ civic perspectives.

4. Theme Four: Participatory off-campus community learning as part of Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course led to a broader understanding of community and a change in civic perspective.
5. Theme Five: Institutional factors positively impacted social justice service-learning in Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary *Privilege and Poverty* course.

6. Theme Six: Participation in effectively facilitated social justice service-learning through Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary *Privilege and Poverty* course led to a change in civic perspective.

Within these themes, several sub-themes emerged. Table 5 provides a summary of these themes and sub-themes.

Table 5: Summary of Themes and Sub-themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub-Themes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For participants who identify transformative learning (change in civic perspective), how do they describe themselves as they begin their learning journey?</td>
<td>Prior learning generated appeal to participate in Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary <em>Privilege and Poverty</em> course and resulted in experienced participants and a change in civic perspective. Cultural factors positively impacted students driven to succeed through social justice service-learning work in Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary <em>Privilege and Poverty</em> course.</td>
<td>Comfortable there Normal routine Before Previously helped Already Approach Attitude Engagement Opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For participants who identify transformative learning (change in civic perspective), how do they describe their change in civic participation in the content of Reeve College’s fall of 2015</td>
<td>Participation in the content of Reeve College’s fall of 2015</td>
<td>Other people Someone else Conversations Course readings</td>
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<td>perspective?</td>
<td>Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course resulted in a gradual change in students’ civic perspectives.</td>
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<td>Participatory off-campus community learning as part of Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course led to a broader understanding of community and a change in civic perspective.</td>
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For participants who identify transformative learning (change in civic perspective) what factors enabled this change?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutional factors positively impacted social justice service-learning in Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation in effectively facilitated social justice service-learning through Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course led to a change in civic perspective.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Community engagement Experiential learning More classes Experience</th>
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<td>A looking glass to view and explore Lenses towards change Lenses to analyze</td>
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This chapter is organized into the following sections: a discussion of the limitations of the study, a discussion of the study as it relates to the theoretical framework, an overview and
discussion of the findings, the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, implications, and recommendations for future study.

**Limitations of the Study**

There were potential limitations to this study that may have impacted the research findings. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to understand how students experienced social justice service-learning as an example of civic pedagogy. The group consisted of six students from one course who participated on a voluntary basis. Because the participants volunteered to be interviewed, those students who did not have a positive experience in Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary *Privilege and Poverty* course may have decided not to participate in an interview. I did not use recruiting techniques other than requesting volunteers; therefore, other students’ perspectives were not included in this study. However, this study did not attempt to understand all students’ experiences in Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary *Privilege and Poverty* course but, instead, focused on understanding those who volunteered to be interviewed as part of the study. Such a narrow focus allowed for in-depth understanding of these students’ perspectives, which may be applicable to researchers and practitioners. Moreover, there were several similarities between the study’s findings and studies of experiential learning, service-learning, social justice education, social justice service-learning, and transformative learning as features of civic pedagogy, suggesting a degree of transferability.

The second limitation is the potential bias I carry. I currently serve as a high school curriculum leader and social studies teacher who accesses curricular resources at Reeve College. Higher education researchers and practitioners influence teaching and learning in secondary education. The proximity of Reeve to a local high school and the willingness of Reeve educators to collaborate with secondary teachers influence this researcher. Therefore, I possess several
biases that, potentially, could influence the interpretation of the research. Several steps were taken to minimize these biases. Reeve College personnel were informed of the nature of the research study and were given the research questions before the study began. This transparency was provided to consider the possible outcomes of this study and remove any potential surprises if aspects of Reeve and/or programs were cast in a negative light. Furthermore, I communicated to those involved in the study that I had no influence over any students’ grades. The participants were fully aware that their participation in the study would have no effect on their academic standing at Reeve College. For example, as a qualification to be included in this study, students had to have completed Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course, which meant that a student’s grade had already been determined. Finally, I engaged in several methods to ensure accuracy of the data. These steps included member-checking, peer review, triangulation, and clarification of researcher bias.

**Use of a Theoretical Framework**

Experiential Learning Theory and Transformative Learning Theory informed the design and data analysis for this study. Constructivist learning theories are the core of experiential and transformative learning. Dewey formed one of the earliest positions for a more experiential mindset in the delivery of education. Dewey (1938) presented a “philosophy of education based upon a philosophy of experience” (p. 75). Kolb (1984) used Dewey’s work to construct the theoretical foundation for experiential learning and asserted that learners must understand an experience in order to transform it into knowledge. Kolb (1984) stated that the “simple perception of experience is not sufficient for learning” (p. 41) and that learners must use the features of experiential learning (experience and reflection) to later transform new learning into action. For Kolb, transformation of experience into learning occurs through reflection and
conceptualization, resulting in action. Action occurs as an extension of experiences and demonstration of new learning.

Mezirow (1981, 1997, 2000, 2012) and Kiely (2005) present Transformative Learning Theory as a lens through which to view transformation of perspective resulting from experience. Experiential Learning Theory defined as experience, reflection, conceptualization, and experimentation provides the opportunity for learner transformation through interactions with people and places, as lenses through which to view civic learning. Social justice service-learning as experiential pedagogy, and an example of civic learning, leads to civic perspective transformation and is the basis for Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course. The research findings, guided by these theoretical lenses, are presented in the next section.

Overview and Discussion of Findings

The following section discusses the major themes that emerged from the data analysis.

Theme One: Prior learning generated appeal to participate in Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course and resulted in experienced participants and a change in civic perspective. The experiences students had with social justice and service in communities increased their ability to connect with the course content on a personal level (Bringle & Hatcher, 1995; Furco, 1996; Jacoby, 2015). This resulted in deeper relationships between the topics of the course (privilege, poverty, race, ethnicity, gender) and students’ semester projects off campus. It was evident from the results of the student interviews that prior civic knowledge and civic participation created conditions for a possible change in their civic perspectives.
The research revealed that students’ lived experiences with inequality motivated them to study social justice and to seek systemic change through service. This finding supports Storms’s (2012) contention that experience with social oppression can be an opportunity for discussion and action. Some students arrived on Reeve’s campus prepared to study and leverage service experiences to address injustices in society. Interest in social justice and service in communities resulted in ongoing work in civic engagement and enrollment in courses focused on social justice. Students reported that specific coursework and exposure to civic engagement at Reeve College provided an understanding of the importance of social justice and civic learning. This is consistent with the findings of Simons and Cleary (2006) that a commitment to service is fostered through prior service experiences.

