Perceptions of Race and Privilege: An Examination of Intercultural Competence and Service-Learning in the Mississippi Delta

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PERCEPTIONS OF RACE AND PRIVILEGE: AN EXAMINATION OF INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE AND SERVICE-LEARNING IN THE MISSISSIPPI DELTA

A Dissertation
presented in partial fulfillment of requirements
for a Doctor of Philosophy degree
in the Department of Counselor Education and Educational Leadership
The University of Mississippi

by

LAURA ANTONOW

December 2015
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this mixed methods constructivist case study was to examine how college students process issues of race and privilege when participating in service-learning in a predominantly minority, underserved region, and if that experience impacts their intercultural competence. The participants were University of Mississippi students (N=20) conducting service in the Mississippi Delta. The qualitative research included pre-service focus groups and post-service in-depth interviews, and syllabi and class written reflections were analyzed. The quantitative research included pre- and post-tests using the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS) that assessed participants’ awareness of and attitudes about racial inequities and privilege before and after the service-learning experience.

The resulting numeric and narrative information were analyzed from a constructivist perspective, informed by Critical Race Theory, Color-blind Ideology, Intercultural Competence models, and Perry’s Theory of Intellectual and Ethical Development. Four primary themes emerged from the qualitative data. The first theme, Motivations, Expectations, and Experience in the Mississippi Delta, examined why students participated in a service-learning class and what they expected from the experience. The second theme, Processing Notions of Race and Privilege through Service-learning, examined how students processed issues of race and privilege, before, during, and after the service experience. The third theme, Color-Blindness as Distance that Protects, described students’ use of color-blind ideology to process issues of race and privilege. The final theme, Service-learning as a Disruptor of the White Paradigm, examined some students’ paradigm shift, where they began to see beyond their own perspective.
During the quantitative analysis, a one-tailed paired samples t test revealed that students’ pre-service CoBRAS scores (m=78.22, s=18.48) decreased on the post-service survey (m=71.33, s=17.09), t(8)=2.264, p ≤ .05. While the comparative quantitative data collected through the CoBRAS was minimal (N=10), the results did support an overall increased awareness of racial privilege, institutional discrimination, and blatant racial issues after participation in service-learning.

Through the findings, the researcher established the notion of layers of understanding regarding race and privilege – cultural, emotional, intellectual, and social – that begin to deconstruct how students process issues of race and privilege and move toward intercultural competence. Recommendations for practice were presented.
DEDICATION

Throughout my life, my family has been a steadfast pillar of support in all have done; therefore, this dissertation is dedicated to my family – my parents, Walt and Janice Antonow; daughters, Riki and Kara Roederer; my grandchildren, Jayden and Ava Ivy; and my partner, Randy Wadkins. They have all been encouraging while I have pursued this opportunity, and they have been patient when I have had to scale back my time and energy with them.

My parents have been my foundation and are largely responsible for my values and worldview, especially when it comes to my sense of justice, fairness, equality, and responsibility. They also have fostered in me a love of learning, which is still in full swing today well into my adulthood. That is one of the greatest gifts a parent can give.

My daughters are wonderful examples of what young people can be. It has been a joy, and sometimes a challenge, watching them grown into the women they have become. They are loving, thoughtful, and kind. They respect people in spite of differences, and appreciate what makes people unique. I thank them for their patience while I became what may have appeared more student than mother. I hope that they know that having them as daughters, and wanting the world to be a better place for them and their families, was largely the inspiration for my doctoral pursuits.

My grandchildren, Jayden and Ava, are a constant delight. It is a joy to watch them turn into little people who will grow up to make their own unique place in the world. Unfortunately, they live in a world where their opportunities may still be limited because of the biases of others,
but as I see both defeats and victories in terms of social progress, racial and gender equality, and interculturalism, I have hope that they will be both beneficiaries and the benefactors of equity and justice.

Finally, Randy has been a constant supporter and advocate for my pursuit of a doctorate, yet often reminded me that all work and no play is counterproductive. He was always willing to lend an ear when the weightiness of my research topic and the disheartening news of the day became more than I could bear. We bemoan the state of race relations in Mississippi, and yet rejoice in the progress made since we attended the University of Mississippi in the 1980s. We talk about wanting to leave the South, and also how important it is for us to stay. He has even tolerated me taking books on racism and White privilege on beach vacations for the past few years – a truly patient and loving partner, and my best friend.

It is with much thanks and love that I dedicate this dissertation to my family.
### LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>CCAI</td>
<td>Cross Cultural Adaptability Inventory</td>
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<tr>
<td>CoBRAS</td>
<td>Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale</td>
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<td>CRT</td>
<td>Critical Race Theory</td>
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<td>GBJWS</td>
<td>Global Belief in a Just World Scale</td>
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<td>IAPCC</td>
<td>Inventory for Assessing the Process of Cultural Competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRB</td>
<td>Institutional Review Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>LSI</td>
<td>Learning Styles Inventory</td>
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<tr>
<td>MBJWS</td>
<td>Multidimensional Belief in a Just World Scale</td>
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<tr>
<td>MRS</td>
<td>Modern Racism Scale</td>
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<tr>
<td>QDI</td>
<td>Quick Discrimination Index</td>
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<td>UM</td>
<td>University of Mississippi</td>
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My dissertation committee was composed of four higher education professionals for whom I have great respect and gratitude – Dr. Amy Wells Dolan, Dr. Debby Chessin, Dr. Phillis George, and Dr. Kerry B. Melear.

Dr. Amy Wells Dolan served as the Chair of my committee. She has been a steadfast supporter and mentor since my acceptance in the doctoral program. She has challenged me to surpass my own expectations for this project, and the results are far better because of her attention, expertise, and care.

Dr. Debby Chessin has served as a sounding board for my research topic long before she was an official member of my dissertation committee. Her expertise in education, service-learning, and intercultural competence is evident, and I value her participation on this committee and her friendship.

Dr. Phillis George’s arrival at University of Mississippi was perfectly timed to lend her wealth of experience and expertise in service-learning to my committee. Her vast knowledge of service-learning, both as a faculty member and practitioner, is an asset that I greatly appreciate. I look forward to many future collaborations.

When I began considering the doctoral program in Higher Education, I went immediately to Dr. Kerry B. Melear, who gave me expert advice, as a colleague, a prospective professor, and a friend. He has been an advisor and counselor regarding both academic and professional issues throughout the years, as well as an outstanding professor.
The Comparative Higher Education class in South Africa, taught by Dr. Melear, was the final motivation for studying student perceptions of race and privilege. Visiting South African institutions of higher education and learning the history of the country, the horrors of apartheid, and its lasting impact on the people of all ethnicities in South Africa echoed the American South in a way that made me sad and angry, but also hopeful. Touring an exhibition on school desegregation in the American South at the Red Location Museum alongside a group of young, Black South African students was a powerful and emotional experience that revealed our oddly parallel histories, and yet the willingness of South Africans to tackle racial reconciliation straightforwardly as a matter of conscience is something from which Americans can learn. My research shows that we have far to go, but moving toward intercultural competence with intensity and intentionality is critical in a multicultural world.

My awareness of Dr. J. T. Thomas and his work in the field of sociology, in particular race and racism, preceded our actual meeting. The high regard in which many of my respected colleagues and friends hold him, both personally and professionally, was reason enough to reach out to him to discuss my research. I was so pleased when he agreed to lend his insights and expertise to this project. Our conversations have been enlightening, and I look forward to continued dialogue in the coming years.

Dr. Albert Nylander has served as an important advocate for service-learning and community engagement since his arrival on campus as the director of the McLean Institute for Public Service and Community Engagement. Watching Dr. Nylander cultivate community engagement and service-learning, as well as his willingness to discuss my research ideas on several occasions, has helped me better understand the opportunities for and importance of community engagement, especially its role in Mississippi.
Finally, to my friends and colleagues with whom I have spent hours pouring over issues of race and privilege in our community, on our campus, in our state, and in society – thank you for sharing your thoughts, insights, experiences, frustrations, and hopes.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

In late 2013, the world lost a champion of racial equality and social justice – Nelson Mandela. In his autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom*, Mandela (1995) declared,

No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite. (p. 622)

Mandela’s advocacy helped end apartheid in South Africa and engaged the world in dialogue about, and activism against, racial inequality. Unfortunately, the effects of racism and privilege have persisted at the macro level in society and at the micro level in individual lives.

Race and privilege are factors in contemporary life in the United States, as well. American college students have much to consider as they develop their own racial identities and learn how to navigate an increasingly diverse world. As part of their charge, colleges and universities often help foster character development, global understanding, and good citizenship in young adults (Vogelgesang & Astin, 2000). Awareness and sensitivity to issues of race and privilege are measures of that growth. As Mandela reminds us, “if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love” (Mandela, 1995, p. 622). Many educators agree, having cited studies that show increased intercultural competence as an outcome of certain pedagogies and educational experiences (Deardorff, 2011; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Jay, 2008; Simons, L., Fehr, L., Black, N., Hogerworff, F., Georganas, D., & Russell, B., 2011). Service-learning, a form of experiential education, is one potentially effective way that universities can work toward that goal.
Racism and inequality have changed throughout history, but they still exist and impact the lives of individuals and society as a whole. Modern racism, as defined by McConahay, Hardee, & Batts (1981), is a subtle, but nonetheless destructive, brand of post-Civil Rights Era racism. Color-blind racial attitudes are one manifestation of this form of racism. This phenomenon includes the denial of the existence of racism and imbedded inequalities in contemporary society, and the refusal to acknowledge and embrace cultural differences as part of what makes the American social fabric rich with diversity (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Endres & Gould, 2009; Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Loya, 2011; Patton, McEwen, Rendon, & Howard-Hamilton, 2007). It also involves an underlying belief that Whiteness is and should be the social norm, and that all people should be judged through the lens of White culture (Dunlap, Scoggin, Green, & Davi, 2007; Loya, 2011). On a more positive note, increased globalization calls for students to become interculturally aware, and colleges and universities serve them well by addressing this need in both curricular and co-curricular arenas (Braskamp & Engberg, 2011; Desmond, Stahl, & Graham, 2011).

While blatant racism has certainly become less acceptable in the United States since the legal and social changes of the Civil Rights Movement, underlying subtle forms of racial inequality and discrimination still exist, and can be witnessed on college campuses as elsewhere in society (Feagin, Vera & Imani, 1996). At the University of Mississippi, both subtle and, too often, blatant displays of racism persist. In spite of its progress in matters of race, the turbulent racial history at University of Mississippi and its ongoing racial tensions make “Ole Miss” an institution worthy of examination. The proposed study will explore student perceptions of race and privilege as they participate in service-learning classes, a pedagogy in higher education that some believe can transform society in the positive ways that Mandela suggested.
Brown v. the Board of Education changed the dynamics of public education in the United States. Previously, schools at all levels were segregated based on race, but this U. S. Supreme Court ruling declared that separate educational facilities were inherently unequal (Brown v. Board of Education, 1954). The second rendition of this case one year later ruled that this change must occur “with all deliberate speed” (Brown v. Board of Education, 1955). These cases, which shifted public education from the “separate, but equal” mandate of Plessy v. Ferguson (1896), concerned many who felt that the ruling was a threat to segregation, White supremacy, and the Southern way of life (Doyle, 2001; Eagles, 2009). Resistance to integration in the South was evident, as southern Whites clung to the “Lost Cause” of the Old South (Wells Dolan & Thelin, 2012). While some southern states had begun to admit Black students prior to the Brown decision, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, South Carolina, and Mississippi had resisted completely, and continued to do so even after the Supreme Court demanded integration (Wallenstein, 2008). Southern defiance ranged from passive resistance to blatant opposition, including the drafting of the Southern Manifesto, a declaration penned by members of the Southern Congressional Delegation formally opposing Brown v. Board of Education and the Civil Rights Movement (Day, 2014).

Mississippi was particularly slow to implement school desegregation, and the University of Mississippi delayed desegregation until forced by the Federal government to admit its first African American student, James Meredith (Cohodas, 1997; Doyle, 2001; Sansing, 1990). In 1962, Meredith was enrolled at the University of Mississippi after repeated attempts at admission (Eagles, 2009). Anger and violence descended upon the University and the community of Oxford, Mississippi, but Meredith was admitted and graduated from the institution on August 18, 1963 (Doyle, 2001). True integration, however, was still elusive.
Legal intervention established integrated educational institutions, and soon after, the courts took the next steps to support diversity in higher education. The value of diversity in higher education was affirmed by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1978 and again in 2003. In the Bakke ruling, the U.S. Supreme Court supported the California Supreme Court’s ruling that diversity in higher education was a reasonable and compelling state interest (University of California Regents v. Bakke, 1978). In 2003, the importance of diversity in higher education was reaffirmed by the U.S. Supreme Court in Grutter v. Bollinger et al, which stated that a critical mass of minority students would provide “substantial, important, and laudable education benefits that diversity is designed to produce, including cross-racial understanding and the breaking down of racial stereotypes” (2003). Some would argue that the mere presence of minority students on a college campus does not fulfill the goal of the courts, and that “interculturalism” is the operative part of a truly diverse campus (Espino & Lee, 2011). Desegregation was achieved and diversity declared important, but true racial integration and interculturalism is still a work in progress at the University of Mississippi.

While the University of Mississippi’s early history had much racial disunity, recent incidents reflect a continued need for interculturalism at the University of Mississippi. Between 2012 and 2014, a series of unfortunate racist events took place on the campus. The University’s first African American female Associated Student Body president was elected, but just a few weeks after her inauguration, she was subjected to racial slurs by a White male student at a town watering hole (Dandridge, 2014). In November of 2012, an election night disturbance, which included burning of Obama campaign signs and the use of racist epithets by White UM students caused turmoil on campus (Johnson, 2012). Most recently, the University of Mississippi’s only civil rights memorial was desecrated by a group of White fraternity members – an act that
included the placement of a noose around the neck of the statue of James Meredith. The common factor in all these racial incidents is that they were perpetrated by White college-age university students, the generation that is often touted as post-racial (Mueller & Feagin, 2014). They are post-Civil Rights Era young people who were raised in a society that praises diversity. So why are Millennials, who are supposed to be enlightened in matters of diversity, thinking and acting this way (Broido, 2004)? And maybe more importantly, what can colleges and universities do to help facilitate meaningful change?

In response to these recent events, the University of Mississippi has made some efforts to foster productive conversations about race (and even White privilege), which is tackled head on in The Ole Miss Experience: First-Year Experience Text (Glisson & Tucker, 2013). The Sensitivity and Respect Committee was formed by the University administration and was expanded after the 2012 election night events. The goal of the committee was to address the intolerance, bias, and incivility to which marginalized populations are often subjected and to provide a “safe, nurturing and diverse environment without fear of discrimination or lack of respect” for all students, faculty, staff, and visitors (University of Mississippi, 2012, p. 5). The report produced recommendations for change, and the Chancellor responded by addressing each recommendation, acknowledging the importance of each goal, clarifying the status of each suggestion, and assigning the implementation of each task to a specific campus office or outside consultant. The suggestions included increasing research related to race, assistance for faculty and staff in addressing bias incidents, adoption of a comprehensive diversity plan, and intentional education of students about issues of inclusion (University of Mississippi, 2012).

Diversity Matters, the University of Mississippi’s 2013 diversity plan, is a 96-page document addressing many aspects of diversity across the institution. Diversity, inclusion and
civility were mentioned time and again in this document and were reflected in the University’s mission, statement of institutional core values, creed, and general education/core curriculum mission statement (University of Mississippi, 2013a). On August 1, 2014, Chancellor Dan Jones unveiled the University’s action plan based on the diversity plan and the reports of two consultants focusing on the institution’s organizational structure as it relates to diversity and inclusion and the racially charged symbolism associated with the institution and the campus (Jones, 2014). Among the plan’s action items were renaming Confederate Drive to Chapel Lane, installing historical markers at sites currently memorializing the Civil War and racial segregationists in order to provide historical context, and the creation of a Vice Chancellor level position for diversity and inclusion (Jones, 2014). The comments from students, alumni, and others claiming to “love Ole Miss” ranged from high praise to racist vitriol, again reinforcing the need for increased intercultural competence and true integration among the members of the University and its extended family (Kirkland, 2014).

Board Goal 3 of the University’s 2013 diversity plan is of particular relevance to this study – “Enhancing the overall curriculum by infusion of content that enhances multicultural awareness and understanding” (University of Mississippi, 2013a). The description of this goal mentioned service-learning specifically, describing it as an experience that “often brings students into direct contact with groups of individuals who are in need (the poor, disabled, elderly, etc.), thus broadening their perspectives and life experiences” (University of Mississippi, 2013a, p. 31). A 2007 report from the American Association of Colleges and Universities implied that “service learning and experiences with diversity are powerful catalysts for deeper engagement and insight” (National Leadership Council for Liberal Education and America’s Promise, 2007, p.38). While research certainly indicates that service-learning is a pedagogical tool that can
increase intercultural competence and multicultural awareness in students (Eyler & Giles, 1999),

institutions must be cautious not to promote cultural deficit thinking under the auspices of
multicultural education (Dunlap, Scoggin, Green, & Davi, 2007; Endres & Gould, 2009;
Sperling, 2007). In short, service-learning done thoughtlessly can generate more harm than good
for students, the university, and the community. Inappropriately designed or implemented
service-learning programs can create scenarios likened to poverty tourism or scholarly
voyeurism, which are exploitive and reinforce the power and privilege dynamic (Philipsen,
2003). So while it can result in progress toward intercultural competence, it can also reinforce
stereotypes and paternalism, resulting in a perpetuation of racist attitudes and White privilege
(Philipsen, 2003). An understanding of how college students process issues of race and privilege
in the context of a service-learning experience is critical information for faculty and
administrators who are charged with enhancing student learning and transforming college
campuses into authentic multicultural environments.

Significance of the Study

School desegregation happened half a century ago, but most colleges and universities are
still not truly integrated (Feagin, Vera, & Imani, 1996). Using service-learning as a means to
foster true integration among diverse students is an idea with much promise (Braskamp &
Engberg, 2011). The fields of social work, education, health care, and psychology have begun to
pay closer attention to intercultural competence of students in order to have well-rounded
professionals prepared to deal with multicultural clientele (Gushue & Constantine, 2007;
Johnson & Munch, 2009; Reich & Reich, 2006). It is also, however, important that students in all
disciplines engage in cross-cultural learning in order to successfully navigate an increasingly
diverse world (Braskamp & Engberg, 2011; Cabrera, 2011). The literature reveals that
intercultural competence is one of the most powerful, but least researched student outcome of service-learning (Deardorff, 2011; Espino & Lee, 2011). The proposed study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge about student perceptions of race and privilege when participating in service-learning in underserved, predominantly minority communities. Additionally, the research may produce information that will help instructors better prepare students for intercultural service-learning experiences and help them anticipate intercultural issues in the field. Finally, the data and analysis may help colleges and universities determine if service-learning could aid in achieving institutional goals of diversity, multiculturalism, and interculturalism.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this constructivist case study was to examine college-level service-learning students conducting work in the Mississippi Delta, in order to determine the impact such experiences have on students’ perception of race and privilege. The participants included students involved in service-learning classes at the University of Mississippi.