Civic participation as a type of civic learning informs pedagogy that allows students to examine their civic perspectives (Bringle & Clayton, 2012; Enos, 2015; Jacoby 2009, 2015; Levine, 2013; Mitchell, 2015; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). The importance of assisting within communities through service was already associated with students’ deep connection to social justice. Students reported having the capacity and desire to contribute in a positive manner in their semester projects as a result of having worked as volunteers before enrolling in this course.

Students reported having meaningful experiences, working through social justice service-learning as part of this course. Students also recognized prior experiences that helped them overcome feelings of anxiety associated with service experiences off campus. The research revealed that students with previous service experiences acknowledged a level of comfort working outside of the Reeve College campus. Results from the study demonstrated the importance of service work as a responsibility of citizenship, as participants from the study continued their semester projects after the course ended (Levine, 2007; Saltmarsh et al., 2009).
These beliefs resulted from prior learning and created conditions that increased the possibility for change in students’ civic perspectives as a result of their participation in Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course. Personal social justice and service experiences prior to enrollment at Reeve College provided the participants with exposure to issues of social justice. As a result, participation in service work and the possibility for civic perspective transformation quickly took shape for “the experienced” students of this study (Mezirow, 1981, 1997, 1998, 2000; Freire, 1994 [1970]).

Theme Two: Cultural factors positively impacted students driven to succeed through social justice service-learning work in Reeve College’s fall of 2015

Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course. Results from this study showed students’ use of the community as a place for learning, creating conditions that allowed students to demonstrate their confidence and abilities academically and socially in their communities as agents of social change. Reeve College established a strong culture of professionalism in which each member of the course identified a desire to be successful in learning and with those with whom they interacted. The culture to succeed that exists on campus at Reeve College positively influenced the authentic collaborative work necessary to engage in social justice service-learning (Boland, 2014; Carlisle et al., 2006; Grant & Gibson, 2013; Mitchell, 2008; Nagda et al., 2003; Sleeter et al., 2005; Storms, 2012). The culture of being a “professional” at Reeve College provided students the opportunity to serve others, sharing their time, abilities, and perspectives, which in turn resulted in productive dialogue in class around topics of social justice and service in students’ communities (Boland, 2014; Dover, 2013; Freire, 1994 [1970]; hooks, 1994; Nagda et al., 2003; Tarrant et al., 2014).
Participants regularly stressed that wanting to assist others resulted in the development of strong relationships through their service work (Butin, 2002, 2007; Dover, 2009; Mitchell, 2007, 2008; Ross, 2014; Sleeter, 2014; Sleeter et al., 2005; Storms, 2012). Students spoke about “providing” for those receiving direct services as well as for the organizations supporting their semester projects. A thought echoed by many of the participants and observed in class was the sense that Reeve College has an obligation to use their advantages to help members of their communities.

The approach to learning embodied by students in Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course resulted in deep learning through experience (Chan, 2012; Dewey, 1938; Freire, 1994 [1970]; Kolb, 1984; Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Due to the level of commitment that students at Reeve College felt towards their learning and that of their classmates, their approach to learning was transformative. A change in perspective was identified through a culture reflecting an intense enthusiasm for their work. Students reported a culture of opportunity to engage with their semester projects and spoke of the activities as being meaningful to the course content. Students’ dedication to learning allowed for reciprocal relationships with community members through their semester projects, an important feature of social justice service-learning (Butin, 2002, 2007; Dover, 2009; Mitchell, 2007, 2008; Mitchell et al., 2015; Pedersen et al., 2015; Ross, 2014; Sleeter, 2014; Sleeter et al., 2005; Storms, 2012). Without this unwavering dedication to the opportunities provided through engagement as civic pedagogy, in and out of class, a change in students’ civic perspectives would not have occurred.
Theme Three: Participation in the content of Reeve College’s fall of 2015

Religion/Interdisciplinary *Privilege and Poverty* course resulted in a gradual change in students’ civic perspectives. The content of the course, as identified through participant interviews, resonated deeply with its students. This study demonstrated that even though the course consisted of 34 students, students regularly connected with their classmates and the course content. Students spoke about feeling comfortable, trusting their classmates, and feeling respected in the class. The importance of fostering an environment conducive to courageous honesty is often cited as an essential factor in successful perspective transformation (Hackman, 2005; Mitchell, 2007; Storms, 2012). Gradual perspective transformation through the course took place as students read, discussed, experienced and discussed, and reflected to create new learning (Kiely, 2005; Mezirow, 1981, 1997, 1998, 2000).

This study demonstrated that students modified their thinking as a result of listening to their classmates, reflecting on the readings assigned, and their experiences in their semester projects. Many studies support the importance of reflection (Deeley, 2010; Hodges, 2014; Jones et al., 2013; Kiely, 2005; King, 2004; Nohl, 2015) through discussion as a process that transforms learning, as a feature of the course content and a place for consideration of a civic perspective. Ideas from the readings allowed students to participate in the course content, leading to a change in civic perspective. Examples of social justice were not only included in the written curriculum but also emerged through the taught curriculum and applied learning experiences. Gurin-Sands, Gurin, Nagda, & Osuna’s (2012), Hackman’s (2005), Storms’s (2012), and Mitchell’s (2007) findings support the course content pedagogy as the foundation for social justice and service-learning as features of civic learning pedagogy.
This study found that students benefited from conversations with their classmates about the course readings and, as a result, informed the development of their civic perspectives. This is consistent with the findings of Gurin-Sands et al. (2012), Nagda et al. (2003), and Nagda, Gurin, Sorenson, Gurin-Sands, & Osuna (2009), who report that dialogue is one factor that helps individuals to form their perspectives. One of the most important facets of civic knowledge and participation in communities is the sharing of experiences that occur regularly through service (Enos, 2015; Jacoby, 2009, 2015; Levine, 2007; Saltmarsh et al., 2009; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004).

In each of the course observations, I recognized discussions about the theory and its application through work in the community. Students commented that conversations about students’ home communities, communities on campus, and community sites off campus led to a gradual development of personal understandings of social justice in terms of privilege and poverty (Kiely, 2005; Mezirow, 1981, 1997, 2000). The theoretical nature of the course readings provided a challenge when read in isolation but, when discussed in class and reflected upon in combination with the semester projects, allowed students to understand the concepts of privilege and poverty and uncovered the root causes that perpetuate the needs recognized by community partners.