Prior to the service-learning experience, focus groups were conducted to assess students’ expectations about service work in the region and the community in which they were serving. Students took quantitative pre- and post-tests using the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS) that were analyzed using paired sample t-tests and which assessed their awareness of and attitudes about racial inequities and privilege before and after the service-learning experience. In-depth interviews were conducted after the service-learning experience, and those transcripts were analyzed to examine common themes to better evaluate the impact the service-learning experience had on students’ perceptions of race and privilege. Additionally, the syllabus
and any written reflections required for each course included in the study were retained for use in
document analysis.

Research Questions

The qualitative portion of this study carried the most weight; therefore, as an emergent study, these specific research questions provided an initial framework for the study and guided the quantitative hypothesis. The research questions are as follows:

• How do students process issues of race and privilege prior to, during, and after participating in service-learning in the Mississippi Delta?

• How is intercultural competence impacted among students who participate in short-term service learning in the Mississippi Delta?

The null hypothesis for the quantitative portion of the study is as follows:

• Hypothesis: There is no significant difference in student scores on the Color-Blind Racial Attitude Scale (CoBRAS) after participating in a service-learning experience in the Mississippi Delta.

Overview of Methods

In order to thoroughly examine student perceptions of race and privilege when conducting service-learning in the Mississippi Delta, a mixed methods study was conducted. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used, including the Colorblind Racial Attitudes Scale, focus groups, and individual interviews. A mixed methods study allowed for triangulation, increased depth and breadth, and enhanced understanding of the central phenomena (Billig & Waterman, 2003; Clayton, Bringle, & Hatcher, 2013; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007). The participants in this study were University of Mississippi students conducting service-learning work in the Mississippi Delta. The data analysis included statistical analysis of the
quantitative data through paired t-tests using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Coding and analysis of focus group and interview transcripts were done manually. Syllabi and final narrative reflections were collected for document analysis. The resulting numeric and narrative information was analyzed from a constructivist perspective, and was informed by Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings, 1998, 2005, 2007), Color-blind Ideology (Neville, H., Lilly, R., Duran, G., Lee, R. N., & Brown, L., 2000; Sue, 1999, 2001, 2013), Intercultural Competence (Deardorff, 2011; Deardorff & Edwards, 2013), and Perry’s Theory of Intellectual and Ethical Development (Perry, 1970). An expert in the field of race, privilege, and Critical Race Theory, conducted an expert audit review of the study during the proposal stage and after analysis to verify the integrity of the conclusions and diminish any researcher bias. A full description of the data collection and analysis methods can be found in Chapter Three.

Terms and Definitions

The study of service-learning presents many challenges. Among the impediments are varying definitions of the pedagogy, lack of associated theory, inconsistent research design, and complicated data analysis (Billig & Waterman, 2003). In an effort to minimize one of these challenges, I am providing the following operational definitions for key terms in this study:

- Color-Blindness – A focus on the universality of humans without regard to racial and ethnic differences; a mode of modern racism that minimizes aspects of racial difference and denies that racism is an issue in contemporary society (Case, 2007; Gushue & Constantine, 2007; Lewis, Neville, & Spanierman, 2012; Plaut, V. C., Thomas, K. M., & Goren, M. J., 2009; Philipsen, 2003).
• Critical Race Theory (CRT) – A theoretical framework that maintains that race and racism are deeply embedded in the structure of modern society, rather than just individual acts of racial prejudice (Ladson-Billings, 1998, 2005; Parker & Lynn, 2002).

• Discrimination – The “differential treatment on the basis of race that disadvantages a racial group,” which includes “both individual behavior and institutional practices” (National Research Council, 2004, p. 55).

• Diversity – The state of having various races or cultures in a group (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Endres & Gould, 2009; Simons & Cleary, 2006).

• Ethnicity – “Cultural characteristics shared by a group of people, including religion, ancestry, national origin, and language,” plus habits, values, and shared understandings (Philipsen, 2003, p. 230).

• Experiential Education – A pedagogical method that takes students outside the classroom environment to provide hands-on experience related to their field of study (Eyler, 2009; Kolb, 1984; Miettinen, 2000; Moore, 1981; Rose & Paisley, 2012).

• Intercultural competence – The development of skills and behaviors that allow an individual to interact effectively and appropriately with people from a different culture or background; sometimes referred to as cultural competence or multicultural competence (Chen, McAdams-Jones, Tay, & Packer, 2012; Colvin-Burque, Davis-Maye, & Zugazaga, 2007; Deardorff, 2011; Purnell, 2005).

• Interculturalism – The presence of many cultures with a focus on meaningful interaction, equal representation, and equity; a respectful cross-pollination of cultures (Espino & Lee, 2011; Kandaswamy, 2007).
• Multiculturalism – The presence of many cultures with a focus on recognizing, understanding, and celebrating diverse and differentiated groups and individuals (Crisp & Meleady, 2012; Kandaswamy, 2007; Plaut, Thomas & Goren, 2009; Sperling, 2007).

• Privilege – The unearned advantages, immunities, and entitlements that some groups or individuals have over others, which impact economics, power, and opportunity. Privilege varies with time, place, and cultural contexts (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Endres & Gould, 2011; Niehuis, 2005; Rose & Paisley, 2012).

• Race – A social construct that groups people based on skin color, but without any credible basis in biology (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Philipsen, 2003; Tatum, 1992).

• Service-learning (S-L) – The definition of service-learning is debated among researchers and practitioners, and includes various manifestations ranging from co-curricular volunteerism to service directly tied to the academic curriculum (Billig, 2003). For the purposes of this study, service-learning is defined as a mode of experiential education in which community service is linked with curricular or co-curricular learning objectives. Reciprocity and reflection are key components to effective service-learning (Einfeld & Collins, 2008; Endres & Gould, 2009; Jacoby, 1996; Speck & Hoppe, 2004).

These definitions, along with the entire introductory chapter provide the background for a better understanding of the following chapters – the review of the literature and the explanation of proposed research methods.

**Delimitations**

The University’s racial history and current racial climate provided a particularly poignant backdrop for the examination of student perceptions of race and privilege when conducting service-learning. Since this is the only institution that was included in the study, the participants
shared a common context of the University of Mississippi and its history and climate. University of Mississippi students are 76% White and 15% Black, with a slight trend downward of minority student enrollment in general and Black student more specifically since 2010 (University of Mississippi, 2013b).

The selection of service-learning class site of the Mississippi Delta limited the courses that could be included in the study. The service-learning classes included in the study crossed academic disciplines, had different professors, and contained students of different classifications and majors. Given the multiple variables in the proposed study groups, it seemed worthwhile to have at least one commonality – the location of the service. For this study, that also translated into a high likelihood that the service-learning students would be working with underserved, minority populations given the demographics of the Mississippi Delta region, which included a populace that is 60.3% African American and an average of 31.7% below the poverty threshold (Delta Center for Culture and Learning, 2014; Eckes, 2005). For the purposes of this study, the Mississippi Delta was defined as an 18-county region in east Mississippi as identified by the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area Partnership and designated by the United States Congress, and includes the following counties: Bolivar, Carroll, Coahoma, DeSoto, Holmes, Humphreys, Issaquena, Leflore, Panola, Quitman, Sharkey, Sunflower, Tallahatchie, Tate, Tunica, Warren, Washington and Yazoo (Delta Center for Culture and Learning, 2014). These counties are regional neighbors to Lafayette County, where the University of Mississippi is located, with Panola County being directly adjacent.

These two delimitations paired two “communities” with both important similarities and differences. Those serving and those being served were fellow Mississippians (at least temporarily while studying at the University of Mississippi), so in theory, the students and
community members had some similar characteristics, but had broad racial and socioeconomic differences. The linkage of these two groups allowed focus on race and privilege without significant consideration of additional layers of cultural diversity, such as language or national origin, which might have existed with a service-learning class in an urban domestic setting or abroad. A skewed power and privilege differential existed between these two segments of the populace, which provided the students with an opportunity to reflect (or not) on that dynamic.

**Limitations**

This study had four primary limitations. The first limitation involved a possible difference in attitude between participating and non-participating students. The students agreeing to participate in the study may have had a broader perspective and been more interested in the exploration of racial attitudes and privilege than those who opt out of participation. This might have skewed the results of both the quantitative and qualitative portions by self-selection of students who are already more comfortable talking about race and privilege.

Second, social desirability may have skewed the results of the study. Prior research has proposed that students may give responses that they believe to be socially appropriate rather than responses that are actually reflective of their beliefs and attitudes (Bell, Horn, & Roxas, 2007; Constantine and Ladany as cited in Gushue & Constantine, 2007; Simons et al, 2011). This factor was a concern in the selection of the instrument to be used in the pre- and post-tests. A student completing a survey with a charged title, such as the Modern Racism Scale, might have been particularly self-conscious about their answers for fear of being identified as racist by the instrument. Thus, the CoBRAS was used, which both captured the necessary data and may have minimized the potential stigma associated with the results.
The participant group’s gender breakdown could have skewed the results. Some research has proposed that women are less likely than men to demonstrate blatantly racist attitudes, perhaps in part because of their own experience with gender discrimination (Carter, 1990; Pope-Davis & Ottavi, 1994). This differentiation between male and female students’ attitudes may have distorted the results given that the students in the classes were predominantly female.

Finally, common method biases could have impacted the results. This phenomenon consists of inherent errors or flaws in data collection methods or instruments that may alter results of the study (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). This limitation was minimized by triangulation, specifically the use of mixed methods in implementing the study.

**Organization of the Document**

The following four chapters, the literature review, methods, research findings, and discussion, provide an overview of the research study, its findings, and the conclusions that can be drawn from this study. The literature review is a summation of relevant existing literature focusing on three particular areas: 1) experiential education and service-learning, 2) intercultural competence as a factor in higher education and as an outcome of service-learning, and 3) trends and developments in service-learning research. This literature review was intended to provide the reader with an overview of the pedagogy, outcomes, challenges, benefits, and research models of service-learning, and its contribution to students perceptions of race and privilege. The methods section describes the specific design of the proposed study, including information about the methodology, site, participants, role of the researcher, ethical considerations, biases and assumptions. The research findings section provides detailed accounting of the qualitative and quantitative data collection, including narrative participant profiles and a description of the analytical themes that emerged from the data. The discussion section describes the findings in
the context of existing literature and theory, and also provides recommendations for practice and strategies for implementation. The results help to understand how students process issues of race and privilege prior to, during, and after participating in service-learning in the Mississippi Delta and how intercultural competence might be impacted among students who participate in short-term service learning in the Mississippi Delta.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review lays the foundation for the proposed study examining service learning and intercultural competence with a focus on race and privilege. Journal articles, books, websites, and other sources have been compiled and synthesized to help establish the current body of knowledge in the areas of experiential education and service-learning, intercultural competence outcomes and challenges, and recent trends and best practices in service-learning research. This review of literature is presented in the following order. First, articles and texts that provide background information on the pedagogy, theoretical frameworks, benefits and criticisms, and relevant student outcomes of experiential education and service-learning are presented. Second, the student outcome of intercultural competence is more closely examined, with particular attention to student perceptions of race and privilege and societal factors that present challenges to such. Finally, trends and best practices in service-learning research methods and future research needs will be explored. These three sections will lay the groundwork for the study of how college students process notions of race and privilege before and after participating in service-learning.

Experiential Education and Service-Learning

Experiential education is a dynamic mode of instruction that allows students to learn through hands-on, interactive activities that help them connect academic knowledge with contextual experience (Eyler, 2009; Rose & Paisley, 2012; Kolb, 1984). The Association for Experiential Education (2013) has defined experiential education as “a philosophy that informs
many methodologies in which educators purposefully engage with learners in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills, clarify values, and develop people’s capacity to contribute to their communities” (para. 2). This mode of instruction incorporates a combination of senses, emotions, physical activity, and cognitive challenges, thus is a holistic approach to education (Carver, 1996). Students, however, are not the only beneficiaries in this process. Experiential education is reciprocal, giving the instructor and the community the opportunity to learn from the group and the experience (Carver, 1996). In an ideal setting, the student, instructor, and community all benefit from experiential education. Various types of experiential education are used in higher education, including internships, practica, outdoor education, and service-learning (Bringle & Hatcher, 2009; Eyler, 2009; Rose & Paisley, 2012).

Successful experiential education must be thoughtfully implemented. Carver (1996) outlined four pedagogical principles that contribute to successful experiential education: 1) authenticity, 2) active learning, 3) drawing on student experience, and 4) providing mechanisms for connecting experience to future experience (p. 152). Experiential education is a learner-centered methodology, empowering students to take responsibility and become a resource for their own learning, and is considered a more democratic process than expert-centered education (Benson, Harkavy, & Puckett, 2007; Carter, 1996; Saltmarsh, 2008; Shellman, 2014).

Regardless of the academic discipline, experiential education should be designed to foster positive interracial and intercultural experiences for all participants. Often, the students who chose to participate in explicitly intercultural experiential education already have some interest in and awareness of cultural variables, but even classes outside of the social sciences become imbibed with issues of race and privilege when the service work is conducted in a predominantly
minority, underserved region like the Mississippi Delta. The challenge is to engage students, who might be more sheltered or from a homogenous community, in positive interracial experiences. Those students might feel uncomfortable when discussing racial issues and tend to self-segregate; therefore, experiential education programs “must address potential fear, tension, continued avoidance, and other relational difficulties” in dealing with people from a different racial or ethnic group (Lewis, Neville, & Spanierman, 2008, p. 866).

**Theoretical foundations.** Experiential education has a theoretical underpinning in both education and psychology, with scholars such as Dewey (1938), Freire (1974, 2000), Boyer (1990), and Kolb (1984) who played key roles in its foundations (Mackenzie, Son, & Hollenhorst, 2014). The following provides a brief summary of those scholars’ philosophies of education as they pertain to experiential education and service-learning.

The philosophy of John Dewey (American, 1859-1952) is often evoked when discussing service-learning. His educational philosophy, which linked education with the ideals of democracy, provided a foundation for service-learning as a route to civic engagement, social responsibility, and a democratic society. When students do not participate in the whole of society, they develop a lack of interest and concern for the “other” – people who are not exactly like themselves. Dewey suggested that the result is a lack of effective responsibility (Saltmarsh, 2008). His work informed the notion of service-learning as a tool to strengthen democratic society.

Dewey considered education a social process, thus engagement within the class and outside of the class were considered equally important (Dewey, 1932). Experience, Dewey contended, is a function of the external environment and an individual’s internal perception and understanding of the current circumstances (Dewey, 1938). Understanding that experiences are
complex, Dewey considered “that one of the purposes of reflection is to be conscious of the layers of cultures weaved in the observations” (Miettinen, 2000). Learning takes place as an individual is able to transfer knowledge from one set of circumstances to a new situation in a meaningful way (Dewey, 1938; Scöhn, 1995). Transfer of knowledge is one of the goals of service-learning, and Dewey identified that it is achievable through experiential education. Dewey laid the foundation for experiential education and service-learning processes, and future educators built upon his philosophy.

Paulo Freire (Brazilian, 1921-1997) contributed to experiential education and service-learning with his explorations in multicultural education and theories of critical pedagogy, and most importantly, the publication of *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which addressed the idea of education as a means to liberation and examined the interrelationship among teacher, student, and society as a whole (Freire, 2000). His theory of education was concerned with the development of civic responsibility and a sense of social justice in education. His work also relates closely to the educational movement of critical pedagogy, which supports educators urging their student towards exploring the notions of citizenship and democracy (Giroux, 2010). Freire’s work emphasized the place of social justice and reciprocity in service-learning (Endres & Gould, 2009). He felt that the development of a political consciousness was a critical part of an education (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Freire’s philosophy focused on experiential education as a means to social justice.

Ernest Boyer (American, 1928-1995), a prominent American education scholar, developed the notion of the scholarship of engagement proposing that scholarship extended beyond research to include the integration and application of knowledge (O’Brien, 2009). Boyer also advocated for higher education’s civic mandate and stated that the scholarship of
engagement “creates a climate in which the academic and civic cultures communicate more continuously with each other…enriching the quality of life for us all” (as cited in Saltmarsh, Giles, Ward, & Buglione, 2009, p. 27). In terms of practice, Boyer identified four realms of engaged scholarship – the scholarships of discovery, integration, teaching, and application (Boyer, 1990). He stressed the importance of community involvement in scholarly activities and the creation of knowledge, and maintained that this engaged scholarship should be as valued as traditional research (Boyer, 1987; 1990).

The work of David Kolb (American, 1939- ) contributed to the pedagogy of experiential education, and his theory of transformational learning strongly informs service-learning specifically. Kolb’s reflection cycle is widely accepted as a key component of successful implementation of this pedagogy (Molee, Henry, Sessa, & McKinney-Prupis, 2010). Kolb proposed that a student first have an experience, then move to reflective observation, then abstract conceptualization, and finally active experimentation making use of the prior stages to reevaluate and rework the best approach to the initial experience (Atkinson & Murrell, 1988; Eyler, 2009; Kolb, 1984; Philipsen, 2003). This process enhances critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which are important components of higher education.

Kolb is considered by many to be the father of experiential learning theory, but he is not without his critics. Some researchers are dismissive of Kolb’s theories and his book *Experiential Learning* as a marketing promotion for the Learning Styles Inventory (LSI), a much criticized instrument developed in the 1960s for assessing experiential learning and the learning cycle model (Bergsteiner, Avery, & Neumann, 2010; Miettinen, 2000). Kolb relied heavily on the work of John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, and Jean Piaget to support his own four-stage model of experiential learning (Miettinen, 2000). While some detractors are critical of the originality of
and motivation for developing the learning cycle and the accompanying text, in general, Kolb’s work is widely accepted as an important foundation for experiential education.

Service-learning researchers have proposed that theoretical frameworks from other fields are appropriate in the study of service learning, such as psychology, anthropology, political science, and sociology, especially as they relate to the particular phenomenon being examined (Billig, 2003). In examining race and privilege, along with intercultural competence, theories addressing both racial understanding and student development informed this study, including Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings, 1998, 2005, 2007), Color-blind Ideology (Neville et al., 2000; Sue, 1999, 2001, 2013), Intercultural Competence (Deardorff, 2011; Deardorff & Edwards, 2013), and Perry’s Theory of Intellectual and Ethical Development (Perry, 1970).

**Service-learning.** Service-learning is a particular form of experiential education that is an amalgamation of academic study and community engagement. O’Brien (2008) defined service-learning as credit-bearing experiential learning in which students’ texts are their experiences as they engage with their communities. Well-designed service-learning experiences typically incorporate clear academic learning goals, reciprocity with the community, and a reflection component. Jacoby (1996; 2014) advised that the following four important stages of service-learning lead to effective service learning: 1) preparation, 2) service, 3) reflection, and 4) celebration, often including both those providing the service and those receiving it. Furco and Root (2010), however, are prudent to point out that the quality of all service learning courses is not equal.

The purpose of this instructional method is to address community needs while guiding students through structured experiences designed to promote learning and psychosocial development (Einfield & Collins, 2008; Jacoby, 1996; Speck & Hoppe, 2004). Effective practice
includes participation in a structured service activity that addresses community needs and reflection on the service activity that increases student understanding of the course material, gives students a broader understanding of the discipline, and enhances the students’ sense of civic responsibility and personal values (Hatcher & Erasmus, 2008; Simons & Cleary, 2005; Steinke & Buress, 2002). Service-learning courses often involve students working with a community partner to provide a service, and through that service, the students gain an increased understanding of academic content. Involving the community in the planning and implementation of the service is important, and helps foster mutual trust, respect, and reciprocity. The reflection component allows students (and faculty) to unpack the service experience and consider the implication for both themselves and the community served (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Fitch, Steinke, & Hudson, 2013; Westrick, 2004). Also, the students’ own developmental readiness for experiential learning, and service-learning in particular, is an important part of its success as an instructional method (Jones, 2002).

Student outcomes of service-learning include increased critical thinking skills, career confirmation, multicultural competence, and enhanced problem-solving abilities among many others (Fitch, Steinke, & Hudson, 2013; Steinke & Buress, 2002). Research shows that the pairing of academic instruction and service-learning, particularly international service-learning, can enhance intercultural competence in college students (Deardorff & Edwards, 2013; Hayward & Charrette, 2012). Additionally, research indicates that service-learning can reduce stereotypes, increase tolerance for diversity, and improve cultural understanding (Einfeld & Collins, 2008; Philipsen, 2003; Simons & Cleary, 2005). The following sections address the integration of service and learning, the idea of reciprocity, and the importance of reflection.

*Service and learning.* Cognitive scientists, like Dewey, believed that “the most powerful
learning takes place when situated in complex contexts” (Eyler & Giles, 1999, p. 91). Service-learning is often praised for its incorporation of cognitive dissonance, which challenges students to reevaluate preconceived notions and unfounded assumptions that they may have never pondered. Cognitive dissonance during service experiences can lead to intellectual growth given that service-learning engages students on a more intense level than classroom instruction (Eyler, 2009). Jones (2002) specifically identified students’ “cognitive capacity, self-knowledge, and interpersonal maturity,” as well as the professors’ ability to “anticipate comments, understand where students are in their developmental process, and acknowledge complex issues” as key components for service-learning to be of benefit to all involved (p. 15).

Service-learning is inherently interdisciplinary, obliging students to use various skills and problem-solving mechanisms, which can enhance learning transfer and retention (Eyler, 2009; Mackenzie, Son, & Hollenhorst, 2014). This type of learning reinforces a current theory of seamless learning, which submits that the organizational divisions found in higher education do not exist in real life, supporting both Boyer and Dewey’s commitment to the relationship between what students learn and how they live (Boyer, 1987; Kezar & Rhoads, 2001). Some consider service-learning a transformational type of learning, where an individual struggles to solve a problem, and through that struggle questions the problem itself and the contributing factors involved (Clayton, P. H., Bringle, R. G., Senor, B., Huq, J., & Morrison, M., 2010; Eyler & Giles, 1999). An example of this type of learning might occur when a student is tutoring in an underserved school as part of a service-learning class. While the student is addressing an immediate need of tutoring, the transformational learning takes place as the student assesses why the child is lagging behind in his reading skills and why the school itself is unable to provide additional support for the students and teachers.
Another observation of learning outside the classroom was presented by Moore (1981) and described establishing, accomplishing, and processing as the three phases during which experiential learning takes place. Establishing entails the gathering of information about what the task is, what it requires, and how it will be assessed. Accomplishing refers to how the student uses information, materials, and people to produce the desired results. Processing, similar to reflection in Kolb’s model, allows the students to get feedback on their performance, contemplate the process, and reexamine their experience (Moore, 1981).

The instructor and his or her values become part of the experiential education process (Rose & Paisley, 2012), so an awareness of whether they correspond to those of the students and those being served is important in creating a respectful and supportive experience for all. Dewey (1938) stated that experience does not exist in a vacuum, but rather has context, and it is important for instructors to be aware that the notion of value-neutrality in experiential education does not actually exist (Rose & Paisley, 2012). The instructors must consider “whose values are being transmitted, who is being empowered, and who is being silenced” (Bowdridge & Blenkinsop, 2011 as cited in Rose & Paisley, 2012).

However, some educators perceive service-learning as awarding credit for volunteerism, which they soundly reject (Eby, 1998; Eyler, 2009). Eyler (2009) explained that the credit comes from the learning, and that the professor must be intentional about connecting the service to the course content, teach skills for integrating the experience into the curriculum, and monitor the experience to ensure that the student is processing the experience adequately. Two key elements critical to a well-designed service-learning course are mutuality and reflection. This is where the primary learning takes place.
**Mutuality and reciprocity.** Mutuality and reciprocity are important elements of successful service-learning. Mutuality is the notion of respectfully working with the partner rather than for them, whereas reciprocity refers to the mutually beneficial results of the service and the shared voice and power (Clayton et al., 2010; Green, 2003). Students apply their knowledge to a community problem, but at the same time, they should be learning from the community itself.

Different course designs and educational philosophies create different relationships between institutions of higher education and the community, or on an interpersonal level, between service-learning students and community members. An expert-centered framework for engagement is one in which the university is the problem solver, as opposed to the democratic-centered framework where reciprocity and mutuality are key (Clanton et al., 2010; Miron & Moely, 2006; Saltmarsh, 2008). Mutuality and reciprocity support service outcomes that are collaborative and mutually respectfully, as opposed to imposed outcomes, which reinforce inequities (Endres & Gould, 2009; Espino & Lee, 2011; Freire, 2000). Researchers have stressed the importance of designing programs that incorporate community-identified objectives to avoid exploitation of communities in the name of multicultural education (Cipolle, 2004; Sperling, 2007). Both the university and the community partner should be involved in all aspects of the service project in order for mutuality to exist (Kezar & Rhoads, 2014; Miron & Moely, 2006). Working with the community to determine needs is a matter of good practice, shared ownership, and a means for students to develop interpersonal skills (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Green, 2003).

**Reflection.** One of the key elements to successful service-learning experiences is that of reflection. Reflection is considered an important part of processing the newfound knowledge, in Dewey’s model (Dewey, 1938). Dewey considered non-reflective experience driven by habit,
whereas, in reflective experience, one examines the habitual process for insufficiencies and flaws, and establishes a new and improved way of doing things (Miettinen, 2000).

Reflection provides students with the opportunity to connect theory with practice (Philipsen, 2003). Students are guided through the process of connecting the concrete and the abstract. Through this continued process, they meld action and thought, thus are able to learn from their experience and modify their method and approach prior to the next encounter (Eyler, 2009). The four-stage experiential learning cycle, in which students move from experience to reflection to assessment, and back to a new effort at experience, is the foundation for reflection in service-learning (Kolb, 1984; Shellman, 2014). David Kolb (1984) has been credited with developing this process, although his process was built upon the theoretical foundations of Dewey (1938) and, in turn, many service-learning practitioners and researchers have built upon Kolb’s work (Eyler, 2009).

While formal reflection is considered a critical element of a well-designed experiential or service-learning experience, reflection happens spontaneously as well. Scöhn (1995) referred to this as reflection-in-action, where surprise triggers reflection as to what just happened and how. According to Eyler (2009), reflection should be continuous, and often is, even if informally. Reflection is the primary source of transformational learning within service-learning and is what distinguishes this educational process from volunteerism.

**Student outcomes in experiential education and service-learning.** Beneficial outcomes and criticisms exist with any given pedagogical practice. Several positive outcomes for students have been revealed by service-learning research with varying levels of certitude. Among the student outcomes identified by research are academic advancement, leadership capacity, self-esteem, career confirmation, critical thinking skills, increased civic engagement, improved
transition to the workplace, and increased intercultural competence (Eyler, 2009; Furco & Root, 2010; Goldberg & Coufal, 2009; Kezar & Rhoads, 2014; Miron & Moely, 2006; Nokes, Nickitas, Keida, & Neville, 2005). Intercultural competence, enhanced diversity awareness, self-awareness, and an increased sense of empathy for others are identified as characteristics impacted by service-learning (Espino & Lee, 2011; Goldberg & Coufal, 2009; Simons & Cleary, 2006; Stavrianopoulos, 2008). Much attention has been given to the benefits of experiential education, yet many scholars argue that there is little empirical support for the effectiveness of experiential learning (Mackenzie et al., 2014).

While there is evidence supporting the benefit of service-learning to psychosocial development of students, conflicting views exist as to the role of the academy in personal development. Often, personal and intellectual development are kept very separate in higher education, with academic affairs and student affairs each responsible for each arena, respectively. One school of thought is that knowledge development is the purview of academic affairs and psychosocial development is the responsibility of student affairs (Stanton, 1990). Perry (1970) contended, however, that the two areas of development are integral to one other, and that advanced levels of thinking in one area enhances the other. The disputed role of student development in higher education is just one of the points of contention surrounding service-learning. Others include the notion of volunteerism for credit, inappropriate political influence, and a paternalistic leaning with regard to power and privilege. The literature addressing selected outcomes and criticisms with particular relevance to the proposed study is reviewed below.

**Academic advancement.** Research indicated that, in addition to exposing students to real-world applications of their field of study, experiential education can “lead to more powerful academic learning and help students achieve intellectual goals associated with liberal education”
(Eyler, 2009, p. 26). While students often believe that their academic learning outcomes improve with learning in a real-world context, there is little empirical evidence that students’ academic outcomes improve with the use of service-learning (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Most means of assessment for the cognitive outcomes of service-learning are either course grades based on traditional assessments such as tests or student self-reporting in reflection papers, neither of which is a dependable method for determining the impact of service-learning on academic achievement, specifically (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Although students feel like they have learned more in service-learning classes than in the classroom, any specific academic gains are very difficult to measure.

Critical thinking and problem-solving skills, however, are shown to improve with service-learning (Goldberg & Coufal, 2009; Kezar & Rhoads, 2001). Students have the opportunity to experience a dilemma, evaluate the various layers of the scenario, implement a solution, reflect on the outcome, and then modify their solution to try to better deal with the situation. This process is based on the Kolb cycle, and it helps the students in dealing with new situations, rather than simple textbook examples of the use of knowledge (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Kolb, 1984). Context adds levels of complexity to a social issue or cultural dilemma, so students have to evaluate the various layers of information when putting their classroom knowledge into action.

Active learning, rather than passive learning, is a benefit of all types of experiential education. Higher-order thinking occurs when students can connect abstract concepts to real-world scenarios, and this phenomenon occurs more readily in experiential education than in most classroom instruction (Carver, 1996; Dewey, 1938; Miettinen, 2000). An additional benefit of off-campus academic experiences, considered by Kuh (2008, 2013) to be high-impact practices,
is increased retention and a higher graduation rate (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996).

**Citizenship and civic engagement.** “Democratic literacy is a literacy of doing, not simply of knowing” (Morrill, 1982, p. 365). Experiential education prompts students to participate in society, rather than just sitting on the sidelines (Eyler, 2009). Ideally, this engagement will continue into civic life once the student has graduated. Many colleges and universities also seek to challenge students’ insularity, and work toward cultivating more socially responsible graduates (Stanton, 1990). Experiential education may enhance civic engagement, but the responsibility of the academy to foster good citizenship is not without its critics.

While most faculty may agree that community service is a positive contribution to student development, many faculty are unconvinced that it has a legitimate place in academic programs (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Furco & Root, 2010; Vogelgesang & Astin, 2000). Some university faculty, administrators, and educational theorists are dismissive, at best, of the role of service-learning in higher education. Fish (2005) referred to community service as an honorable activity that is in no way an educational activity for which students should earn academic credit. He and others proposed that teaching the ideals of ethics, morality, and citizenship can, and should, be taught in the context of, perhaps, a philosophy course, and that the university is not the place to instill specific moral or civic values (Egger, 2008; Fish, 2005; Furco & Root, 2010).

**Social justice.** Service-learning experiences range from exposure to engagement, with the former often resulting from short-term programs based on a charitable model, whereas more intense programs based on a social justice model are more likely to result in an understanding of societal elements that contribute to the challenges faced by those in underserved communities (Levinson, 1990; Tryon, Stoecker, Martin, Seblonka, Hilgendorf, and Nellis, 2008). Speck and Hoppe (2004) described three approaches to service-learning. Communitarian and philanthropic
models focus on a need to give back to the community and provide for those less fortunate; whereas the civic model encourages a focus on social justice and long-term structural changes in the community, rather than serving an immediate need. Einfeld and Collins (2008) also described the difference in charitable and social justice models and examined how effective service-learning programs should focus on the social justice aspect of the experience – addressing systemic changes rather than just meeting immediate needs, thus reinforcing Freire’s philosophy of critical pedagogy (Freire, 2000). Experiential programs that move students from guilt and sympathy to empathy and an understanding of the social dynamics of power, poverty, and racism seem to produce the most permanent impacts on students attitudes toward race and privilege (Levinson, 1990; Simons et al., 2011). The social justice model of service-learning appears to provide a more meaningful, transformative, and equitable experience for both the students and the community.

Service-learning that hinges on social justice makes some faculty, students, and administrators uncomfortable because it involves advancing a particular point of view. As Eyler and Giles pointed out, “it is political, and politics is about competing interests and controversy” (1999, p. 131). Egger argued that what some institutions consider character building, part of the mission of higher education, is actually the promotion of a specific political ideology, socialism specifically (2008). Of course, Freire would applaud the intersection of politics and higher education, so supporters of his philosophy would not be troubled by this connection (Freire, 1974). Service-learning is not a perfect pedagogy, but it is powerful and a potentially worthwhile mechanism for fostering certain student outcomes, including intercultural competence, which will be more closely examined because of its role in this study.
**Intercultural competence.** Cultural awareness, enhanced diversity awareness, and self-awareness are a few of the areas in which students evolve during the college years, and there is research suggesting that participation in service-learning programs can advance these qualities (Stavrianopoulos, 2008). The studies, both quantitative and qualitative, show a correlation between service-learning and benefits to the students. The research indicates that personal development, especially that which involves cultural awareness and tolerance, is one of the strongest areas enhanced by the participation in a service-learning program (Baldwin, Buchanan, & Rudisill, 2007; Desmond, Stahl, & Graham, 2011).

Many of the models applied to service-learning begin with the stage of self-awareness. The knowledge gained through education allows students to recognize their place in the world, as well as to distinguish between themselves and those with fewer opportunities and resources (Giroux, 2010). Additionally, a group of researchers examined White students from relatively privileged backgrounds to learn how they process racial and socioeconomic disparities in a service-learning environment (Dunlap, Scoggin, Green, & Davi, 2007). The awareness of racial identity development, specifically the notion of Whiteness and White privilege, of students participating in service-learning courses is an important contributor to the impact the course will have on their development (Lewis, 2004; Wong, 2008).

Although enhanced intercultural competence is often an outcome of service-learning, some would argue that service-learning can reinforce stereotypes, validate deficit theory, and buttress power, privilege, and racial superiority (Desmond, Stahl, & Graham, 2011; Eby as cited in Egger, 2008; Endres & Gould, 2009; Gushue & Constantine, 2007; Jones, 2002). If not well-designed, service-learning courses focusing on diversity can become a “tourist experience rather than a place for serious critical inquiry” (Kandaswamy, 2007, p. 7). Service-learning courses that
are more student- or university-focused rather than community-driven can foster paternalism instead of mutuality and reciprocity (Eby as cited in Egger, 2008). Additionally, some educators argue that experiential education is a pedagogy of privilege, serving to transmit traditional White values, maintain the status quo, and reinforce existing power dynamics between racial groups (Mitchell, Donahue, & Young-Law, 2012; Rose & Paisley, 2012). Privileged students have the luxury to appreciate the challenges of experiential education, such as being out of their element culturally, linguistically, or socially, because unlike marginalized individuals, their daily life is not burdened with societal inequalities that are themselves experiencing (Rose & Paisley, 2012). In examining their outdoor education class at the University of Utah, Rose and Paisley (2012) explained that “creating scenarios with contrived challenges in conjunction with existing oppressive structural systems may produce situations that are inappropriately and injuriously challenging” (p. 145). Clearly, instructors need to be aware of the differences in how White and Black students may process various aspects of experiential education, as well as the differences in students’ and community members’ experiences of the service.

Using service-learning to advance an appreciation for diversity in higher education and to enhance multicultural experiences for students can be a positive outcome for all involved. It must, however, be undertaken with the potential challenges in mind. The next section more comprehensively addresses intercultural competence as an outcome of service-learning and contemporary dynamics of race and privilege that may deter student development in that area.

**Intercultural Competence**

As the world becomes more globalized, and the United States itself becomes more diverse, students’ development of intercultural competence (also called cultural or multicultural competence) has increasing importance. Intercultural competence is the process of becoming
aware, knowledgeable, and skillful in interacting with people from different cultures (Chen, McAdams-Jones, Tay, & Packer, 2012; Colvin-Burque, Davis-Maye, & Zugazaga, 2007; Deardorff, 2011; Purnell, 2005). Many educators and administrators romanticize the notion of diversity, equating an ethnically diverse student population with progress toward social justice, but diversity alone is a static achievement that needs an active component to make it powerful (Harper, 2012; Loya, 2011; Rose & Paisley, 2012). Often diversity or multiculturalism education focuses on learning about minorities, but this strategy does not lead to intercultural competence and reinforces the notion of White as normative (Loya, 2011; Mitchell, Donahue, & Young-Law, 2012). In addition to understanding other cultures, self-awareness is a critical component of true cultural responsiveness, and intercultural competence (Loya, 2011). Students in higher education have a unique opportunity to engage in instruction that has intercultural competence as one of its learning objectives, thus giving them important tools for successfully navigating increased globalization. There are challenges, however, to achieving intercultural competence. At the individual level, “biases, prejudices, and misinformation manifested via discrimination” serve as impediments to intercultural competence (Sue, 2001, p. 802). At the organizational and societal levels, challenges such as monoculturalism and a bias reading of history serve to limit interculturalism (Espino & Lee, 2011; Sue, 2001).

Deardorff (2011) identified four attributes to intercultural competence: 1) ongoing process, 2) critical thinking, 3) respect, openness, and curiosity, and 4) the ability to appreciate multiple perspectives. She also emphasized the need for an experiential component to intercultural learning, which makes the learning more dynamic and transformational (Deardorff, 2011). Sue (1999) offered four principles in working toward intercultural competence: 1) explore the topic from many sources and fact check the information, 2) interact with healthy and strong
people from different cultures, 3) combine factual information with experiential knowledge, and 4) be vigilant in observing the world, and the self, for bias. This section examines the literature describing models related to intercultural competence, as well as contemporary dynamics regarding race and privilege that impact the development of intercultural competence, including modern racism, colorblind racial attitudes, deficit theory, White privilege, and resistance to intercultural competence.