**Theme Four: Participatory off-campus community learning as part of Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course led to a broader understanding of community and a change in civic perspective.** The data from this study showed that students’ willingness to go outside of their local communities on campus influenced their civic perspectives. Extending from participation in the course content, students’ experiences in their off-campus communities engaged their learning and provided opportunities
to apply course readings and ideas through their semester projects (Bringle & Hatcher, 1995; Furco, 1996; Jacoby, 2015). This study’s research findings support that applied experiences off campus positively affect student engagement and perspective transformation are supported by Deeley, 2010; Jones et al., 2013; Kiely, 2005; Mitchell, 2007; Nohl, 2015; Pedersen, Woolum, & George, 2007; Pedersen et al., 2015; Simons & Cleary, 2006. These experiences off campus, in turn, helped build the capacity in the final days of the class for members to connect their service-learning experiences with the class readings and discussions of privilege and poverty. The move to learn through means not traditionally experienced in most courses at Reeve College provided opportunities for students to share the application of social justice topics outside of Reeve College. The results of off-campus participation in service-learning as a type of civic learning allowed the students of the fall of 2015 Privilege and Poverty course to apply their learning experiences. These experiences furthered the possibility of a change in students’ civic perspectives. The students’ desire to pursue change in society, and within the organizations the students served, motivated them during the course.

The students interviewed identified connections with people in the town of Reeve and the county as an outcome of their course experiences (Bettez & Hytten, 2013; Butin, 2007; Jacoby, 2009, 2015; Kumashiro, 2000, 2004; Mitchell, 2008). The successes and lessons learned off campus could immediately be applied in the classroom, connecting the theoretical concepts of privilege and poverty to students’ engaged learning in their communities (Chan, 2012; King, 2004; Kiley, 2005; Pedersen et al., 2015). Students’ sense of disconnection between the content of the course and their applied learning experiences turned into opportunities to grow, to learn from other students, to understand, and to gain the confidence to seek justice, when students brought theory and experience into the classroom. Too often, classroom practice does not seem
completely applicable to the “outside” because students, without having experienced real-world connections, struggle to turn theory into practice (Dewey, 1938; Freire, 1994 [1970]; Kolb, 1984; Kolb & Kolb, 2005). In civic participation, the theory of a class implemented in practice and reflected upon guides student learning (Enos, 2015; Jacoby, 2009, 2015; Levine, 2007; Saltmarsh et al., 2009; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). This study’s research supported students’ assistance of one another to develop strategies “to make a difference” as a result of off-campus learning and challenging injustices in their local and global communities.

Theme Five: Institutional factors positively impacted social justice service-learning in Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course. This research confirmed that Reeve College’s experiential learning initiatives, and goals identified in the college’s 2006 strategic plan, influenced the curriculum of the fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course. The students interviewed repeatedly stressed this curricular and instructional practice identified by administrators and guided by the professor’s pedagogical course design. The students desire more experiential learning opportunities as part of Reeve’s existing courses.

A philosophy of experiential learning exists at Reeve College. The students interviewed regularly identified community engagement experiences off campus as part of new-student orientation. In addition, one student stated that she is a member of a specific on-campus work group focused on experiential learning. Administrative support for the Privilege and Poverty course and its existence within an academic cluster provide learning through experiential pedagogy, which provides very active college students with civic knowledge and civic participation. Anne stated, “The Privilege and Poverty academic cluster has experiential learning which is really great. You can take whatever smattering of courses it is and you participate in
internships and other community engagement opportunities through Reeve’s programs and connections with other organizations.”

The professor of Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course provides academic and service experiences as the gateway course to the Privilege and Poverty academic cluster. The social justice service-learning experiences were instrumental in creating an environment for students’ civic perspective transformations. An academic cluster providing community engagement opportunities that recognize issues of privilege and poverty provides students at Reeve College with experiences in social justice service-learning with the possibility for civic perspective development. The framework within which Privilege and Poverty exists at Reeve College provides institutional support through community engagement. This study confirmed that Reeve College supports experiential pedagogy as an accepted practice that acknowledges the privilege of traditional learning and the benefits of applied learning through its communities. The continued emergence of experiential courses combining academic content with experiences in Reeve’s communities promotes a civic perspective through applied learning within existing courses.

Reeve College supports an Office of Community Engagement on its campus. This study confirms Reeve College’s commitment to work within its communities through experiential learning. Students mentioned accessing events on campus through direct contact with the Office of Community Engagement or through existing programs that access community partners. Through the Office of Community Engagement, Privilege and Poverty, Reeve’s curricular initiative in experiential learning, and civic responsibility emerge as examples of social justice service-learning, experiential learning, and civic learning pedagogy.
Theme Six: Participation in effectively facilitated social justice service-learning through Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary *Privilege and Poverty* course led to a change in civic perspective. Beyond the pedagogical benefits realized through experiential learning and the *Privilege and Poverty* academic cluster, this study found that students participated in effectively facilitated social justice service-learning. This learning established an environment conducive to civic learning and possible perspective transformation. This was evident in students’ emphasis on perspective transformation and their questions posed about their place in society and the changes they seek in the world. Lynn stated,

Something that I really valued about the course and how it fed into how I thought about Reeve Foods is that it really made me question everything we do at Reeve Foods and my motivation to want to volunteer. Thinking about where my motivation comes from, but also what I ought to do, was one of the bigger questions I thought about.

The successful implementation of social justice service-learning greatly increased the possibility that students’ civic perspectives would be transformed. Deeley (2010), Gurin-Sands et al. (2012), Nagda et al. (2003), Nagda et al. (2009), Nohl (2015), Pedersen et al. (2015), and Storms (2012) emphasize the positive outcomes of experiential pedagogy, which in this study social justice service-learning, and potential personal transformation directed towards future action. Students mentioned that their experiences resulted in a stronger sense of their civic responsibility. The participants spoke of learning presented through readings, discussions, presentations, writings, service-learning, guest speakers, visual materials, and documentaries allowing for exploration of social justice and a civic consciousness. This study confirmed the students’ abilities to analyze their development of “understanding,” as a result of successfully facilitated experiential and transformative experiences as civic pedagogy.
Credibility and Trustworthiness of the Findings

Creswell (2013) summarizes credibility as “an attempt to assess the ‘accuracy’ of the findings, as best described by the researcher and the participants” (pp. 250-251) and towards implementation of various strategies to ensure the accuracy of a study’s findings. To that end, I used several strategies recommended by Creswell: member-checking, the use of peer review, triangulation of data, and clarification of researcher bias.