**Models of intercultural competence.** Several theoretical models exist for the development of intercultural competence. Bennett’s Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (1993) and King and Baxter Magolda’s Intercultural Maturity Model (2005) are two frameworks that are based on development and growth (as cited in Deardorff, 2011). Another framework is the Purnell Model, which examines consciousness of culture (Purnell, 2005). Moving through the four ranges of competence, an individual is “unconsciously incompetent” if he is unaware that he is lacking knowledge about another culture. A person is “consciously incompetent” if they are aware that they lack that knowledge. They are “consciously competent” if they are learning about another culture. Finally, people are considered “unconsciously competent” if they automatically interact with cultural sensitivity (Hayward & Charrette, 2012; Purnell, 2005).

Hayward and Charrette (2012) cited a blended model of theory, which incorporated the Purnell Model for Cultural Competence and the theory of Campinha-Bacote into a research project. Both theories emphasize that cultural competence is the continual process of learning about other cultures, rather than an endpoint (Purnell, 2005). The initial phase of this blended model is cultural desire, which is an interest in understanding people different from oneself. The second phase is cultural awareness, which involves the recognition that there are many levels of
difference and similarity in people of various cultures. The third phase, cultural knowledge, consists of educating oneself about the beliefs, values, customs, arts, and behavioral patterns of those from other cultures. Cultural encounter is the fourth phase, during which an individual actually engages those from other cultures and learns from them directly. The final phase is cultural skill, during which an individual learns how to successfully interact with and engage people and communities that are culturally diverse (Chen, McAdams-Jones, Tay, & Packer, 2012; Hayward & Charrette, 2012).

Some contradictions exist within the notion of cultural competence that must be examined. The first contradiction is that of “knowing about” a culture. Johnson and Munch (2009) intimated that “instead of adopting a position of knowing about the client, modern social work practice stresses learning from the client,” and they acknowledged the importance of the individual’s personal story to fully understand his or her needs (p. 223). Descriptions of the attributes of a particular culture may simply not be accurate or may only be one factor in the composition of the client’s identity. This notion leads to the second contradiction which considers collective identities – observing both the similarities and differences between cultures, and the acknowledgement that there are many layers of diversity, or intersectionality, in any given individual (Johnson & Munch, 2009). The third contradiction examined by Johnson and Munch (2009) is that of group rights – sensitivity to (but not necessarily acceptance of) the practices of diverse cultures while respecting the notions of self-determination and individual worth and dignity. The final contradiction noted is the idea of intercultural competence being achievable. Intercultural competence is an ongoing process rather than a final objective (Deardorff, 2011; Johnson & Munch, 2009). Students will not become experts in a culture to
which they do not belong, but they can become sensitive and skillful in their interactions with other cultures.

**Contemporary dynamics regarding race and privilege.** While theory helps in understanding intercultural competence in the abstract, real-world dynamics bring to light more tangible behaviors and attitudes that may be obstacles to intercultural competence. The societal framework that allocates oppression to some and privilege to others, often along racial lines, affects both White and Black Americans. Developing intercultural competence and an awareness of the impact of race and privilege is often challenging. Below is a brief overview of some of the more common impediments to becoming an interculturally competent individual.

**Modern racism.** Post-Civil Rights Era racism is vastly different than racism of earlier times. Given that many racist aspects of Jim Crow America are now illegal, one would think that racism would disappear. Unfortunately, this is far from reality. Both individual and systemic racism exist today, and while people seem to be able to clearly identify individual racism, systemic racism is more challenging to detect and, yet, more pervasive and probably more oppressive in the long run. A term coined by McConahay (1986), modern racism is the combination of factors that perpetuate racism in contemporary society. McConahay described underlying assumptions of modern racism as follows: 1) discrimination is a thing of the past, 2) Blacks are too aggressive in their pursuit of parity and privileges, 3) unfair strategies are used by Blacks to gain access to entitlements and privileges, and 4) recent societal gains by Blacks are unwarranted (as cited in Awad, Cokley, & Ravitch, 2005).

**Color-Blind Racial Attitudes.** On initial reading, color-blind racial attitudes may sound like an admirable goal. It implies that all people are and should be treated equally, and that race should not matter (Neville et al., 2000). The challenge in the United States (and other regions,
but this study will focus on American college students and their attitudes) is that the construct of race does not exist in a vacuum. The historical, social, and cultural context of race and race relations greatly influence the perception of race, thus a color-blind society is not viable as long as systemic and institutional racial disparities exist (Awad et al., 2005; Gushue & Constantine, 2007; Wise, 2010). Awad et al. (2005) cite the history of “slavery, internment camps, and Jim Crow laws, combined with the realities of racial profiling and racial disparities in education, incarceration, poverty, and wealth” as evidence that race does, in fact, matter (p. 1387). Not only is a color-blind racial attitude impractical, but it actually serves to perpetuate racism by reinforcing majority dominance and minority marginalization (Loya, 2011; Plaut et al., 2009).

Unfortunately, the notion of treating everyone the same typically translates into treating everyone as though they are White, again positioned as the normative standards (Gushue & Constantine, 2007). Color-blind racial attitudes do differ from explicit racial prejudice in that they often are derived from an “inaccurate or distorted view of race relations and racial and ethnic minorities, rather than harboring a deep-seated racial prejudice” (Awad, 2005, p. 1396). The negative consequences of color-blindness, however, are just as impactful. Viewing racism only as overt, extreme acts allows individuals to distance themselves from and minimize the problem, convinced that it is simply a few extreme individuals perpetuating racism (Harper, 2012; Katz & Torres, 1983; Loya, 2011). The minimization of racism serves to further disenfranchise Black Americans and absolve White Americans of the onus of perpetuating racism (Harper, 2012; Katz & Torres, 1983; Loya, 2011). Delgado argued that Whites use color-blind racism to explicate racial differences, which absolves them of responsibility for racism (as cited in Harper, 2012).
Two primary tracks to color-blind racial attitudes exist: 1) color-evasion, where individuals emphasize similarities among all people, thus denying that society values whiteness over other races, and 2) power-evasion, under which individuals believe that everyone has the same opportunities for success (i.e. society as a meritocracy), thus failure is solely the fault of the individual (i.e. victim-blaming) (Frankenberg, 1993). Neville et al. recommended further research exploring meaning and consequences of color-blind racial attitudes, specifically research that includes both quantitative and qualitative explorations (2000).

**Deficit theory.** Racial and ethnic differences are often couched in a deficit perspective, which makes having productive conversations about race challenging (Sue, 2001). Service-learning that is approached from a deficit model generally leads participants to believe that they can fix or “improve poor people,” rather than engaging them as partners (Philipsen, 2003, p. 238). While the explicit language of deficit theory is no longer typically used, the belief system is still in place (Ladson-Billings, 2007). Discussions of a “culture of poverty” undermines the actual economic, social, and political underpinnings of poverty (Ladson-Billings, 2007).

**White privilege.** White privilege is the unearned advantage that individuals and groups have because of their race and the status of that race in society (Awad et al., 2005; Green, 2003). While the notion of White privilege may seem abstract, there are tangible manifestations of White privilege in American society. These expressions of privilege include a higher salary, a greater net worth, ease of securing a loan for a home, financial investments, job security, and superior housing options (Awad et al., 2005). White privilege is not something necessarily sought by individuals, but rather is a byproduct of a racist society; however, its existence is perpetuated through color-blind racial attitudes and other aspects of modern racism (Awad et al., 2005; Green, 2003). Whiteness is a description of physical characteristic, but also describes
one’s position in society with regard to culture, power, and privilege (Mitchell, Donahue, & Young-Law, 2012; Rose & Paisley, 2012). White experiences are often regarded as the norm, mainstream, neutral, and pervasive, causing anything other than White experience to be deemed different and outside of the norm (Green, 2003; Katz & Torres, 1983; Loya, 2011; Rose & Paisley, 2012; Wong, 2008).

Another manifestation of White privilege is the sense of individualism that White people are afforded that populations of color are not. Personal identity hinges on three levels of identity: 1) individual, 2) group, and 3) universal (Sue, 2001). While Americans pride themselves on individualism, the reality for individuals from minority cultures is that they are often identified with their group (in this case race) rather than the individual or universal level. So where White people are first seen as individuals, African Americans are viewed first as a member of the Black race, and second as a unique individual (Katz & Torres, 1983; Sue, 2001). This factor becomes yet another manifestation of White privilege. Kivel proposed that White privilege might deflect society from naming the perpetrators of racism and discrimination (as as cited in Rose & Paisley, 2012). Teaching students about White privilege is challenging and can lead to a range of responses including guilt, defensiveness, denial, and resistance (Niehuis, 2005). More about resistance to both the notion of White privilege and racism in general is discussed below.

**Resistance.** Discussion of race, gender, sexual orientation, and disability are considered loaded topics because they “bring to light issues of oppression and the unpleasantness of personal bias” (Sue, 2001, p. 795). Even institutions of higher education promote “racial silence” and dismiss microaggressions, so as not to have to have disturbing dialogue about the realities of racism on their campuses (Harper, 2012, p. 15). Sue (2013) describes a “politeness protocol” that drives Americans to avoid public discussion of uncomfortable topics such as prejudice,
stereotyping and discrimination. The politeness protocol is likely even more prominent in the American South, where its racial history has been more violent, segregation more recent, and polite conversation is paramount. Tatum (1992) proposed three primary sources of student resistance to conversations about and exploration of race and racism – 1) race is considered an inappropriate topic for discussion, 2) students have been taught that American society is just and a meritocracy, so reject that discrimination could exist, and 3) Americans learn at an early age how to deal with discussions of race, and unfortunately, quite ineffectively. White children tend to avoid discussing racial differences, considering it a negative and inappropriate topic of conversation; whereas, African American children are urged to dismiss or trivialize the discrimination to which they are subjected (Atwater, 2007; Green, 2003; Tatum, 1992). Students, and often their educators, have greater discomfort in dealing with issues of race than other sociodemographic differences, such as gender, religion, or socioeconomic status (Sue, 2001). Harper (2012) listed a number of terms that are often used by education scholars to avoid the term “racist” to describe campus environments, including “hostile,” “marginalizing,” unwelcoming,” exclusionary,” and “antagonistic” (p. 20). If educators, scholars, and administrators cannot speak frankly about race, how will students learn to do so? The ability to discuss values, beliefs, and biases regarding race promotes cultural responsiveness that can help increase intercultural competence (Loya, 2011). Generally, resistance would be viewed as a negative, however, it can also be a sign of cognitive dissonance, thus a form of engagement given that the student is clearly being intellectually challenged (Espino & Lee, 2011; Kandaswamy, 2007). The reflection component of service-learning can provide a guided opportunity for students to enter into these challenging conversations.
Intercultural competence is one of the most important student outcomes of service-learning, thus it warrants much further examination in educational research. The next section examines service-learning research methods and the need for further research.

**Trends and Gaps in Service-Learning Research**

After extensive review of the literature on the study of service-learning, it is abundantly clear that mixed methods studies allow for depth and credibility that strictly qualitative or quantitative studies do not have. Some researchers maintain that service-learning pedagogy will be legitimized only with more rigorous experiments to reinforce the existing quasi-experimental studies, more correlational studies, examination of well-designed service-learning courses, replication of well-executed studies, and exploration of probable effects (Furco & Root, 2010; Simons & Cleary, 2005; Westrick, 2004). And yet because many of the most important outcomes are difficult to quantify, qualitative research will always have its place in service-learning research. The following section examines the literature exploring the use of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods research in the study of service-learning, as well as suggestions for future research.

**Qualitative methods.** As a fairly new pedagogical method, the study of service-learning is still under development. Service-learning data has previously been anecdotal, which the scholarly community has previously deemed excessively subjective and lacking validity and reliability (Billig & Waterman, 2003; Furco & Root, 2010; Westrick, 2004). Scholars and practitioners recognized the need for more reproducible and quantifiable studies, but also acknowledged the benefits of qualitative research in describing and understanding the impacts of service-learning on both students and the communities they serve. The report entitled “Research Agenda for Combining Service and Learning in the 1990s” (Giles, Honnet, & Migliore, 1991)
was pivotal to the study of service-learning in higher education. It began to document protocol for studying service learning and has helped to legitimize research of this pedagogy.

Given the role of reflexivity in qualitative studies, it is critical that the researcher be aware of positionalities and possible biases when conducting research on experiential learning and service-learning in particular (Creswell, 2003; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007; Patton, 2002). One researcher examined the role of privilege in his outdoor education course and reflected on how he viewed his personal and professional experiences only from the standpoint of his own race and socioeconomic status, assuming that they were normative and neutral (Rose & Paisley, 2012). Self-awareness regarding race and privilege must start with the researcher in order to conduct credible qualitative studies.

**Quantitative methods.** In an effort to legitimize service-learning research, quantitative methods are sometimes used, which have some actual strengths, but primarily are considered more “scientific,” thus providing perceived benefits when in actuality they often produce inconsistent results in service-learning research (Waterman, 2003, p. 73). Since this study is exploring intercultural competence as an outcome of service-learning, it is logical to consider existing instruments that evaluate that particular phenomenon. Several quantitative instruments are available for assessing the outcomes with regards to intercultural competence. The Cross Cultural Adaptability Inventory (CCAI) measures “emotional resilience, flexibility and openness, perceptual acuity, and personal autonomy” (Hayward & Charrette, 2012). Another instrument is the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire, which measures open-mindedness and characteristics that indicate ease of adaptation with other cultures (Fischer, 2011). Yet another instrument is the Inventory for Assessing the Process of Cultural Competence (IAPCC), which is a 20-item measurement of cultural competency focusing on the five constructs of cultural desire,
cultural awareness, cultural knowledge, cultural exposure, and cultural skill, as described above (Nokes, Nickitas, Keida, & Neville, 2005). Finally, the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS) is a Likert-type questionnaire that rates individuals on three subscales: “(a) Unawareness of Racial Privilege (seven items; e.g., ‘Everyone who works hard, no matter what race they are, has an equal chance to become rich’); (b) Unawareness of Institutional Discrimination (seven items; e.g., ‘Immigrants should try to fit into the culture and adopt the values of the U.S.’); and (c) Unawareness to Blatant Racial Issues (six items; e.g., ‘Racism may have been a problem in the past, but it is not an important problem today.’)” (Colvin-Burque et al., 2007, p. 232). The CoBRAS was utilized in this study because it is the instrument that will best allow exploration of perceptions of both race and privilege before and after a service-learning experience.

**Mixed methods.** In researching the impact of service-learning on intercultural competence, consideration must be given to whether quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods is most appropriate. Mixed methods inquiry “focuses on collecting, analyzing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative empirical materials in a single study or a series of studies” (Denzin, 2012, p. 82). Given the literature reviewed, mixed methods appear to be used frequently by experts in the field of service-learning (Furco, 2003; Goldberg & Coufal, 2009; Hayward & Charrette, 2012; Simons & Cleary, 2006). Additionally, Deardorff (2011) emphasizes the importance of using both direct evidence (i.e., reflection, interviews, etc.) and indirect evidence (i.e., surveys or inventories) in studying intercultural competence. Often the quantitative component involves pre- and post-test scenarios, statistically analyzed using paired t-tests and ANOVA analysis, and the qualitative data is typically collected through reflection essays, focus groups, and individual interviews (Miller & Gonzalez, 2009; Stavrianopoulos, 2008; Goldberg &
Mixed methods design allows for triangulation and validation, as well as provides the opportunity for a more in-depth understanding of a particular phenomenon (Denzin, 2012; Johnson et al., 2007).

**Future research.** As a relatively new pedagogical method that is gaining popularity, the need for service-learning research is great (Endres & Gould, 2009). Research associated with how service-learning students make meaning of race, socioeconomic status, and the inequities associated with both is lacking (Espino & Lee, 2011). In addition to the study of racial attitudes, more directed study of the impact of White privilege on experiential education and service-learning would contribute to the body of knowledge of students’ racial ideology development (Cabrera, 2011; Endres & Gould, 2009, Rose & Paisley, 2012). Researchers examining the racial climate on college campuses have often focused on the experience of the marginalized population, failing to examine self-awareness, ideologies, behaviors, and beliefs of the privileged students (Cabrera, 2011; Desmond, Stahl, & Graham, 2011). The role of Whiteness in experiential education needs to be examined further (Rose & Paisley, 2012). The literature indicates that there is a shortage of strong research about service-learning and intercultural competence, particularly examining race and privilege and how students make meaning of race, class, and inequities (Espino & Lee, 2011; Heinze & DeCandia, 2011). Additionally, future research should examine individuals’ thoughts and feelings both before and after multicultural service-learning experiences to gain insights into intercultural competence development (Smith, Johnson, Powell, & Oliver, 2012).

While research on service-learning and its impact on perceptions of race and privilege exists, there is a need for additional exploration, including more direct examination of awareness of privilege, colorblind racial attitudes, and students’ understanding of their own racial identities.
Additionally, more research using mixed methods design, specifically incorporating both quantitative and qualitative components, is an important contribution to service-learning research. This study may begin to fill some of those gaps in service-learning research.

In Chapter 3, the details of the research methods for the study is described, addressing some of the prior shortcomings of service-learning research and attempting to further examine students’ experiences and the potential impact of service-learning on intercultural competence and perceptions of race and privilege, specifically.
CHAPTER III

METHODS

This chapter provides a detailed description of the proposed study methodologies, participants, research questions, hypotheses, procedures, theoretical framework, and data analyses used in this work. The study examined and described individual student experiences before, during, and after participating in service-learning programs in the Mississippi Delta, with a focus on student awareness of privilege and racial attitudes. It was a mixed methods study utilizing a constructivist perspective, which allowed each student’s individual perspective to be explored (Patton, 2002). Because of little existing theory specific to service-learning, researchers have the opportunity to link their research to existing theory in other fields relevant to their study, such as sociology, psychology, education, and political science (Billig & Waterman, 2003). The specific theories that framed this study were determined concurrently with the research and analysis (Guba, 1981; Krefting, 1991). The theories that provided a framework for the data analysis included Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings, 1998, 2005, 2007), Color-blind Ideology (Neville et al., 2000; Sue, 1999, 2001, 2013), Intercultural Competence (Deardorff, 2011; Deardorff & Edwards, 2013), and Perry’s Theory of Intellectual and Ethical Development (Perry, 1970).

The study of service-learning is a developing area. The rigor of service-learning research is often criticized, as described in the literature review section about service-learning research. In order to address ongoing challenges of service-learning, three qualitative data collection methods were used, in addition to a quantitative underpinning. The use of multiple data sources and
multiple methods, or between-methods triangulation, to study a single phenomenon provide robust triangulation and strengthened the study (Johnson et al., 2007; Patton, 2002; Reams & Twale, 2008). The following is a full description of the research design utilized in this study.