I used member-checking, the process of asking one or more study participants to check the accuracy of the account (Creswell, 2012). After I transcribed each interview, each participant was provided a copy of his/her transcript and given the opportunity to review it to ensure his/her words were transcribed accurately. Additionally, participants were asked to consider the contextual accuracy of their responses, which provided an opportunity to elaborate on their thinking to ensure their words matched their intent.

I also employed peer review as an external check of the research questions, research methods, and my interpretation of data. Peer review was conducted with individuals who had knowledge of the study and could provide an external check of the research process by asking hard questions about methods, meaning, and the study’s interpretations (Creswell, 2013; Guba & Lincoln, 1985). The individuals who participated in the peer review process understood the research methodology, the Experiential and Transformative Learning Theories as the theoretical framework for this study, and the design of the fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course. Knowledge of this study’s aspects is an asset to peer review and this validation strategy. As a result, peer review provided validity and trustworthiness to the study.

Triangulation was employed as a process to verify different forms of data to enhance the study’s accuracy (Creswell, 2012). To triangulate the data in this study, I used several data
sources (Creswell, 2012; Yin, 2009), including semi-structured interviews with each participant, observation of Privilege and Poverty classes, and a review of relevant curricular documents and artifacts produced for the course.

Clarification of researcher bias was identified from the outset of this study as essential to ensure accurate findings. Due to my positionality and knowledge of experiential learning, clarifying researcher bias and considering that bias through all stages of the study were important. Throughout the study, I reflected on “past experiences, biases, prejudices, and orientations” (Creswell, 2013, p. 251) that potentially influenced the interpretation of the study’s findings.

**Implications for Future Study**

This study worked from previous studies focused on the learning impact of experiential and transformative pedagogy through a course’s design. This research had findings similar to those of past research on perspective transformation. However, there are areas of investigation that should be further explored to better understand the impact of experiential and transformative course design to develop civic learning pedagogy.

A clear result of this study was the importance of and need for greater opportunity for students to partake in experiential pedagogy as part of a credit-bearing course. Researchers may consider how to continue to integrate experiential learning into existing course design. The advancement of experiential education at Reeve College may require a formal, advocating body of researchers and practitioners as a means to overcome the challenges inherent in developing experiential courses and curricula. Additional studies may be considered in the creation of a research agenda to advance understanding of the nuances and training methods for the most effective experiential practices, systemically, for administrators, faculty, and staff.
To effectively provide support for creating an engaged campus, the members of the Reeve College community (students, administrators, faculty, and staff) should develop pedagogy to establish goals for experiential learning as a type of civic learning pedagogy. These goals should be accompanied by methods to evaluate the work of this pedagogy in an effort to determine transformation in students’ civic perspectives (Butin, 2010a; Dostilio, 2012; Hartman, 2013). A collaborative model for civic learning through course design on Reeve College’s campus is essential to the long-term success of its civic mission to “engage the world.” Establishing a shared model towards civic learning would create an environment in which participants in experiential pedagogy can assist in realizing Reeve’s civic goals. Support on campus must include scholar-practitioner generated professional development to help students, administrators, faculty, and staff realize the personal, professional, and institutional goals of civic learning pedagogy (Furco & Moely, 2012).

A topic for future study is whether Reeve College could establish a central location for experiential learning. A center devoted to research for experiential education would provide a central location for the varied forms of experiential pedagogy at Reeve. The results of this study support an increase in opportunities for on-campus experiential pedagogy. Advancements in experiential learning on campus should remain consistent with the strategic plan and mission of the college. The formal existence of experiential pedagogy would secure an identity for a campus engaged in its communities. Formation of an engaged campus must include an agenda to develop and design courses and to recruit and train faculty in “acts of engagement.” With an identified “center,” the creation of a research agenda to advance the understanding and training methods of experiential learning, systematically, would allow Reeve to identify as an “engaged campus.”
Reeve College should continue to incorporate experiential learning into existing course design as a type of civic learning pedagogy. Reeve’s Strategic Plan (2006) provides opportunity for experiential learning through service-learning and internships. However, not all students at Reeve College participate in experiential learning, as civic learning, in their communities off campus. There appears to be supportive leadership towards continued implementation of experiential learning. The professor of the course examined in this study supported this conclusion, stating, “There is institutional support recognizing the importance of experiential learning. [Earlier that day] I was at a meeting with the Educational Affairs Committee and the V.P. of Academic Affairs discussing the place for experiential learning in the curriculum.” This study’s findings suggest that students’ engaged learning in their communities influenced their civic perspectives while enrolled in the fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course. This course provides “the place” for experiential learning in the curriculum.

It was evident from this study that students felt, even with all the efforts in place at Reeve College, that many did not engage in learning experiences in their communities off campus. The students interviewed attributed their peers’ lack of service participation on campus to being too busy, too privileged, sheltered, and perhaps even apathetic towards their off-campus communities. Through interviews and class observations, students voiced the sentiment that perhaps all students should have experiences in social justice service-learning. With the support of administration, faculty, and staff, all students could have a better understanding of their communities locally and globally through various events leading to new learning through service in their communities. Therefore, a commitment through the structures (policies, procedures, and programs) of Reeve College must be established to ensure that all students have experiences to develop civic knowledge and participation prior to graduation (Kolb & Kolb, 2005).
This study, although informative, was narrow in scope. The study focused on six participants of a single course and is not a representative sample of social justice service-learning as civic pedagogy throughout the country. Further research should be designed to gather insights about students’ baseline entry knowledge of social justice and experiences with service in communities, to better determine their effects on perspective transformation. Selected qualitative and quantitative research strategies should be used to conduct studies with randomly selected students, pre- and post-service, to continue examining the results of experiential course design, with larger sample sizes, to identify transformative learning that helps to develop a civic perspective. More generally, researchers should begin to formally seek permission to collect ongoing data from incoming and existing students involved in experiential courses to determine the effectiveness of these courses’ pedagogy.

**Implications and Recommendations for Practice**

This study supported research showing the benefits of experiential social justice service-learning as civic learning pedagogy. Across all themes, a change in civic perspective through “experience” dominated the students’ discussions. While the students mentioned additional drivers of change, participation in effectively facilitated social justice service-learning proved most critical. Outside of the classroom environment, the structural and cultural support for off-campus community learning facilitated the students’ civic perspective transformations. Understanding how students experience possible perspective transformation through experiential social justice service-learning as civic learning pedagogy is paramount to maximizing the benefits of this curricular and instructional model.

More studies need to be conducted to deepen the understanding of the learning transformations made possible during experiential social justice pedagogy as civic learning. The
documentation of “civic perspective revelations” during on- and off-campus experiences, writings, and conversations resulting from course content must occur to determine the characteristics of effective social justice service-learning pedagogy as a type of civic learning. Discovering precise moments of perspective transformation in “real-time” through tweets, threaded discussions, and other media must be explored to better support and identify specific moments in which students’ perspectives change.

Future researchers should assess student-generated content to consider successful strategies to best facilitate moments for possible civic transformation. The process of learning through experiential pedagogy relies on reflection to determine transformation. In the absence of a campus-wide protocol for reflection, faculty and students could start with accepted models and work towards development of an agreed-upon practice at Reeve. Advances in technology might provide platforms that have not previously been considered for consistent reflection during all forms of experiential learning. Students, as the greatest resources in reflection, will provide necessary information in the development of reflective strategies. The importance of shared reflective principles at Reeve would allow for infrastructure and processes directed towards opportunities to identify exact moments of civic transformation in experiential learning.

During the students’ interviews and in course observations, there was clear evidence that the sharing of ideas from personal experiences in conjunction with the course material provided the single greatest effect in transformative learning (Alhadeff-Jones, 2012; Chan, 2012; Deeley, 2010; Gurin-Sands et al., 2012; Jones et al., 2013; Mezirow, 2012; Mitchell, 2007, 2014, 2015; Nagda et al., 2003; Nagda et al., 2009; Nohl, 2015; Pedersen, 2015; Storms, 2012). In the case of the participants’ changes in civic perspective, the professor stated, “the conversations about semester projects need to occur throughout the course, and don’t need to wait until the end of the
course.” The professor went on to state, “making the connections throughout the course, not only at the end, would integrate service-projects throughout the class.” To allow for greater discussion about social justice and service-learning (through semester projects) the professor is offering the course three times a week instead of twice in the fall of 2016.

Researchers would benefit from the ability to examine students’ reflective work as separate from course grades, to promote unbiased findings. Utilizing and accessing student voices, perhaps through discussion board postings as reflective exercises, would allow researchers to more accurately recognize moments in which students experience transformation of their civic perspectives through social justice service-learning or another form of experiential learning. Identifying transformational moments and being better able to establish conditions surrounding them would better determine an environment to foster their existence for students and teachers.

This study revealed that Reeve College needs to identify the prior knowledge that students possess upon entry into their civic learning experiences. Although students did experience personal transformation through the fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course, individual transformations occurred as a result of various events rather than from a more purposeful approach based on specified formal and informal experiences with social justice service-learning. With curricular and instructional innovation focused on supporting civic learning pedagogy as an example of experiential learning, students, administrators, faculty, and staff would be provided resources that could result in a more purposeful transformation of students’ civic perspectives (Bell et al., 2000; Mitchell, 2007, 2008, 2014, 2015; Mitchell et al., 2015).
Another area of further research would be to quantify the benefits of experiential learning. Exploration of appropriate quantitative methods to determine civic perspective transformation is recommended. This study found that students considered their civic perspectives; however, these perceptions were anecdotal. There were no measurable means to gauge the success of the social justice service-learning benefits, as part of the course design, that lead to the development of a civic perspective. Further research should be undertaken to quantify the extent to which participation in experiential pedagogy resulted in transformative learning and development of students’ civic perspectives.

Professional development, using data to inform experiential pedagogy as civic learning at Reeve, would improve civic learning in practice. Although monitoring and reflecting on a process that occurs at varying intervals for students is difficult, the collection of data could potentially reveal exact moments of students’ transformations (Pedersen et al., 2015). Therefore, systems to collect and share the success of the work in experiential learning as a type of civic learning pedagogy would be beneficial. Providing methods to disseminate transformative experiences could lead to the identification of where to adjust practice in order to further improve efforts in civic pedagogy. Professional development could then potentially increase the effectiveness of experiential learning directed towards a civic perspective, greatly benefiting the work of such learning.

The role of effectively facilitated social justice service-learning, quite simply, was found to be the most integral aspect of the students’ civic perspective transformations. Without it, as the participants noted, their civic perspectives would not have changed. This finding represents an opportunity to share the curricular design of the fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course with colleagues at Reeve College, so that they might take full
advantage of the insights gained by participants in this study. Social justice service-learning scholar-practitioners must be encouraged to share the work they do with the school community to further the goals of experiential learning and civic pedagogy at Reeve College (Furco & Moely, 2012).

Experiential learning approaches require a different sort of preparation and awareness of student learning needs, compared with the more predictable lecture-based models typical of higher education. Effectively facilitated civic learning through the Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course included various perspectives on issues presented in class; collaboration in various learning experiences; community-focused research on “real-world” problems; empathy through classroom and community-connected experiences; individual and group reflection; and the connection of theory to practice. A more formal approach to campus-wide engagement in social justice service-learning would create greater acceptance of its pedagogy in Reeve classrooms and its communities. The features of effectively facilitated social justice service-learning identified through this study should become the model pedagogy for civic learning at Reeve College.

Finally, there is an opportunity to further realize the benefits of community engagement and the interdisciplinary nature of the fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary Privilege and Poverty course. While students considered the collective experience of being enrolled in Privilege and Poverty valuable, they reported that the most significant pedagogical benefits came as a result of their semester projects and collaborating with their classmates through conversation (Gurin-Sands et al., 2012; Nagda et al., 2003; Nagda et al., 2009; Pedersen, Woolum, & Gagne, 2007). Discussions resulting from the professor’s strategies to apply theory through the semester
projects, guest speakers, readings, presentations, and documentaries, as part of the curriculum design, proved to be crucial for students’ transformations of civic perspectives.