**Design of the Study**

I identified service-learning classes for inclusion in the study both by informally surveying faculty in person and via e-mail, and through consultation with the staff at the McLean Institute of Public Service and Community Engagement. The professors of prospective classes were contacted via a letter requesting consideration of inclusion of their students in this study (Appendix A). Upon approval of the instructor of the identified service-learning class, I either visited the service-learning class prior to the service component or contacted the prospective participants if they had already completed the service portion of the course. I introduced the project and solicit students to participate in the study. To those students interested in participating, I administered a short demographic data questionnaire and either conducted or scheduled a focus group discussing expectations and assumptions of the upcoming service experience. For participants completing of these focus groups, they were then contacted via e-mail to take the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS) pre-test administered online through Qualtrics. For students who had already complete their service, the pre-service data was not able to be collected. After the service work was completed, the participants took the CoBRAS post-service survey online. Individual interviews were scheduled after completion of the service work and conducted at an agreed upon time.

**Mixed Methods Research Design**

As described in the “Research Methods” section of Chapter 2, the service-learning research literature points to mixed methods as the most thorough and rigorous design for
examining service-learning. The constructivist paradigm applied to this study further reinforces the appropriateness of mixed methods. Because constructivist paradigm sought to uncover the multiple perspectives, viewpoints, and positions of individuals, examining service-learning through focus groups, surveys, and interviews allowed me to gain greater depth of meaning behind the students’ experiences and a validity check to survey responses (Johnson et al., 2007; Reams & Twale, 2008). Specifically, “mixed methods interpretivism emphasizes understanding persons on their own terms,” allowing all voices to become part of the narrative (Denzin, 2010, p. 423). In adding dimension to quantitative data, collecting qualitative data through focus groups or interviews improved accuracy, created balance, and compensated for limitations of a single research method (Cabrera, 2011; Johnson et al., 2007).

**Unit of Analysis**

Given the number of potential variables, selecting the unit of analysis can be problematic if a researcher is conducting a multisite study. A comparison of specific classes, institutions, or service sites introduces variables such as the instructor’s experience, the class size, institutional commitment, funding, staff organization at the site, maturity of the student, academic discipline, and other variables that can become covariates to consider. Thus, some researchers maintain that service-learning can really only be examined as an “individualistic phenomenon because it is perceived and experienced so differently by the individual having the experience” (Billig & Waterman, 2003, p. ix). With these challenges in mind, the most appropriate unit of analysis was the individual student. The supporting literature suggested that capturing the individual student experience and the impact of those experiences on the student were important measures, and that utilizing multiple data sources allowed for triangulation (Furco, 2003; Waterman, 2003). An additional rationale for focusing on the student experience was the importance of learner-
centered education upon which experiential education draws. As stated earlier, experiential education empowers students to take responsibility and become a resource for their own learning, and it is considered a more democratic process than expert-centered education, thus gaining understanding of the experience through the students’ perspective reinforced that notion (Benson, Harkavy, & Puckett, 2007; Carter, 1996; Saltmarsh, 2008; Shellman, 2014).

**Qualitative Research Component**

The qualitative portion of this mixed methods study allowed for the collection of individual expectations and perceptions regarding the impact of the service-learning class and the students’ experience with regard to their attitude about race and privilege. Qualitative research provides an opportunity for researchers to study a central phenomenon in-depth with much detail (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007; Patton, 2002). This study was conducted from a social constructivist perspective, which allowed me to gain insight into individual student perceptions, explanations, beliefs, and perspectives within their constructed reality while examining the consequences of their constructions (Patton, 2002).

As with all qualitative studies, the researcher becomes a conduit for data collection, interpretation, and conclusions drawn, all while filtering the data through a “personal lens” (Creswell, 2003, p. 182). The researcher’s own biases, values, and interests become inseparable from the study, thus it was important to reflect upon and be sensitive to my personal, political, and cultural perspectives (Creswell, 2003; Denzin, 2012; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007; Gunaratnam, 2003; Patton, 2002). The following section addresses researcher reflexivity, which is a “strategy to critically situate our own knowledge, values, and power within dominant social orders (in this case, whiteness) and encourages us to navigate the ramifications of the situated context” (Rose & Paisley, 2012, p 147).
Role of the researcher. I am a 50-year-old White woman from Mississippi. I am a middle- to upper-middle class and hold an M.F.A. from Parsons School of Design in New York. Currently, I am the Director of College Programs in the Division of Outreach and Continuing Education at the University of Mississippi, where I oversee the UM Testing Center, iStudy, Study USA, and the New York and Washington Internship Experiences, the latter three being experiential education programs. I have taught as an adjunct assistant professor in the Department of Art since 1994, including some experiential education courses. I serve on the Council on Community Engagement for the McLean Institute, and previously served on the Service-Learning Interest Group at the University. I also am the Chair of the Chancellor’s Commission on the Status of Women and serve on the Diversity Leadership Council, an advisory committee to the Assistant Provost and Assistant to the Chancellor Concerning Minority Affairs.

I have a long-standing personal and political interest in matters of race and civil rights, in large part from returning to Mississippi in my late-20s after having lived in Texas during college and New York upon graduation. The transition back to the state of my upbringing brought with it discomfort and disbelief that such regressive attitudes about race still exist in the South. While issues of race and racism had been long apparent to me, I first became aware of the notion of White privilege one morning while on the subway platform in Brooklyn, while back in New York on business. It was 1999, and New York City had recently learned of an incident of police brutality involving an unarmed Black man holding a wallet, which was mistaken for a gun. Amadou Diallo, the unarmed man, was shot forty-one times by four New York City police officers and died at the scene (Cooper, 1999). While waiting for the subway one morning shortly after that incident, an NYPD officer walked down the platform. As a White woman, I was a minority on that platform with most of the other morning commuters being men and women of
color. I became very aware at that moment that I was likely the only person who felt safer as opposed to threatened by the White police officer’s presence, simply because of my race. I was 34-years-old at the time – arguably too old to be having the realization of White privilege for the first time. Recent incidents involving the police and the killing of unarmed Black men in New York (Goldstein & Schweber, 2014), Los Angeles (Knoll, 2014), and Ferguson, Missouri (McLaughlin, 2014) have prompted protests, state and federal investigations, and much heated discussion about the role of race and privilege in this country.

In 2000, I adopted two daughters. The girls, nine and ten at the time, were half-sisters with the same biological mother. The younger is biracial and the older White. Given only two weeks’ notice that they would be joining our family, I read voraciously to try to understand the needs of the girls and how both adoption and multiculturalism would impact our family. I read several powerful books about race and ethnicity, including *I’m Chocolate, You’re Vanilla: Raising Healthy Black and Biracial Children in a Race-Conscious World* (Wright, 1998) and *In Their Own Voices: Transracial Adoptees Tell Their Stories* (Simon & Roorda, 2000). As the girls integrated into the family, the differences in the way they were treated at school and in society became apparent to me. I also became aware of attitude changes in teachers and other parents when they realized that my “Black” daughter had a White mother. This double-standard for my daughters was disturbing, and never being shy about tackling even uncomfortable issues directly, I advocated for both daughters in school and elsewhere, frustrated by the fact that my children (and others) were judged first by their race. I now have two African American grandchildren, six years old and eighteen months old, who are growing up in a similar racial climate in American society.

As an adjunct assistant professor in the Department of Art at the University of
Mississippi, I have made every effort to teach in a very inclusive manner. Having read much about racial identity development, I realize the importance of students connecting with the course content in many ways, including personally. I have always been very conscientious about bringing artwork by artists of color and women artists, both sadly underrepresented in most art history texts, into my course content. Being inclusive in instruction is beneficial to all students, as they begin to learn about the contributions of artists, art historians, and patrons of all races and ethnicities.

In conclusion, my interest in race and privilege is personal, professional, and academic. I have strong feelings about racial inequities, but worked to keep my own views out of the data collection process. I feel, however, that my long-standing interest and involvement in social justice and racial equality provided me with a heightened sensitivity to race and privilege that enhanced my ability to analyze and synthesize the data collected during this study.

**Research questions.** The following are the general research questions that guided the study:

- How do students process issues of race and privilege prior to, during, and after participating in service-learning in the Mississippi Delta?
- How is intercultural competence impacted among students who participate in short-term service learning in the Mississippi Delta?

**Qualitative procedure.** The qualitative procedures reflected the constructivist perspective in their implementation. As Patton (2002) stated, interviews framed by constructivism are social interactions where the researcher and the interviewee construct a narrative, and both contribute to the meaning-making process.

**Focus group.** Focus groups were conducted with the classes prior to the students’ visits
to the service site, as possible. The focus groups allowed me to obtain data in a social context where participants shared their own views in the context of the views of fellow participants (Patton, 2002). I was also able to observe group dynamics prior to the service-learning component, which will provide a baseline for the remainder of the study. I proposed ground rules regarding listening, speaking respectfully, taking turns, and allowing for a safe environment free of critical assessment of comments. The following were the basic discussion prompts:

1. Why do students enroll in service-learning courses?
2. What are students’ expectations regarding the environment at their service sites?
3. What are students’ expectations regarding the people at their service sites?
4. What are students’ doing to prepare themselves for this service experience?
5. What challenges do you think students will encounter doing service-learning in the Mississippi Delta?
6. What do you think students hope to accomplish?

A more detailed focus group script with follow-up prompts can be found in Appendix F.

The discussion was captured using a recording device, and recorded data stored in a secure place. Verbatim transcripts were produced from each focus group for analysis. To maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms were used in the transcripts. After the required five-year waiting period, all forms of the original data will be permanently destroyed.

**Individual interviews.** Post-service in-depth individual interviews allowed me to gather qualitative information about the students’ experiences. In-depth semi-structured interviews allowed individuals to discuss their specific experiences and often led to rich and extensive descriptions (National Research Council, 2004). I combined standardized-open ended and informal conversational interview techniques to provide initial structure to the interview, but
allowed for individualized follow up questions based on the specific content of the interview (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007; Patton, 2002). The interview questions consisted of ten semi-structured, open-ended questions, with follow up questions as needed. The following are the general prompts:

1. Describe your racial and ethnic identity.
2. Tell me about your experience in the field.
3. How would you describe your exposure to and attitude toward people from other racial or ethnic groups?
4. What role did race play in your service-learning experience in the Delta?
5. What role did your own race play in your experience?
6. Did you observe or get a sense of discrimination of any sort while at your site?
7. In general, what challenges did you face at your work site or in the community?
8. What positive experiences made the strongest impact on you?
9. What did you learn about yourself during this experience?
10. In general, what is the most important thing that you will take away from this experience?

A more detailed interview protocol can be found in Appendix H. The interviews were recorded using a hand-held recording device, and data is stored in a secure place. Verbatim transcripts were produced of each interview for analysis. To maintain confidentiality, randomly assigned pseudonyms were used in the transcripts. After the required five-year waiting period, the original data will be permanently destroyed.

**Documents.** The syllabi for the courses were obtained and reviewed to better understand the course structure and content. Additionally, when available, I obtained course-related student narratives submitted at the end of the course. These documents were analyzed in conjunction
with the survey results and the individual interviews to get a better understanding of the students’ experiences of conducting service work in the Delta.

**Qualitative data analysis.** The analysis of the data collected during the pre-service focus group and the post-service individual interviews began with thematic coding. Initially, I had planned to use NVivo qualitative analysis software, but found that the combination of my inexperience with the program and my personal need to see multiple documents at once and my preference of notating documents by hand, led me to rely on manual coding during data analysis. Using constant comparative analysis, I read the transcripts and student narratives multiple times, created a coding list, coded the various items, tallied the codes, generated themes, and then used the coded material and the existing literature to connect the data to the related themes (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). The audit journal and course syllabi were also integrated into the analysis. The resulting report was in narrative form, drawing from the transcripts, documents, and prior literature (Krefting, 1991; Patton, 2002).

**Quantitative Research Component**

The quantitative portion of this mixed methods study consisted of the administration of the CoBRAS and the analysis of the results. The resulting data complemented the qualitative data by providing an objective view of students’ pre- and post-service attitudes regarding racial privilege, institutional discrimination, and blatant racial issues. Only nine participants completed both the pre- and post-service surveys.

**Research null hypothesis.** There is no significant difference in student scores on the CoBRAS before and after participating in a service-learning experience in the Mississippi Delta.

**Quantitative procedure.** The CoBRAS was administered to the participating students prior to the service-learning field work as a pre-test, when students were engaged with the study
prior to their service experience and after the service was completed as a post-test. The method of administration was through the online survey software, Qualtrics, which the University of Mississippi makes available for use by students, faculty, and staff. On some occasions, students were offered paper copies of the CoBRAS to complete during a follow-up class meeting or at the time of their interview, for their convenience. I then entered that data into Qualtrics in order to have all the data in a single format for analysis.

Instrumentation. The instrument that was used to collect quantitative data was the CoBRAS (Appendix G). Permission to use the instrument was sought and received from Dr. Helen Neville, developer of the CoBRAS, Chair of the Counseling Psychology Program, and Professor of Educational Psychology and African American Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Upon request, raw data from this study with all identifiers removed will be provided to Dr. Neville, who will use it to monitor utility, reliability, and validity of the instrument.

This CoBRAS is a 20-question scale with 6-point Likert-like response options for each item (1=strongly disagree to 6=strongly agree). See Appendix G for the complete instrument. Total scores range from 20 (high awareness of racial bias and privilege) to 120 (low awareness of racial bias and privilege). Seven items are worded in the negative to help reduce potential response biases by requiring respondents to give more consideration to their responses rather than automatic replies (Atwater, 2007; Croasmun & Ostrom, 2011; Davis & Engle, 2011; Loya, 2011).

Validity and reliability have been verified, and CoBRAS has strong psychometric properties (Cronbach’s alpha = .86; 2-week test-retest reliability estimate = .68). Cronbach’s alpha between .70 and .90 indicates good internal consistency, but a value over .90 may reflect
redundancy in the content of the survey (George & Mallery, 2003; Streiner, 2003). Additionally, concurrent validity between CoBRAS and the Global Belief in a Just World Scale (GBJWS), the Multidimensional Belief in a Just World Scale (MBJWS), the Quick Discrimination Index (QDI), and the Modern Racism Scale (MRS) reinforce the validity of the instrument (Neville et al., 2000). The CoBRAS was administered before the initial service-learning experience and upon completion of the service and site visit, in order to measure the difference in scores and assess a change in attitudes surrounding three factors: (a) Unawareness of Racial Privilege, (b) Institutional Discrimination, and (c) Blatant Racial Issues (Neville et al., 2000).

The CoBRAS was initially developed from literature on color-blind racial attitudes, consultation with experts on race, and casual discussions with a racially diverse group of undergraduate and graduate students, as well as community members. The initial 17 items created by the research team evaluated by five experts in the areas of ethnic studies and psychometric tests (Neville et al., 2000). The second rendition of the CoBRAS included 26 items, and these items were reviewed by three of the original reviewers. The adjustments made in this second draft included wording half of the items in the negative to reduce response bias and rewording a few items, all of which were constructed on the 6th grade reading level (Neville et al., 2000). This early incarnation of the CoBRAS was examined for reliability and validity through five separate studies described below.

The first study examined the 26 items through exploratory factor analysis and sought to establish a factor structure and determine initial reliability estimates (Neville et al., 2000). A total of 302 college students and community members took part in this study (Davis & Engle, 2011). The data resulting from the equimax rotation established that three factors predominated the study: 1) Racial Privilege, 2) Institutional Discrimination, and 3) Blatant Racial Issues. Twenty
items loaded above .40 on one of the factors, thus six items were determined too weak to retain (Neville et al., 2000).

The second study reexamined the factor structure established in the first study through confirmatory factor analysis and also examined the initial validity of CoBRAS. The 594 participants in this study completed the CoBRAS, the Global Belief in a Just World Scale (GBJWS), the Multidimensional Belief in a Just World Scale (MBJWS) and the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (MCSDS) (Davis & Engle, 2011). Through this process, the researchers determined that there was concurrent validity between the factors of Institutional Discrimination and Racial Privilege and the GBJWS and the MBJWS, and there is discriminant validity between Blatant Racial Issues and the MCSDS (Neville et al., 2000). This study also addressed social reliability, which was found to be unrelated to scores for Racial Privilege and Institutional Discrimination, and statistically significant, yet weak, for Blatant Racial Issues (Davis & Engle, 2011).

The third study examined test-retest reliability, which would aid in predicting stability of the instrument over time. The researchers administered the CoBRAS to 102 college students and then administered the retest two weeks after the initial measure (Davis & Engle, 2011). Eighty percent of the original students participated in the retest. The reliability estimate differed for the various factors. For Racial Privilege and Institutional Discrimination, the reliability estimate was .80, which is considered acceptable (Neville et al., 2000). For Blatant Racial Issues, the rating was .34, and for the overall instrument, it was .68 (Neville et al., 2000), which while weak reliability for the former factor, the CoBRAS overall has near acceptable test-retest reliability.

While concurrent validity was examined in the second study discussed above, researchers further evaluated the CoBRAS relationship to measures of attitudes toward racial diversity, as
well as gender equality in a fourth study. The participants were college students and community members who completed a demographics questionnaire, the CoBRAS, and two discrimination measures – the Quick Discrimination Index (QDI) and the Modern Racism Scale (MRS) (Neville et al., 2000). Correlation between the CoBRAS and QDI ranged from -.25 to -.83, and the correlation between the CoBRAS and the MRS ranged from .36 to .55, indicating significant correlation between the CoBRAS factors and those measuring racial discrimination (and to a lesser extent, gender discrimination in the QDI) in the compared measures (Neville et al., 2000).

The fifth and final study examined whether prior multicultural training impacted scores on the CoBRAS. Forty-five students seeking leadership positions on their campus participated in the study (Neville et al., 2000). The participants completed the CoBRAS and a demographic questionnaire. Interestingly, their pretest mean score on the CoBRAS was lower than the other previous studies, perhaps because they were more aware of diversity issues due to their leadership aspirations. Upon completion of the year-long multicultural training class, the students’ posttest scores decreased, representing an increased awareness in Racial Privilege, Institutional Discrimination, and Blatant Racial Issues (Neville et al., 2000).

**Quantitative data analysis.** The difference between the pre- and post-test scores on the CoBRAS were analyzed using a paired sample t-test to determine if there was a statistically significant change in intercultural competence, specifically perceptions of race and privilege, after completing a service-learning class in the Mississippi Delta. Low scores indicated high awareness of racial bias and privilege, and high scores indicated low awareness of racial bias and privilege. The statistical software package SPSS was used to analyze the data.

**Ethical Considerations**

The participants were informed of the nature of the study and how the data collected will
be used. The data, in the form of audio files, transcripts, questionnaires, surveys, and field notes, is stored in a secure location. The data will be stored for five years and then permanently destroyed. The study is confidential; therefore, only I will have access to the data. All identifying information was removed from the materials, and pseudonyms were used for the participants, the course, and the professor to maintain confidentiality (Patton, 2002).