**Conclusion**

This study found that students perceived a change in their civic perspectives, which they associated with participation in Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary *Privilege and Poverty* course. Although several research studies have explored students’ changes in perspective through experiential learning, few study possible students’ perceived transformation as an outcome of social justice service-learning. Therefore, this study seeks to expand the research literature on the conditions potentially conducive to students’ transformations as an outcome of social justice service-learning pedagogy, and as an example of experiential learning and civic learning pedagogy. The findings provide insight into the institutional and cultural factors that affect a change in students’ civic perspectives; students’ benefits from Reeve College’s commitment to experiential learning and the Office of Community Engagement, which provided opportunities for service off campus; and students’ dedication to their learning and that of those with whom they shared their learning journeys, which provided fertile ground for a change in civic perspectives.

The professor’s use of learning strategies to best meet the needs of the students in Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary *Privilege and Poverty* course created experiences, opportunities for reflections, conceptualized possibilities based on experiences, and action directed towards the development of students’ civic perspectives. The students perceived many benefits to their learning through opportunities provided by the course content, including course readings, guest speakers, presentations, discussions, documentaries, and their semester projects. The students who were interviewed identified Reeve College’s fall of 2015
Religion/Interdisciplinary *Privilege and Poverty* course towards developing interdependent reciprocal collegial relationships with their professor, classmates, and community partners around the challenges of privilege and poverty. The importance of students serving communities outside of the Reeve College campus, which addressed issues of privilege and poverty, acknowledged the necessity of social justice service-learning.

The students interviewed stated that, through shared experience, they supported one another and offered strategies and resources to address privilege, poverty, and other social justice issues. Additionally, students in this study recognized that their perspectives became more socially just and civic-centered as a result of experiences through the curriculum and instructional practices of Reeve College’s fall of 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary *Privilege and Poverty* course. Social justice service-learning as civic pedagogy asked that students contemplate the origin of their actions in their communities.
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Appendix A: Permission Letter-Professor

December 1, 2015

Dear Professor*****,

My name is Casey O’Meara, and I am a doctoral student at Northeastern University, Boston, Massachusetts. I am writing to ask for your assistance in my current research.

I have a strong research interest in the role experiential learning has played in civic learning in higher education. I am currently preparing a dissertation on experiential learning as a component of civic learning pedagogy, and am seeking to interview past participants of Privilege and Poverty. I am interested in interviewing past students from your 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary*****Privilege and Poverty********course about perceived changes in students’ civic mindedness.

The research process will involve designing questions and procedures to collect data at *****College, and develop general themes from an analysis of data. The research process includes four steps: a review of Privilege and Poverty******** curriculum documents, an interview with, you, the professor of Privilege and Poverty********, observations of classes, and interviews with students who volunteer from this course.

In my interview with you I will collect information on your design of the 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary*****Privilege and Poverty********and its perceived impact on your students and the wider community. In my interviews with students, I will gather basic background information about students; ask questions about privilege and poverty (social justice) and perceived changes in perspective (civic mindedness) from their experiential service-learning project. The interviews will last approximately 60 minutes. All responses will remain confidential; identifying information will never be published. Any interviews I conduct will be under stringent university protocols, which give the interviewee the right to remain confidential if they wish and to withdraw from the study at any time. Students will have the opportunity to volunteer to be interviewed and will be told that they do not have to participate.

The study’s results may lead to the identification of specific strategies and potentially a model for civic learning at ***** College. I believe this case study will serve to benefit ***** College as well as higher education as they pursue civic learning. The goal of this study is to represent how Privilege and Poverty********, might provide a model for civic learning.

If you have any questions or would like to volunteer to be a part of this study, please contact me directly at (802) 989-3364 or via e-mail omeara.co@husky.neu.edu or the chairperson of my committee, Dr. Kristal Moore Clemons, Northeastern University via email at k.clemons@neu.edu.

Thank you in advance for your time. I look forward to hearing from you regarding this request for permission.
Sincerely,

Casey O’Meara
EdD Candidate Northeastern University at Boston, MA
Cell phone: (802)-989-3364
Email: omeara.co@husky.neu.edu
Appendix B: Letter to Student Participants

December 1, 2015

Dear (Name of former student here),

My name is Casey O’Meara and I am a doctoral candidate in the College of Professional Studies at Northeastern University and a teacher at ********** High School. As part of my dissertation research, I am seeking to interview past students of the 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary*******Privilege and Poverty*********course. The purpose of this study is to identify elements of civic learning at **********College. The research aims to identify specific initiatives to potentially form a model for civic learning.

As a former student of the 2015 Privilege and Poverty*********, with direct experience in civic learning through service-learning, you have been identified by Professor ********* as a possible candidate for this research study. This study will be conducted in January of 2016.

Your participation in this study is completely optional and voluntary. Participants who volunteer to this request will be sent further details about scheduling a 60 minute one-on-one interview. I will be utilizing the interview data collected to help assist in the completion of my doctoral studies at Northeastern University. Any participation in the study will be completely confidential; names and other personal information will not be used. There will not be compensation/reimbursement for participation in this study.

If you have any questions about the study or if you would like to volunteer, you can contact me by phone at (802)-989-3364 or via e-mail to omeara.co@husky.neu.edu.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Casey O’Meara
EdD Candidate Northeastern University at Boston, MA
Cell phone: (802)-989-3364
Email: omeara.co@husky.neu.edu
Appendix C: Signed Informed Consent

Northeastern University, Department: College of Professional Studies (CPS)-Curriculum, Teaching, Learning and Leadership (CTLL) concentration

Principal Investigator: Dr. Kristal Moore Clemons

Student Researcher: Casey O’Meara

Title of Project: Origin of Action: Social Justice Civic Learning

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

We are inviting you to take part in a research study. This form will tell you about the study, but the researcher will explain it to you first. You may ask this person any questions that you have. When you are ready to make a decision, you may tell the researcher if you want to participate or not. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. If you decide to participate, the researcher will ask you to sign this statement and will give you a copy to keep.

Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?

The professor and students who were involved in the fall 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary**** Privilege and Poverty******** course at ******** College are being recruited to participate in this study. I will gather individual perspectives and understandings about the experiences of those involved in this course in order to capture and describe individuals’ perspectives from this experiential learning process. I propose to conduct six to eight individual interviews with participants who have all experienced the fall of 2015 Privilege and Poverty******* course. Participants have all experienced elements of social justice service-learning as part of the 2015 Privilege and Poverty******* course design. Age, gender, ethnicity/race, socio-economic status, education level, and health will not limit inclusion in this study.