Trustworthiness in mixed methods research is particularly important (Johnson et al., 2007). Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are considered the key criteria for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research; whereas, internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity are characteristics fostering trustworthiness in quantitative research (Guba, 1981; Krefting, 1991). Triangulation through multiple data collection methods and member checking enhanced credibility of this study. Interviewees were allowed to review the transcript of their individual interviews to confirm the accuracy, approve the content for use in the study, and expand upon any answers that they feel warrant more depth. This process of member checking contributed to triangulation and cultivated a trusting relationship between the researcher and the participants (Patton, 2002; Creswell, 2008). Transferability was improved by the collection of thick descriptive data from focus groups, interviews, student narrative reflections, and the researcher audit journal. Purposive sampling also contributed to transferability by recruiting participants who have specific experience in service-learning work in the Mississippi Delta, increasing the quantity of information that was obtained from each participant. Dependability was increased through the overlap of data collection methods, including both quantitative and multiple qualitative measures, and the creation of an audit trail through the use of a researcher audit journal. I recorded the details of the data collection in an audit journal, in order to document the research process, minimize personal bias, ensure
accuracy, describe any potential impartiality on the part of the researcher, and contribute to triangulation in this study (Guba, 1981; Patton, 2002). The audit journal and triangulation contributed to the confirmability of the study. The internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity of the CoBRAS instrument used in the quantitative portion of this study indicated an instrument that has been tested, as described in detail in the “Instrumentation” section of Chapter 3. Both the qualitative and quantitative portions of the study presented trustworthiness, and their combined use added an additional level of rigor to the study.

Biases and Assumptions

Given the proposed power of service-learning as a pedagogical method, I presumed that it could contribute positively or negatively to students’ reported intercultural competence. The impact on the students may have depended upon how service in the Mississippi Delta is presented to students, and if and how they were prepared for their interaction with a community and population that may be vastly different from their own identity – racially, socioeconomically, and culturally. It also may have depended upon their own individual history and engagement with diversity, racism, and racial dynamics.

An increase in awareness of issues of race and privilege as measured by CoBRAS may have occurred, but may have been tied to pre-service discussion regarding the racial and socioeconomic climate in the Delta in class, the length of the service experience, and the incorporation of guided reflection that prompts students to consider race and privilege upon completion of their service. Given the other variables surrounding each student’s exposure to and interaction with people from different racial and ethnic background, and their personal values, it was unlikely that the service experience alone would change their perceptions of race and privilege. Additionally, the topics of race and privilege were likely ones with which the students
were uncomfortable talking openly, had difficulty formulating and articulating their feelings, or the students may have been completely unaware that the topics have relevance in today’s society. The inability or unwillingness to openly discuss race and privilege for many of the participants was evident.

I suspected that the majority of White University of Mississippi students included in the study had a fairly narrow and uninformed world view, in large part due to their age and maturity level, but also due to their exposure (or lack thereof) to the historical, cultural, and societal roles that race and privilege play in American society, and for some no doubt, due to their family values and beliefs regarding race and ethnicity. In order to keep my assumptions in check, I engaged an expert in the field with a background in race, privilege, and Critical Race Theory to conduct an expert audit review of the methods, data analysis and interpretation, to enhance external credibility (Patton, 2002).

Overall, it was enlightening to examine whether service-learning in communities in the Mississippi Delta reinforced stereotypes, increased awareness of issues of race and privilege, or resulted in change in the students’ intercultural competence, and to learn how students processed the notions of race and privilege. Ideally, the use of mixed methods and multiple data collection sources helped alleviate any biases that may have surfaced in both the data collection and analysis.

**Population and Sample**

The population for this study was American undergraduate and graduate college students participating in service-learning classes in underserved areas. The sample was selected students who have conducted service in the Mississippi Delta while enrolled in service-learning classes at the University of Mississippi. Patton (2002) referred to this selection process as intensity
sampling, because it produced an information-rich sample that provided valuable instances of the phenomenon being studied. The results are not generalizable given the nature of qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Guba, 1981; Patton, 2002).

Participants

The sample of participants consisted of college students participating in service-learning classes that took place in the Mississippi Delta. The participants were degree-seeking students, with 45% being between 19 and 22 years of age, and the remaining 55% being 23 or older, who were enrolled at the University of Mississippi at the time of their service-learning experience. Participation was completely voluntary, and participants could withdraw from the study at any time. Instructors teaching service-learning classes in the Mississippi Delta were contacted regarding participation in the study. If the instructor expressed interest in participation, a formal class solicitation letter (Appendix A) was sent via e-mail. A copy of the CoBRAS survey was made available to the instructor for review, upon request. None of the professors requested a copy of the survey. Upon confirmation of participation, a class visit was scheduled where I introduced the study and solicited participants. For classes that had already conducted their service-learning component, I solicited participation via e-mail. Students willing to participate completed the consent form (Appendix C), the release form (Appendix D), and the demographic questionnaire (Appendix E). Students were contacted either in person in class or via e-mail to schedule the focus groups, and via e-mail to schedule the pre- and post-service survey, and the individual interviews. If I did not receive a reply via e-mail, I followed up with either a class visit or a phone call in an effort to retain participation in the study. If a student was unable to participate in one or more segments of the study, he or she was still able to participate in the other portions. This process allowed me to capture as much data as possible from each student.
without having to dismiss them from the study if they were not able to participate fully. I established a core group of participants based on those with home I was able to interview, plus one participant who took both the pre- and post-service surveys, but did not complete the individual interview.

Site Selection. The selection of the University of Mississippi as the research site hinges on both its history of race relations and its recent focus on service, instituted by former Chancellor Dan Jones who joined the administration in 2009 (University of Mississippi, About UM, n.d.). Prior to becoming chancellor, Jones served as Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs, Dean of the School of Medicine and Professor of Medicine at the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson. Chancellor Jones’ commitment to service, diversity, and inclusion has had an important impact on the campus climate and culture, although not without much resistance from those clinging to the University of Mississippi’s historical “Old South” symbols and traditions (Kirkland, 2014).

The racial history of the institution, as well as recent racist incidents, made this site of particular interest in unearthing student perceptions of race and privilege. A more involved description of the historical and contemporary racial environment can be found in the introductory chapter of this document. The University of Mississippi has had a sporadic history of service-learning courses, with some academic disciplines dominating that arena during the past couple of decades, primarily social work and education. Recently, the McLean Institute for Public Service and Community Engagement was established, which grew out of the McLean Institute for Community Development originally founded in 1984. The reimagined institute serves to support community engagement and partnerships at many levels, including service as a

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1 On March 20, 2015, Mississippi’s Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL) announced that Chancellor Dan Jones’ contract would not be renewed (Mitchell & Chandler, 2015).
resource for service-learning across the University of Mississippi campus (University of Mississippi, McLean Center, n.d.). With the development of this newly-conceived institute, the University will undoubtedly expand its service-learning offerings, in both quantity and quality. Both the current racial climate and the commitment to service at this institution make the University of Mississippi worthy of examination. Many colleges and universities view the Mississippi Delta as a logical site for service-learning work, often without regard to deeper issues of race and privilege. Examining the union of these two communities, University of Mississippi students and underserved individuals and agencies in the Mississippi Delta, provided a snapshot of intercultural competence outcomes focusing on race and privilege that should was illuminating.

**Institutional Review Board approval.** The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Mississippi declared the initial study exempt (Appendix B). IRB approval for the remainder of the study was sought upon approval of the prospectus, and it was again deemed exempt. Identifying information was removed from the data to make the study confidential, and pseudonyms were used for the individual students, the course, and the professor.

**Costs and benefits.** The two primary costs to students were potential social discomfort and time. Some students found it uncomfortable to discuss race, as many consider it a taboo or impolite topic (Neville et al., 2000). Every effort was made to make the participants feel at ease in discussing the topic, including assurances of a safe environment and confidentiality. Participation required some amount of personal time on the part of the students. While the focus groups occurred during a class period, the completion of the CoBRAS both before and after the service-learning component, and the individual interview involved a total of approximately 60 minutes of time outside of class for each participant.
The benefits to the participants included their contribution to the body of knowledge and $20 as an incentive and in gratitude for their participation. Many researchers have identified a gap in knowledge of how a participant’s color-blind racial attitudes (Neville et al., 2000) and intercultural competence are affected as an outcome of a service-learning experience (Eyler & Giles, 1999).

**Demographic Information and Consent Forms**

When possible, I verbally introduced the project to the class and, for students willing to participate, I provided them with a consent form (Appendix C), a release form (Appendix D), and a demographics questionnaire (Appendix E). For those participants who had previously taken a service-learning class, I provided these documents via e-mail, and the participants either returned them via e-mail or upon meeting for their interview. Regardless, I had the completed consent and release documents on file prior to their actual participation in the study. The consent form provided consent of the student to participate in the research study. The form included a description of the project, the risks and benefits of participation, the cost and payments to the participant, a description of the confidentiality procedures, the participant’s right to withdraw, the IRB approval notification, and a statement of consent. The consent form was signed by both the participant and the investigator. The release form ensured that I have the necessary permissions to use any written or recorded data in the research study. The demographics questionnaire captured information such as age, race and ethnicity, academic classification, residency and transfer status, and contact information. Collecting this information allowed me to assess the results in conjunction with demographic variables, had trends along demographic lines become important during the data analysis.
Summary

This research study was responsive to past criticisms of service-learning research and creates a robust, reproducible study that may impact on the fields of service-learning in higher education, and multiculturalism and interculturalism on college campuses. As anticipated, complementary data was collected and analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Using a mixed method study, including triangulation, member checking, and an external audit journal established the study’s rigor and credibility. Using a constructivist framework to analyze the data, which acknowledged that reality is composed of multiple perspectives, it was expected that an engaging narrative would emerge from this study of diverse student experiences and perceptions. That narrative did emerge, and the research findings are detailed in the following chapter.
CHAPTER IV
RESEARCH FINDINGS

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to examine service-learning students conducting work in the Mississippi Delta, in order to determine the impact such experiences have on students’ perception of race and privilege. The participants included students involved in service-learning classes at the University of Mississippi. The primary research questions driving this study were (a) how do students process issues of race and privilege prior to, during, and after participating in service-learning in the Mississippi Delta?, and (b) how is intercultural competence impacted among students who participate in short-term service-learning in the Mississippi Delta? This chapter provides a summary of research findings, including participant profiles, primary themes that emerged through qualitative data collection, and a comparison of pre- and post-service scores on the Color-blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS).

Participants

Interviews were conducted with twenty University of Mississippi students who had participated in a service-learning course. Of the twenty participants, 12 were female and 8 were male. Nineteen participants identified as White, and one identified as African American. One of the White participants also identified as Hispanic/Latino. The participants were a mixture of undergraduate, graduate and professional school students taking courses in a variety of disciplines. The unifying factors of this participant group were their enrollment as students at the University of Mississippi and their participation in a service-learning course that was focused on
a community within the Mississippi Delta. In addition to the individual interviews, data was collected through focus groups, pre- and post-service surveys, and class written reflections. The specific modes of data collection for each participant are indicated on Table 1. The mixed methods design allowed for increased depth of information about the participants’ service-learning experiences and how those experiences might have impacted their perceptions of race and privilege.

Table 1
Data Collection Details by Participant

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<th>Post-Service Survey</th>
<th>Individual Interview</th>
<th>Written Reflection</th>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Maggie</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sandy</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>Shannon</td>
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<td>Todd</td>
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<td>Pseudonym</td>
<td>Focus Group</td>
<td>Pre-Service Survey</td>
<td>Post-Service Survey</td>
<td>Individual Interview</td>
<td>Written Reflection</td>
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<td>Will</td>
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<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wendy</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Participant Characteristics.** Participants were solicited either by in-person during class time or by e-mail. During the initial contact, students were provided information about the study, including a description of the study, the consent form, the release, and a demographic information form. Those solicited in-person completed the demographic form, consent form, and release and returned them to me. Those solicited via e-mail were provided with digital copies and asked to either bring completed forms or be prepared to complete them upon arrival for the interview. The demographic form included information such as name, address, age, race/ethnicity, gender, major, minor, academic classification, home state, transfer institution, and details about the service site, type of agency, and location. Some students were not yet aware of the location of their service work, so that information was obtained during the individual interviews.

Participants were initially assigned a numeric identifier while the data collection was in progress. Pseudonyms were assigned after all the data were collected, and are utilized in Tables 1 through 10. Table 2 collates the demographic information about all the participants, including gender, race/ethnicity, age and home state. Table 3 presents educational information about each participant, including major, classification, transfer or undergraduate institution, and the category of high school the participant attended. Table 4 provides information about the participants’ service-learning experience, including the discipline under which the service-learning course fell, the name or description of the service site, and the geographic location where the service was conducted. Only discipline is noted in order to maintain anonymity of the specific class and the
professor. Table 5 provides the specifics about the codes that were developed for the analysis, including the source from which the code was derived and code description. Tables 6 through 10 present student feedback on the service-learning experiences and will be discussed later in this document.

As indicated by Table 2, 13 of the students were female (60%) and eight male (40%). All except one of the students identified as White (95%), and one of the White students also identified as Hispanic or Latino. The single Black student (5%) did not identify as Hispanic or Latino. With regard to age, 55% of the students were 23 or older, one of those self-identifying as non-traditional. The remainder of the participants ranged from 19 to 22.

Table 2
*Participant Demographic Information*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Home State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>23 or older</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashley</td>
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<td>White</td>
<td>23 or older</td>
<td>Missouri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridget</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Alabama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
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<td>White/Hispanic</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Mississippi</td>
</tr>
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<td>Claire</td>
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<td>White</td>
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<tr>
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<td>White</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Mississippi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ford</td>
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<td>White</td>
<td>23 or older</td>
<td>Mississippi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greg</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>23 or older</td>
<td>Alabama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howard</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Mississippi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Canada</td>
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<td>White</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>23 or older</td>
<td>Mississippi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>23 or older</td>
<td>Mississippi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudonym</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Race/Ethnicity</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Home State</td>
</tr>
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<td>-----------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandy</td>
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<td>Mississippi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shannon</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>23 or older</td>
<td>Pennsylvania/Louisiana</td>
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<tr>
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<td>California</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wendy</td>
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<td>White</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Michigan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Just over 50% of the participants were from the state of Mississippi, which is consistent with enrollment at the University of Mississippi, in general. One student was from Canada, but the remaining eight were from various U.S. states. Table 3 presents educational data on the participants and shows that eight of the participants were in either graduate school or professional school, specifically law school. The 13 undergraduates were pursuing majors including political science (50%), international studies (21%), and the remaining were economics, journalism, public policy leadership, linguistics, and general studies majors. One undergraduate student transferred to the University of Mississippi from a community college. Of the eight graduate and professional students, three attended undergraduate school at the University of Mississippi and five came to this institution from another college or university. The final data set collected regarding education describes the participants’ high school experience. Thirteen students (62%) attended public high schools, five (24%) attended private high schools, and for two student (9%) the type of high school is unknown. One student (5%) attended both a private and then a public high school. Those who attended public schools tended to have more early exposure to peers from different racial and ethnic groups, but they did not necessarily interact with them during school or socially outside of school.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Transfer or Undergraduate Institution</th>
<th>Type of High School*</th>
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<td>Allen</td>
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<td>Undergraduate</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>Linguistics</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashley</td>
<td>Linguistics</td>
<td>Graduate Student</td>
<td>University of Mississippi</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridget</td>
<td>International Studies/French/ Public Policy Leadership Journalism/ Political Science</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>International Studies/ Chinese Law</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claire</td>
<td>International Studies/ Chinese Law</td>
<td>Law Student</td>
<td>Springhill College</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>International Studies/Spanish Journalism</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen</td>
<td>Journalism/ Political Science Linguistics</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ford</td>
<td>Linguistics</td>
<td>Graduate Student</td>
<td>Itawamba Community College/ University of Mississippi</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greg</td>
<td>Law</td>
<td>Law Student</td>
<td>Auburn</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howard</td>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Public</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lindsey</td>
<td>Law</td>
<td>Law Student</td>
<td>South Florida</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maggie</td>
<td>Law</td>
<td>Law Student</td>
<td>Boston University/ University of Alabama</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melissa</td>
<td>Law</td>
<td>Law Student</td>
<td>Mississippi State</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard</td>
<td>Law</td>
<td>Law Student</td>
<td>University of Mississippi</td>
<td>Public and Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>General Studies-Journalism/ Political Science</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overall, the participants in this study varied demographically, geographically, and educationally. The common factor was their participation in service-learning course in the Mississippi Delta while at the University of Mississippi, although even that commonality had quite a bit of variance. Each course was from a different discipline, taught by a different professor, with different academic and service requirements. The unit of analysis was the individual student, thus the primary objective of the study is to understand each participant’s individual experience and how service-learning in an underserved rural Mississippi region might impact his or her perceptions of race and privilege.

**Descriptions of service-learning experiences.** Four courses with a service-learning component were included in this study. The professors deemed the courses service-learning, although there was a wide variety of manifestations of service-learning among the courses. Table 4 indicates the course discipline, the service agency involved, and city and county location of the service work by participant.

**Law course.** Offered annually, this course provides law students with the opportunity to work with “disadvantaged or underserved communities in Mississippi,” by providing business-
related legal services with the objective of improving the economic potential of individuals and communities in impoverished areas of the state. Each student was required to complete a minimum of 90 hours of service work including research and communication, plus the professor allowed students to count time participating in this study toward their total hours.

**Linguistics course.** A cross-listed and stacked course, this linguistics class contained both graduate and undergraduate students. The focus of the course was to conduct sociolinguistic research to better understand the dialect and other sociolinguistic attributes of people in Quitman County, Mississippi. Each student was required to conduct a practice interview and two data-collecting interviews. After conducting oral history interviews, the class analyzed the data and created a brochure on the history of the community, which was an opportunity to give back to the community – an important element of sociolinguistic research.

**Political science course.** Service-learning is a relatively new component of this political science course focusing on international development. In addition to classroom study about the politics and economics of developing countries, students were to gain insight into these challenges by exploring underdeveloped areas of the United States, specifically the Mississippi Delta. Students were required to conduct a minimum of ten hours of service, including travel time to the Delta, and write a response paper about the experience.

**Sociology course.** This course directly addresses social issues in the Mississippi Delta by examining the history, theory, and policy behind the current challenges and developments in the Delta. Education and poverty in the Delta were covered in classroom instruction, along with community and economic development, healthcare, leadership, and public policy. Students spent a week traveling through the Mississippi Delta and conducting community service, in an effort to provide more in-depth learning about sociological methods and analysis of social issues in the
underserved areas. A service-learning journal was a required component of the course. Table 4 provides the course discipline, service site, and location of the service-learning for each participant.