Why is this research study being done?

An exploration of specific elements of ******** College’s Privilege and Poverty******* course may provide an example for civic learning. The purpose of this study is to identify students participating in social justice service-learning and to recognize civic mindedness (civic perspective) through course experiences. An analysis of students’ experiences through experiential and transformational learning theories will assist in the exploration of students change in civic perspective. The research aims to identify specific initiatives to potentially form a model for civic learning in education.

What will I be asked to do?

If you decide to take part in this study the researcher will ask you to participate in the following ways:

1. Participate in an interview session that will be audio taped
2. Participate in a member check process to verify the contents of the interviews
3. The researcher will collect observations as field notes
4. The researcher will review curricular documents pertinent to the fall 2015 Religion/Interdisciplinary*****Privilege and Poverty********

Your participation is voluntary, and you can opt out at any time.

**Where will this take place and how much of my time will it take?**

Individual interviews will take approximately one hour each. Individual interviews will take place at a mutually agreed upon time and location between participants and myself. Interviews will be conducted at any location of each participants choosing.

**Will there be any risk or discomfort to me?**

While I do not foresee any risks, a participant may find talking poverty and power uncomfortable. I will have participants look over the questions before the interview starts and if any participant is made uncomfortable they have the right to withdraw or stop participating at any time.

**Will I benefit by being in this research?**

There will be no direct benefit to you for taking part in the study. However, there are potential benefits to education and society. Recommendations from this study may make the implementation of civic learning in colleges and universities more effective which could result in greater individual social responsibility throughout the world. Also, recommendations may assist administrators gain recognition for current civic learning practices. This may enhance civic learning pedagogy systemically at *****College.

**Who will see the information about me?**

Your part in the study will be completely confidential. Pseudonyms will be used for all study participants. Only the researcher will be aware of the participants' identities. No reports or publications will use information that can identify you in any way.

As a participant your part will be confidential. The data collected for this study will be kept by the researcher, including audiotapes, but will not be shared with others. Only first names will be used during transcriptions. False names will be used in reports related to individual interviews. All audiotapes will be destroyed following transcription of the interviews.

In rare instances, authorized people may request to see research information about you and other people in this study. This is done only to be sure that the research is done properly. The researcher would only permit people who are authorized by organizations such as Northeastern University and *****College to view the study data. No identifying information will ever be shared with people outside of these two institutions.

**If I do not want to take part in the study, what choices do I have?**
You are not required to take part in this study. If you do not want to participate, you do not have to sign this form.

**What will happen if I suffer any harm from this research?**

There are no known significant risks involved in being a participant in this study. No special arrangements will be made for compensation or for payment for treatment solely because of your participation in this research.

**Can I stop my participation in this study?**

Participation in this study is voluntary, and your participation or non-participation will in no way affect other relationships (e.g., student standing, grades, professor student relationship, etc.). You may discontinue your participation in this research program at any time without penalty or costs of any nature, character, or kind.

**Who can I contact if I have questions or problems?**

If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact me, the person mainly responsible for the research directly at (802) 989-3364 or via e-mail omeara.co@husky.neu.edu. You can also contact Dr. Kristal Moore Clemons, the Principal Investigator via email at k.clemons@neu.edu.

**Who can I contact about my rights as a participant?**

If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 490 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: n.regina@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

**Will I be paid for my participation?**

There is no compensation for participating in this study.

**Will it cost me anything to participate?**

There is no cost for participating in this study.

I have read, understood, and had the opportunity to ask questions regarding this consent form. I fully understand the nature and character of my involvement in this research program as a participant and the potential risks. I agree to participate in this study on a voluntary basis, and understand that I can depart from the research study at any time.

___________________________________________  ____________________
Signature of person agreeing to take part  Date
# Appendix D: Observation Protocol

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive Notes</th>
<th>Reflective Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date &amp; Time:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Location:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant(s) (pseudonym):</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Description of Activity (lesson, special project, presenter)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Description of Activity including sequence of events</td>
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<tr>
<td>Key Quotations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Examples of civic learning in class (student(s)/instructor/presenter exhibit)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visible evidence of civic learning in the learning environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Opportunity for civic learning connecting class with community (discussions, writings, meetings, presentations, videos, guest speakers from the community) towards change in perspective.</td>
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<td>Researcher personal view, reflection and emotion.</td>
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</table>
Appendix E: Student Interview Protocol

Background Information

Location of Interview: Date: Time: Age: Gender:

Introduction
Build rapport, describe the study, answer any questions, review and sign IRB protocol and form for audio recording.

Introductory Protocol
You have been selected to speak with me today because you have been identified as someone who has a great deal to share about your experiences in ******** College’s 2015 Privilege and Poverty*********. This research project focuses on students’ experiences with a particular interest in uncovering factors that will possibly improve civic learning at ******** College and other institutions.

Because your responses are important and I want to make sure to capture everything you say, I would like to audio tape our conversation today. Do I have your permission to record this interview? I will also be taking written notes during the interview. I can assure you that all responses will be confidential and only a pseudonym will be used when quoting from the transcripts. The audio recording will be transcribed by me and I will be the only one privy to the transcriptions of the audio recording. All audio recordings will be deleted after they are transcribed. Do you have any questions at this time?

To meet our human subjects’ requirements at the university, you must sign the form I have with me (provide the form). Essentially, this document states that: (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) we do not intend to inflict any harm (allow time to review form). Do you have any questions about the interview process or this form? I would also like to audio record this interview and have a consent form related to this as well (provide form).

This interview will last approximately one hour. During this time, I have several questions that I would like to cover. If time begins to run short, it may be necessary to interrupt you in order to push ahead and complete this line of questioning. Do you have any questions at this time?

Introduction to Interview
Interviewee Background-my name is Casey O’Meara and I am a doctoral student at Northeastern University. I am presently working on my dissertation. I am also a social studies teacher at ******** High School. I have been a teacher at ******** for 14 years.

Interview Questions:
1. Tell me your name, your year of graduation, and when you were enrolled in Privilege and Poverty******** at ********?
2. **What **semester project were you a part of and what, if any, community organization(s) (non-school entities) were involved?**

3. **Did you work on your project alone or as part of a team?**

4. **Tell me about the beginning of your experience...**
   - Can you describe what it felt like to be a part of the project at the very beginning?
   - Think back to the first time you were told of the semester project, how were you feeling about the opportunity?
   - What were some of your thoughts about how you felt you might be able to contribute to the project?
   - Can you give an example of where you felt your experiences and talents might advance the project?