Table 4
Service-learning Service Sites and Locations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Course Discipline</th>
<th>Service Site</th>
<th>Location</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allen</td>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>Spring Initiative/ Junior Spring Initiative</td>
<td>Clarksdale, MS (Coahoma County)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>Linguistics</td>
<td>Individual Interview</td>
<td>Oxford, MS in lieu of Marks, MS (Quitman County)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashley</td>
<td>Linguistics</td>
<td>Interviews at September Song Festival</td>
<td>Marks, MS (Quitman County)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridget</td>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>Spring Initiative</td>
<td>Clarksdale, MS (Coahoma County)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>West Tallahatchie High School, MEGA, and Mound Bayou City Hall</td>
<td>Mound Bayou, Cleveland (Bolivar County), Clarksdale (Coahoma County), and Sumner, MS (Tallahatchie County)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claire</td>
<td>Law</td>
<td>Farm Day Individual Clients</td>
<td>Durant, MS (Holmes County)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>Spring Initiative</td>
<td>Clarksdale, MS (Coahoma County)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen</td>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>Spring Initiative</td>
<td>Clarksdale, MS (Coahoma County)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ford</td>
<td>Linguistics</td>
<td>Individual Interview</td>
<td>Marks, MS (Quitman County)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greg</td>
<td>Law</td>
<td>Farm Day Individual Clients</td>
<td>Durant, MS (Holmes County)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howard</td>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>Habitat for Humanity</td>
<td>Tutwiler, MS (Tallahatchie County)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudonym</td>
<td>Course Discipline</td>
<td>Service Site</td>
<td>Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>Spring Initiative</td>
<td>Clarksdale, MS</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(Coahoma County)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lindsey</td>
<td>Law</td>
<td>Farm Day Individual Clients</td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>(Holmes County)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Law</td>
<td>Individual Clients</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>(Tallahatchie County)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Spring Initiative</td>
<td>Clarksdale, MS</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Coahoma County)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will</td>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>West Tallahatchie High School, MEGA, and Mound Bayou City Hall</td>
<td>Mound Bayou, Cleveland (Bolivar County), Clarksdale (Coahoma County), and Sumner, MS (Tallahatchie County)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wendy</td>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>Not available</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Annotated narratives.** The following narratives give a brief description of each participant in the study, including educational information, prior exposure to people of different races and ethnicities, and other relevant background information. I have used each student’s
preferred terminology regarding race (i.e., White, Caucasian, Black, African American) in his or her individual participant profile.

*Allen.* Allen, a White, male political science major from southwest Mississippi, was an avid volunteer prior to the class. “I regularly donate blood and try and volunteer whenever I can, and so this was an easy opportunity to do that.” While he heard some grumbling from his peers about the service-learning component of this class, he felt that they generally had a good experience, but that knowing about the service component prior to enrolling would have made for a better experience for some. He had been to the Delta only when passing through on his way elsewhere. He had a positive experience when working at the Junior Spring Initiative with elementary-aged children, and then with older children at Spring Initiative on his second service trip to Clarksdale.

Allen attended a very diverse public high school and felt that students of different races interacted, but also fought on occasion. He also recalled older people in the community being more likely to be racists, and attributes that to their personal recollections of the volatility of the Civil Rights Era.

In college, he noted that he was around Asian, Black, and Latino students more than in high school, and while his peer group was predominantly White, he did have friends of other ethnicities. “I try to make friends, but it’s hard with school and work and stuff, but I try and make friends whenever I can.” While at Ole Miss, Allen did recall two racist incidents -- the draping of a Confederate flag over the James Meredith statue and the rebuilding of a Black fraternity house that had been burned down, which opened some old wounds regarding that incident. Allen seemed more aware than many of his peers of the disparities that continue to exist for the Black community in Mississippi, and he attributed that to his education and knowledge.
about the Civil Rights Movement and Jim Crow laws.

Anna. Anna, a female undergraduate student, identified racially as White, but she was much more connected to her identity as Irish American. She also referred to herself as a “northern Yankee.” She was a linguistics major who grew up near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and attended an all-White private Catholic high school where she had no interaction with students of color.

Attending Ole Miss was a move Anna made in large part because she “had to get away” and had “the hugest crush on Eli Manning.” Many of her childhood friends attended school in inner city Philadelphia, and Anna’s decision to attend a school in the South prompted many comments about southern stereotypes, such as “you must eat grits and use double-negatives.”

Upon arriving, she became good friends with a Black student with whom she was neighbors during her freshman year. While at the University of Mississippi, Anna recalled several racially charged incidents or experiences. The first was hearing on CNN that there was a riot on campus in response to the re-election of President Obama. Anna recalled, “I was on a walk at the time through the Grove. Didn’t see it at all.” The second was “that whole James Meredith thing,” referring to the desecration of the campus Civil Rights Memorial. Finally, Anna mentioned the atmosphere in a sociology class where the professor, with whom she said she did not get along, brought up issues of race quite a bit, and it sometimes got uncomfortable, but in the end, Anna recalled that some “constructive conversations” had materialized during the course.

Anna’s service-learning experience, which was initially supposed to take place in Quitman County, ended up simply being an in-person interview with someone from Quitman County, but was actually conducted in Oxford. While this diminished her first-hand experience
of the Delta, she was able to glean much information about growing up in the Delta from the interviewee, a college-aged White male student from Marks, Mississippi.

**Ashley.** Ashley is a White graduate student in linguistics who grew up in a small town in southwest Missouri. Her hometown, not unlike Marks, Mississippi where she did her service work, is shrinking due to loss of industry and farming, so she felt that immediate connection with the Delta community. Ashley did, however, notice a marked difference between Marks and Oxford, the latter being much more economically robust than areas in the Delta.

Having attended a predominantly White private high school, Ashley was not around people of other races and ethnicities growing up, explaining that “southwest Missouri isn’t a super racially diverse area.” She also pointed out that the few Asian, African American, Native American, and Indian people in the community “never had any problems fitting in” in her perception, but also noted that they were all of the same socioeconomic class, so “there wasn’t an issue that they were going to turn out to be gangbangers or anything like that, because we knew their parents probably make more money than mine do.” Overall, Ashley was cognizant of her insulated upbringing, and said, “frankly we were upper-middle class kids, and therefore, we were fairly isolated and sheltered.”

Ashley attend the University of Mississippi for her undergraduate degree, and found herself around a much more diverse collection of peers than in her previous community. She described noticing that many African American students lived down the hall from her in the dorm, and that was not something she saw normally, but after a few months, she became far more accustomed to the presence of minority students and even made some African American friends. Ashley did note that dating someone African American would have been an issue with her parents, and gave an example of a past relationship with a biracial young man that troubled
her mother, but primarily because her grandmother would have been very upset. Both the Obama re-election “riot scenario” and the “James Meredith incident” were mentioned when discussing racial conflict while at the University of Mississippi. Ashley denounced both incidents, but also mentioned “listening to African American students trash your university because one of the girls straight up said that this university, Ole Miss, IS slavery.” She felt that implying a link between the students responsible for the defacing of the statue being “jackasses” and other White students supporting slavery was unreasonable. Regarding the Ole Miss campus, Ashley also said, “I appreciate that while some of the buildings have names of slave owners, which was the cultural norm of their time, that doesn’t make them horrible people and mean that you should take their name off the building.” She felt that nobody is made to come to Ole Miss, and that they could certainly choose to leave.

Ashley’s service work in the Delta was to document the language and history of Delta residents at the September Song Festival in Marks, Mississippi. She and her interview partner conducted three 15 to 20 minute interviews, one with a White man in his 50s, one with an African American woman in her 40s, and a brief interview with an African American woman in her 60s. She felt that while cold interviews are somewhat awkward, that overall the interviewees were pleased that someone was interested in their community’s history.

**Bridget.** Bridget is a Caucasian 21-year-old female undergraduate student from Alabama studying international studies, French, and public policy leadership. She attended a public high school in Alabama that was 20 to 30% African American, but still majority White. She did not recall any conflict in high school surrounding issues of race, but did at the University of Mississippi, although she said that she was around students from different races “to a lesser extent.” While she did not experience any issues within her immediate peer group, she said that
“obviously there are incidents on campus that my friends and I talk about that are regarding race.” The vandalism of the James Meredith statue was the first mentioned. Bridget was studying abroad when that incident took place, and “we were mortified when you’re abroad and people ask you about your university.” She and her study abroad group, who were all White, discussed things such as how the university would handle the situation and the legal implications of such an act. “We were all very much hoping that the student would be punished for that.”

Her service-learning experience in the Delta took place at Junior Spring Initiative in Clarksdale. Bridget was impressed with the high expectations that the program staff had for the students and how they treated the students like adults, giving them a lot of responsibility. The children seemed to rise to the occasion, even carefully using a handsaw during one of the special projects in which they were constructing a wooden canoe that would then become Spring Initiative’s property for use with the students.

Bridget seemed to have a clear sense of the role of service-learning in connection with her class content. She was self-reflective when it came to her own racial identity and the part that played in the dynamics of the experience. While she did not give specifics about her childhood interaction with minorities, she seems to be aware of race and some of the byproducts of privilege and was able to discuss it in a thoughtful and productive manner.

**Chris.** Chris had never been to the Delta, but said, “It’s just something that you always hear about. The Delta, the Delta, the Delta.” A 21-year-old White male student who also identifies as Hispanic, Chris has tried to learn about the culture of the South and Mississippi, and saw this sociology class as an interesting opportunity to further understand the region. Chris’s immigrant family gave him a unique perspective when it came to issues of race and ethnicity. His parents immigrated to the United States, and while they were financially strapped, they
instilled in the family a sense of pride in their Hispanic heritage and often said, “don’t forget where you came from.” His early schooling on the Mississippi coast provided the opportunity to be around a lot of socioeconomic diversity, but his actual community was “a very White town” without “much mixing of the races.” Even in college, he was not around many African Americans. His friend group was primarily from his academic discipline, and he said that there were not many Black students in the international studies program. He noted, however, that he felt like a primary factor that causes separation is “more of a class division than it is a racial division.” While not around many African Americans in childhood or college, Chris explained that his secondary major of Chinese language had afforded him the opportunity to travel to China, which was a culturally enlightening experience.

Chris described issues at the University of Mississippi that were in direct contrast to his informed views about race and ethnicity. When asked about conflicts in college surrounding race, he exclaimed, “This IS Ole Miss.” He described interactions with fellow students who are “outright racist and will admit it, that they are outright racist,” and how disturbing this has been. He also has observed blatant discrimination against Black students seeking membership in traditionally White fraternities, even his own which he touts as the most progressive on campus.

The service-learning class went as a group to several towns in the Delta over a week-long Alternative Spring Break experience. Chris noted that going as a group led to much discussion about what they were observing and experiencing. They engaged in activities such as cleaning up the area around the City Hall in Mound Bayou, an historic African American community, notable because of its long tradition of Black leadership in a region where that was uncommon. They also worked with the West Tallahatchie High School on a mural project and with Mississippians Engaged in Greener Agriculture (MEGA). Chris explained that MEGA was “run
by a former nurse, and she’s dedicated to teaching people about food reliance and being able to get healthier food into people’s diets.” Overall, Chris found the experience interesting, rewarding, and positive, yet the biggest challenge was that “we all just felt it wasn’t enough,” and he wished they could do more for the communities they visited.

**Claire.** Claire, a White female law student from a rural area of southern Illinois, was interested in taking a service-learning class in law school to gain hands-on experience and to “work with people without actually trying to prep their case for court.” She had established that being a litigator was not her ideal career path, and she liked the idea of helping clients be proactive and set up businesses in a way that will deflect future problems.

Southern Illinois, in general, is not very diverse according to Claire, and her hometown was exclusively White until she was in high school. Around that same time, the first Black student arrived at her high school, and she recalled that “people were surprised when he spoke proper English and played in the band.” She also speculated that he had actually been recruited to play basketball, but his other attributes prevented the school from getting in trouble, and that the move actually benefited the young man because “they brought him out of a really bad area.” Needless to say, interaction with minority students for Claire in high school was nearly non-existent.

In college, Claire was also in a fairly insulated environment, attending a private college in Alabama with few minority students. She did, however, recall going to Prichard, Alabama, which she described as “real rough,” to do service work for Greek life during which the students “had to wear gloves and things because you would find heroin needles, bags with empty bottles, and I think it is predominantly non-White in that area.” She said that discussions about race would come up occasionally at this Jesuit school when discussing service projects in Central
America, for example, but Claire said, “It was never negative.”

Claire was surprised at the similarities between the Delta and the area in which she grew up. The property that the class visited for Farm Day was unexpectedly small and modest, but the surrounding area was not an unfamiliar landscape for her. “To me a farm is like a big thing, and this [the Farm Day location] was like a test farm.” In addition to Farm Day, Claire had two individual clients, an animal rescue agency in north Mississippi and a low-income housing development in Sunflower County in the Delta. For the housing project, she and her partner were actually collaborating with a team of law students specifically addressing housing needs in the Delta, so they had not had any direct interaction with the client at the time of the interview. Claire also added that she realized from this experience that she enjoyed the business side of the law, but was actually now thinking of pursuing work with the FBI. I did not explore what exactly led to that change.

**Elizabeth.** Elizabeth is a 19-year-old international studies/Spanish double major. She identifies racially and ethnically as Caucasian. Even though her father’s side of the family is Orthodox Jewish, she does not identify with Judaism religiously or culturally. She also has an African American uncle by marriage on her father’s side of the family. Elizabeth attended a large public high school, which was “one of the most racially diverse high schools in Memphis.” She described a population that included African American, Indian, Japanese, Korean, and Chinese students, in addition to White students. The only conflict surrounding race or ethnicity that she recalled was some irritation on the part of the White students that all the top class positions were held by Indian students one year, a frustration exacerbated by the fact that they were high school transfer students, so not really seen as long-time members of the school community.

Elizabeth felt like there was less interaction among different races at the University of
Mississippi. At her high school “it was much more normal, and here, it’s a lot more separated.” She attributes some of that to being part of the Croft Institute, where the majority of the students in international studies are Caucasian. She speculated that might be because of the racial and economic disparities in Mississippi, and that students from lower socioeconomic strata might not be interested in or prepared for the rigor of a selective program like international studies. Additionally, the study abroad requirement for the international studies major may make that field of study inaccessible to lower income students.

Outside of academics, Elizabeth noted the lack of African American participation in the predominantly White ministry organization in which she is involved. The group would like to have more minority participation, but currently the only non-White participants are international students. Elizabeth spoke of a good friend who writes on issue of race for the *Daily Mississippian*, the University of Mississippi’s student newspaper, and she said that her conversations with this friend have helped her understand the effect that racism continues to have on “the lives of the races now.” She also witnessed racism directly when at a historically White fraternity house on campus. When telling a member of the fraternity that she and a friend were heading over to another fraternity house, the young man said, “No, don’t go there. There’s Black people there.” Elizabeth was mortified and said that she told the young man, rather insistently, that she had no problem with Black people.

The service-learning site at which she worked was Spring Initiative in Clarksdale. She helped tutor students in an after-school program. She was aware of the racial disparity between those in charge, the teachers, volunteers, and staff, and those being served, the children. “The people in charge were White and the students were Black, but it never felt like an unequal thing. It didn’t feel like they were looking down upon them in any way.” Having done a lot of service
in the past, she reflected that “I think that for anyone involved in the long-term with service, that’s typical.” She pondered later in the interview whether that imbalance could possibly be degrading to the African American community members, but said again that she did not feel like it was in this situation. Overall, through her observations of the Delta, she felt that it was not that different than other rural areas on the surface, but she was aware that the “numbers told a different story than what I saw.”

**Ellen.** Ellen is a 21-year-old female student studying journalism and political science. She identifies as “White, Caucasian, Anglo-Saxon, all of those.” She had been to the Delta several times in the past with her high school sports teams, so the flat, open landscape was no surprise to her. During her service work at Spring Initiative, she was pleased to discover that children being tutored were smart, enthusiastic, and seemed to be reading above their grade level, in her estimation. One child reminded her of her brother at that age, and she “put a bit more care into him just because I felt like he reminded me so much of him.”

Ellen attended a private high school in north Mississippi, where she was “a little disadvantaged” with regard to being around people from different racial and ethnic groups. Her school, both students and teachers, were all White, with an occasional Black student arriving form time to time. She recounted an incident in the lunchroom when a White student with Asperger’s syndrome made a derogatory comment to the lone Black student about liking fried chicken, and the Black student “lost it and leaps across the table, socked him in the face. He flew back on to the ground, and you could hear a pin drop in the room.” In general, the student body was pleased when the White student received out-of-school suspension, because he had prominent parents and they assumed we would not be held accountable.

In college, Ellen had “tons” of interaction with students of color. Freshman year, she
lived in close proximity to young women who were Black and biracial, one with whom she remained good friends. She commented, however, that there are “some girls that were from the South that were raised differently.” When Ellen moved off campus, her White roommate took issue with her having Black friends over to watch television one night. The roommate, cloistered away in her bedroom, called her mother to report this situation, who then called Ellen’s mother, who then called Ellen with the report of “three Black boys” at their apartment. Ellen explained the reality of the situation to her mother, but the roommate moved out abruptly the next morning without speaking a word to Ellen. The scenario was very upsetting to Ellen, and she was particularly disturbed by how uncomfortable it made her Black friends. Ellen apologized and said, “I’m sorry. You’ve got to understand that I’m nothing like her,” but she felt that the damage was already done to their relationship.

Ellen seemed to have an awareness of racial and power dynamics. In spite of her limited early interaction with people of color, Ellen forged relationships with African American peers at the University of Mississippi, but was still aware of the different experiences White and Black students have in this environment. Her observations at Spring Initiative included the lack of White children participating in the program and the absence of Black people in leadership roles in the program. She seemed to employ critical thinking skills in an effort to sort out these disparities, which allowed her to gain particularly keen insights during her service-learning experience.

**Ford.** A graduate student in linguistics, Ford identifies as “pretty super duper White” and describes his father as “the Whitest person I’ve ever met. All his family for 500 years didn’t breed outside of Scandinavia.” Yet Ford does not really consider his race part of his identity. When asked how aware he was of his own race during a service-learning class in the Delta, he
declared, “Oh, god. It was absent,” but went on to clarify that he was interviewing an older White woman, and that he is really only aware of it when he is in an “exclusively different environment, if I’m the minority in a particular situation.” His awareness of social and racial context was keen, and he seemed to be insightful about the subtext during the interview he was conducting as a part of this service-learning class.

Ford went to a public high school in northeast Mississippi where while the student population was diverse, self-segregation existed. He described that “Black people sat with Black people and White people sat with White people.” It wasn’t until his senior year that he befriended two Black classmates, but it was challenging in his community. “When they came to my neighborhood, people would call my dad and tell him that there were Black kids in my house.” There was anger among his White high school peers when a Black girl was named to the homecoming court, because they wanted a White girl to be named instead. Also when President Obama was campaigning, students actively rebelled, but he was unsure if that was because he was Black or a Democrat, “because there was equal hatred for those in high school.”

His friend group continued to be diverse in college. At community college, the diversity was significant, and he recalled no racially charged incidents until he arrived at Ole Miss. Ford recalled that, again, the Obama election of 2008 prompted an uproar. “Well, they say it was a riot. I’ve head that apologists say it was blown out of proportion. I wasn’t there on campus at the time, but I saw the news coverage, and it looked pretty gross.” He then remembered “the James Meredith thing,” which he described as sad because he loves Ole Miss and knows most others here do as well, and was quick to point out that the perpetrator of that incident was from Georgia.