5. **Tell me about the actual work of your project (community issue)?**
   - What was the project you/your team researched/explored?
   - Once you found yourself working on the project, what did you think about it?
   - How did you approach the work on your own, and with the team (if applicable)?
   - How would you describe your experience working on your project?

6. **How did your learning evolve over the time (semester) you were enrolled in this course?**
   - Can you describe some of the ways in which you found yourself thinking about your semester project in relation to the course’s content?
   - What were some of the things that motivated you, and your team (if applicable), during the project?
   - Were there any situations, or moments, you recall, where there was a change of direction or momentum? What was it? How did it impact you personally, and the team (if applicable)?
   - How were you supported during your work with the semester project?
   - Did faculty impact the project?
   - How did the community organization(s) (non-school entities) impact the project?
   - Nearing the end of the project how did your feelings about your project change if at all?

7. **Did you feel as if you changed at all as a result of the project?**
   - If you compare yourself post-semester project with your pre-Semester self, do you notice anything different? Please describe.
   - Can you describe a situation/event where the change occurred?
   - What do you think contributed to this?
   - Did you have doubts about your abilities during the situation/event? How about now?
   - Were there any particular skills that you feel changed or increased as a result of your experiences this semester?
   - Did the experiences change your perspectives on anything?
   - What was the most memorable moment during the semester for you?
   - What do you think about that experience now?
   - Was the semester project a good learning experience? Why do you think so or not?
   - Has the experience of being in **College’s Privilege and Poverty** course changed you at all? If so how?
   - What was it that made that change possible?
8. What else would you like me to understand about the role of service-learning, civic mindedness and social justice in your teaching and/or at ********** College?

Closing the Interview: I am finished with my questions at this point. Is there anything that we did not discuss that you think would be important to add at this time? I will send you a copy of the text transcript of this interview and will contact you afterward to obtain additional information as needed and to verify your comfort with the material. I thank you again for taking the time to speak with me. Your participation has been very helpful and I hope the process was rewarding to you as well.
Appendix F: Professor Interview Protocol

Background Information
Location of Interview: Date: Time: Age: Gender:

Introduction
Build rapport, describe the study, answer any questions, review and sign IRB protocol and form for audio recording.

Introductory Protocol
You have been selected to speak with me today because you have been identified as someone who has a great deal to share about your experiences in ******** College’s 2015 Privilege and Poverty******** course. This research project focuses on students’ experiences with a particular interest in uncovering factors that will possibly improve civic learning at ******** College and other institutions.

Because your responses are important and I want to make sure to capture everything you say, I would like to audio tape our conversation today. Do I have your permission to record this interview? I will also be taking written notes during the interview. I can assure you that all responses will be confidential and only a pseudonym will be used when quoting from the transcripts. The audio recording will be transcribed by me and I will be the only one privy to the transcriptions of the audio recording. All audio recordings will be deleted after they are transcribed. Do you have any questions at this time?

To meet our human subjects’ requirements at the university, you must sign the form I have with me (provide the form). Essentially, this document states that: (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) we do not intend to inflict any harm (allow time to review form). Do you have any questions about the interview process or this form? I would also like to audio record this interview and have a consent form related to this as well (provide form).

This interview will last approximately one hour. During this time, I have several questions that I would like to cover. If time begins to run short, it may be necessary to interrupt you in order to push ahead and complete this line of questioning. Do you have any questions at this time?

Introduction to Interview
Interviewee Background—my name is Casey O’Meara and I am a doctoral student at Northeastern University. I am presently working on my dissertation. I am also a social studies teacher at ******** High School. I have been a teacher at ******** for 14 years.

Interview Questions:

1. How long have you worked at ******** College and how many years have you been involved with ******** Privilege and Poverty cluster?
2. Tell me about your role at ****** College and your involvement in the design and implementation of the Privilege and Poverty cluster.
3. How did you design your fall of 2015 *Privilege and Poverty*********?
   Why did you include social justice in your course design?
   Why did you include service-learning in your course design?
   Did ****** College’s leadership provide you with a model from which to design this course? If not, how did you decide what to include and not include?
   How often do you evaluate your design of this course and what is the process to change it? Were/are other departments at ****** College involved?
   What actions or resources have the college or other departments taken to assist or collaborate with you? If none, what could be done?
4. Can you describe a time when you saw students connect deeply with social justice (privilege and poverty) through your course?
   What was the experience/lesson?
   How did you know they were connecting in a deep way?
   How have you changed as a person and professor as a result of your engagement with this course? If so, what led to that transformation(s)?
5. Have you noticed any changes in your school community, and/or the community at large, that seem to be connected to the issues of social justice as experienced in Privilege and Poverty (E.g., pro-civic minded behaviors)?
   Please describe any examples of what that looks/ed like.
   How do you understand and think about the relationship between social justice, service-learning, and civic mindedness?
6. Thinking about methods you have tried in *Privilege and Poverty*********, could you go into detail about one that did not go well and what lessons you learned from it?
   How might you go about making changes to future designs of this course? Is there a mechanism for sharing across the school/departments – formal and/or informal regarding these changes?
   Is there a formal process you must go through in order to modify this course?
7. Thinking about your use of service-learning in ****** *Privilege and Poverty*********, could you go into detail about what went well and what lessons you learned during the fall semester of 2015?
   How did you incorporate service-learning methods into your teaching and research?
   Can you describe a time when students drew connections between social issues and civic mindedness (civic perspective)?
   What led to those connections?
8. Assume that your course design five years from now is widely recognized as an innovative and successful model. How does it look?
   How do you see the rest of the college in five years when it comes to social justice, civic learning/civic mindedness (civic perspective), service-learning?
   Why?
9. What else would you like me to understand about the role of service-learning, civic mindedness and social justice in your teaching and/or at ****** College?
Closing the Interview: I am finished with my questions at this point. Is there anything that we did not discuss that you think would be important to add at this time? I will send you a copy of the text transcript of this interview and will contact you afterward to obtain additional information as needed and to verify your comfort with the material. I thank you again for taking the time to speak with me. Your participation has been very helpful and I hope the process was rewarding to you as well.