While Ford’s service-learning experience involved a White woman interviewee, it still provided a view into the racial dynamics of Marks, Mississippi, past and present. She was a
former teacher who taught through integration, originally at the public schools, but soon moving
to a private school because of better salary and administration, she says. She described a
community where Black and White people shared meals and even attended church together, a
scenario that Ford said was simply not accurate. According to Ford, she said, “Oh, it’s gotten
much better. We’re going to church together.” His reaction to that statement was, “No one’s
going to church together. They have segregated churches, and the also have de facto segregated
schools.” Ford also commented that people talked about “the drug houses,” and the Mexicans
that lived together in big groups, so there seemed to be significant stereotyping of minorities in
the community. He did relate to her regarding her attitude toward education, its importance, and
ways to improve it. He appreciated her wanting to portray Marks in the best possible light, but
also questioned how guarded she might have been with him. Ford seemed to think that she was
probably less guarded with him since in her view, they had commonalities since they were both
White and “in the same group, the same in-group.” In spite of that common bond, Ford felt that
she did not really believe he was from Mississippi because he didn’t talk like she did and might
suspect that he was “coming to document stupid old rural Mississippi.” Ford seemed to get a
good sense of the racial dynamics in Marks, even after a brief interview with this one community
member.

**Greg.** A White law student from Alabama, Greg had heard positive reviews of the
service-learning course offered through the law school. A previous roommate had been in the
class and had a “great, rewarding experience.” Interacting with the people of the Delta and the
ability to help out were also alluring to Greg. He’d heard “how a lot of these people in the Delta
are highly motivated and have an entrepreneurial spirit, but they don’t always have the best
understanding of how to protect themselves legally.”
The high school Greg attended was a majority White, liberal arts public high school. He said that some African American students did attend, and he declared that his school put the “liberal” in liberal arts. He made no mention of his own interaction with his Black classmates in high school, but did comment that in college, his interaction with African Americans was primarily in the local trailer park in which he lived, rather than in the classroom.

His experience in the service-learning class consisted of Farm Day in Durant, Mississippi, and interaction with three individual clients, two in north Mississippi and one in Sunflower County in the Delta. At the time of the interview, Greg had not yet communicated with any of his clients, but expected to soon, as the professor required 90 hours of experiential work to fulfill the course requirements. Greg’s experience at Farm Day was very positive. He described it at “goal oriented,” “egalitarian,” and the content was very interesting. “It definitely got me excited about farming, or at least starting my own garden, or something like that.”

**Howard.** Howard is a 20-year-old African American undergraduate student majoring in political science. He expressed a need for more African American students to study political science because “if y’all want to advance…y’all should be majoring in something like this to help understand politics more…” Most of his classmates in political science are White, as were those on his service-learning team in the Delta.

Howard expressed a comfort level with White people that he did not have with African Americans, especially when growing up near Chicago, because “White people, to me, are easier to talk to than Black people.” He did not find Black people, in general, truthful or trustworthy, so chose to interact primarily with White people in both high school and college.

Howard came to the University of Mississippi because his grandmother lives in north Mississippi, and she always talked about “Ole Miss.” Howard “was afraid at first because I heard
nothing but negative comments from all the people up north.” After arriving, he found it better than he was expecting, and as a northerner, “It was an experience for me to experience the South and get to know a different culture.” When asked about the racial climate on campus, he recalled both the incident involving the James Meredith statue and another where a Black student’s car was spray-painted and “some White guys” yelled racial slurs at her. I did not press him on his thoughts on either event.

Howard had not been to the Delta prior to the service-learning class, where he worked with Habitat for Humanity helping with home construction, mudding to be exact – something at which he was not skilled, he realized during the experience. He was shocked by the living conditions and the lack of businesses in the Delta. He also commented on the demographics of the area. “Why is the Delta so bad and there’s a lot of Black people there?” He felt like the obvious need in the Delta was a concern that people of all races should be more focused on addressing.

Jane. Jane is a 20-year-old White Canadian female political science major. While she did not originally know that there was a service component for the class in which she enrolled, she had no problem with that because she really enjoyed past classes with this particular professor. She thought some students were a little disgruntled because of the time commitment, but wasn’t sure if any dropped the class upon learning about the service requirement.

Attending high school in Canada, Jane was heavily exposed to students from different races and ethnicities. Her school was approximately 50% White and 50% other ethnic backgrounds, which in Canada were primarily Middle Eastern and Native Canadians. She had always been taught that “it doesn’t matter what color you are, if you’re a good person.” She also mentioned Canada being more politically left-wing, therefore, multiculturalism was something
students began learning about at a very young age.

At the University of Mississippi, Jane’s peer group is all White. She added that she didn’t mean to imply that “we don’t have friend from different races at all,” but her closest friends were of her race. While at Ole Miss, she has seen some conflicts surrounding issues of race, and briefly mentioned “the James Meredith statue,” presumably meaning the defacing of the memorial, and “an armed robbery this year between a Black and a White,” but did not recall any other racially charged situations.

The service-learning experience took place in Clarksdale, Mississippi, at the Spring Initiative where she assisted at an after-school program tutoring math and reading. Before the students settle in for homework help, they have a sharing time, and when asked what the worst part of their day was, one youngster said that “his best friend might get sent to ‘juvie’ because he’s been stealing teachers’ wallets and their money.” This revelation made a strong impact on Jane, and she noted that at that age [probably 11-years-old], she had never even heard of “juvie.” She was also aware of the fact that all the instructors were White and all the children, except one little boy, were Black. While she was aware of that imbalance, she felt that the children were oblivious to the divide. Jane said that this experience made her realize that she liked working with kids, and that she’d like to teach in the Delta after she graduates. When asked if she planned to work with Teach for America (TFA) after graduation, she noted that she could not participate in TFA since she wasn’t an American citizen, but still wanted to find a way to go back.

Lindsey. A White female law student, Lindsey identifies more as Southern than by race or national origins. She attended a public high school in Florida that was relatively diverse, approximately 15% Black in her estimation. Growing up in a small southern town, a history of racial divisiveness was part of the culture. The Confederate soldier statue in front of the town
courthouse was one physical representation of this, Lindsey noted. In spite of the historical divide, Lindsey had friends of different races. She was very involved in sports, so this gave her the opportunity to engage with many students in and out of class. She had Black girlfriends with whom she would socialize. Although Lindsey said she was always aware of her Whiteness, she did not feel like it was a hindrance to her relationships. She has continued to keep in touch with many of these high school friends.

Lindsey attended a very diverse university in southern Florida, where she had friends of many ethnicities – Indian, Pakistani, and Egyptian, she said. She didn’t actively seek out diverse friends, but it felt natural to her having had a broad group of friends in childhood. The institution was a departure from others she knew of that were considered “good ole boy schools” and schools where Greek organizations, sports conferences, and legacies took top billing. Therefore, her transition to the University of Mississippi, and Mississippi in general, for law school was a bit of a culture shock. “So when I came to Mississippi, I was like, ‘racism is over.’ There is no such thing any more. Quit harping on it.” She acknowledges that perhaps she grew up in a bubble in Florida, and that she was very naïve about ongoing racial disparities until arriving in Mississippi. “They had a noose around James Meredith’s [statue] neck last year! This is not 20th century America.”

She was prompted to take this particular service-learning class because she “would like to graduate with some type of skill base, not just a knowledge base…” She was involved not only in the Farm Day in Durant and with individual clients, but also with planning and facilitating the Race and Sustainability Symposium that was being hosted by the law school. She obtained much information about the history of and current cultural and socioeconomic atmosphere in the Delta from her research for this symposium, well beyond the general preparation presented in the
classroom instruction for this service-learning class. Her description of and insights about her experience in the Delta reflected this additional level of knowledge and seemed to greatly enhance her processing of the experience. Lindsey seemed to have a greater level of awareness and overall maturity that allowed her to put the service-learning experience into a broader context.

**Maggie.** Maggie, a law student, was prompted to take a service-learning class in order to make connections and get important hands-on experience before getting on the job market. She is a White female originally from Mississippi who attended a small private high school in Jackson, which had a predominantly White student body. As far as minorities in her class, she said “there may have been like 3 out of a 100 person class.” Needless to say, her interaction with people of color was minimal.

When asked about her exposure to people from different backgrounds in college, she only mentioned a very negative interaction while at a university in the Boston area. She had a roommate from Nigeria, with whom “it did not work out very well.” Apparently, whenever Maggie was in their dorm room, her Black roommate “would put up these YouTube videos about how much she hated White people.” Maggie moved out after six weeks to a single room, and transferred to Alabama. There she became a member of a largely White sorority, where she met most of her friends, and therefore interaction with people of different races and ethnicities was very limited. “We may have had a handful of minorities,” she noted.

In law school, she has had a more diverse experience, but she did not elaborate on interactions while at the University of Mississippi. During her service-learning work, she dealt primarily with White clients, who she said were relatively educated and experienced, and basically easy clients to deal with. She did not attend the Farm Day in Durant, during which the
others in the class had the opportunity to travel to the Delta and meet informally with locals in the agriculture business. She and a partner did travel to Clarksdale to meet with one of their clients, but did not see much of the town. She had been to the Delta previously, but only saw Parchman prison and the Ground Zero Blues Club.

Maggie expressed some frustrations with the class because she felt unprepared to do the legal work that the clients needed. She wished that class time had either been spent preparing the law students on the technical aspects of law, or that they had simply not had regular class meetings at all, and just been able to consult with their clients on their own schedule. This experience has helped her with career confirmation, and she felt that this class provided some of the connections and hands-on experience for which she was looking.

**Melissa.** “People from the Delta think that they know the Delta better than anyone else, and I didn’t.” Melissa, a White female law student originally from Cleveland, Mississippi, wasn’t surprised by the need in the Delta, but was surprised by the existence of programs that were within a mile from her home – programs she discovered during a service-learning class in the law school. She was interested in the service-learning class because of its outreach to the Delta, with a focus on agriculture and underprivileged areas, areas in which she had personal connections because of her farming family in Cleveland.

Growing up in the Delta, Melissa attended private schools, where she was virtually not around people of different races at all. “We had one Hispanic transfer student my junior year of high school, and that was it.” Being an all-White private school, the only tension around race Melissa recalls was the public school students’ assumption that students attending the private school were only doing so “so they don’t have to go to school with all of the Black kids.”

In college, she was around a more diverse population. During her time at Mississippi
State, the Kappa Delta sorority accepted its first Black member. Also, Melissa’s participation in the Miss Mississippi pageant provided her opportunity to get to know Black, Hispanic, and Asian women. She still was not “immersed in the culture, but definitely more.” Law school has afforded more opportunity for interaction with peers from different cultures. “Just by the nature of us being a smaller group in law school, I would say I have more interaction with people of different racial groups. Instead of just being around them, it’s more like actually working and hanging out outside of school.”

Melissa’s service-learning experience included individual client consultation and participation in a second Farm Day, focusing on Farm-to-School programs that get fresh food to area public schools as part of the service-learning experience. The group also spent a day in Mound Bayou visiting sites such as the Taborian Hospital, which is about to launch as the Delta Health Center, and the St. Gabriel Sisters of Mercy. These site visits were information gathering rather than service, but Melissa clearly discovered a part of the Delta with which she was not previously familiar, in spite of being raised in the vicinity.

Richard. Looking forward to a “great learning experience” and hoping to get “hands-on experience,” Richard, a White male law student, took a service-learning class that included travel to the Delta for Farm Day. He had previously participated in field experiences with the law school, and had been to the Delta often in the past because he had friends from Yazoo City.

While growing up, Richard attended several different schools. He began at a predominately White private Christian school in southern Mississippi. Around 7th grade, his family moved to Oklahoma, where he attended a fairly diverse public school, with a racial breakdown of 30% Black, 60% White, and 10% other, by his estimation. His junior year, the family moved back to Mississippi, and Richard attended a public high school on the Gulf Coast.
where the student body was approximately half Black and half White. He always had a diverse group of friends. He attributes that, at least in part, to his now deceased father’s attitude toward race. Richard recalls:

I don’t think he would have been tolerant of any kind of racial bias or anything like that. He was very from the 70s. He wasn’t a hippie, but he loved everybody, and he treated everybody well, so I don’t think that would have flown with him. He was one of those “man of the people” type guys.

Richard also reflected on how he had many Black classmates in his high school AP classes in Oklahoma, when he had virtually none in his AP classes in Mississippi.

Richard attended the University of Mississippi for undergraduate school and was in the Honors College. He noted that the vast majority of his peers in the Honors College were White, so his exposure to minority students diminished when he arrived. He also commented that in the South, race and the past are constantly being brought up, something he did not experience in Oklahoma, and felt that that might contribute to less interaction between White and Black people here. He, as most students, mentioned the incident on campus during which a noose was placed on the statue of James Meredith. “I didn’t see anybody approving of that. It seemed like everybody thought that was pretty low and nobody liked it…everybody saw that for what it was.” He felt that it could actually be viewed as a unifying event since most students shared a common outrage over “some racists being jerks.”

Richard’s experience with the service-learning course involved individual clients, Farm Day, and work on the Race and Sustainability Symposium. He spoke of little interaction between the farmers and the law students, but felt that was more a lack of a need for assistance rather than anything more deeply rooted. He found the diversity of the participants unexpected, with the
majority being White, but “actually a pretty good mix” and a “lively group” where “everybody made a point to ask a question.” He worked with three individual clients, a director of a non-profit organization, a rising entrepreneur, and another non-profit based in the law school. Richard expressed pride in the work that they had done with the clients, and seemed to think that he and his partner were particularly fortunate to work with clients who were very communicative and motivated.

Sandy. A self-described non-traditional student, Sandy returned to Mississippi after a 30-year hiatus in pursuit of a Bachelor of General Studies degree focusing on journalism, political science, and legal studies. She identified as Caucasian, and mentioned people of different ethnicity in her extended family, including an Hispanic/American Indian step-father and two half-siblings from her mother’s relationship with “a Civil Rights leader” who was African American. She has always had an interest in Habitat for Humanity, and was happy to have the opportunity to participate in a service-learning class when a service-learning internship that she was trying to arrange would not fit into her schedule.

Sandy was “raised in an Air Force environment where there are people from all over the world that are coming and going, who have intermarried, and the rest of it, so it was just normal to me.” When moving to Mississippi in the 1970s, she was shocked to see that racism and discrimination were alive and well, ranging from the Ku Klux Klan marching in a Fourth of July parade and Black male peers not being allowed to come to the home of a White girl to study. Her mother’s involvement with the Civil Rights Movement, and romantic involvement with one of the leaders, created a lot of tension for Sandy. Her mother actively involved Sandy and her sister in the cause. “Being part of the NAACP was to receive the death stare” from members of the Black community. Sandy said she never really “looked at color” until her mother’s involvement
with a married African American man began to directly impact her childhood experience. She began to hear from peers, “I can’t go out with you. Your mom’s involved with a Black guy.” This stigmatization lasted into college when she came to Ole Miss in the mid-70s.

When she first began to attend the University of Mississippi, there were some African American students, but Black and White students did not socialize and remained fairly self-segregated. When she returned in 2013, she was very proud of all the strides the university community had made in race relations. The contrast was clear. “…in Mississippi in 1975, I was like, guys, did anybody tell you that this whole Civil Rights thing happened? You don’t have to be like this, you know.” She reflected that upon her return, “I’m so proud of Mississippi. It’s just like, yes! Ole Miss is doing it. I’m so thrilled!” Sandy had a unique perspective on the recent racial incidents on the University of Mississippi campus and a Black History Month presentation by journalist Soledad O’Brien. “It made me mad when they did the ‘Black in America’ routine and that thing happened with the statue because, well, I could be called a conspiracy theorist, but I felt like they drummed that up…” Basically, Sandy questioned whether the vandalism of the Meredith statue, along with the alleged sudden appearance of Black panhandlers in the School of Journalism, were trumped up incidents to incite racial divide on campus, in order to give O’Brien fodder for her presentation, the last on her national tour.

Sandy’s experience during the service-learning portion of a political science class was generally positive. She and three other students from the class, an African American woman, a White traditional-aged student, and a male international student from South America, all carpooled to Tutwiler to work with Habitat for Humanity. She said they discussed the service work and the Delta in general from four very different perspectives. “I’m really glad that Ole Miss has service-learning. I think there’s room for a lot more, especially in areas that really need
Shannon. Shannon is a White, upper-middle class political science major who had volunteered with Habitat for Humanity in New Orleans prior to working with the organization in the Mississippi Delta for a service-learning class. She was surprised at the low number of houses constructed by the Tutwiler, Mississippi chapter – only 41 houses in 28 years. But she said, meeting the homeowner was great. “She was so sweet. She was so excited…this is her first home she’s ever owned, and she was just beyond excited.”

When asked about exposure to people from other racial and ethnic groups, Shannon said that she was “fine with it,” and that she had lots of experience doing service work since she was very young, and had been brought up “never to judge anybody.” She attended predominantly White schools in a small town in Pennsylvania, where there were just a handful of students of color, but she clarifies that “it wasn’t on purpose” that there were so few minority students.

After transferring from a community college in New Orleans to the University of Mississippi, she was around a much more diverse student population, including having roommates from different races and ethnicities, include three who were Black and one Chinese. She has noticed that race is “talked about more than it needs to be” at Ole Miss, and that the bulk of the conversation is “from the other side.” She acknowledges that the James Meredith incident was awful, but comments that it was just two people, and yet the administration “took out an entire fraternity house for it.” In response to the Black community “complaining about things,” Shannon feels that “if you stop talking about it so much, maybe it would go away,” and even quotes James Meredith himself when he made a comment about removing both the Confederate soldier statue and the Meredith statue, and that that would end the issues. Shannon felt strongly, and restated several times, that “maybe it [racism] would just go away on its own if we just
stopped bringing it up.”

Shannon had never been to the Delta, so while they had discussed it a little bit in class, she was not sure what to expect beyond poverty. The level of economic hardship was beyond what she anticipated, including houses that were barely standing, but were still occupied by people. While she didn’t feel that race played a role at all in the experience, she did feel like privilege did, when a wealthy Ole Miss student arrived at the site in a BMW, complaining in front of the Habitat team about having to be there on a Saturday. Shannon, however, felt that wasn’t a “race thing. It was a spoiled rich kid thing.” In her estimation, she did not experience anything that had to do with race during her service-learning experience in the Mississippi Delta.

**Todd.** The students at Junior Spring Initiative in Clarksdale immediately noticed that Todd didn’t have a southern accent. Originally from California, he was a 22-year-old political science major who felt that “people these days define too much by race, and I think it causes problems and tends to push Americans away from each other and see too many differences.” Rather than identifying by race, Todd, who was White, considered himself American first for “political reasons.”

Todd attended a racially diverse high school that he described as 80% Asian, and noted that he “hung out with all different types of people.” He had one good African American friend, but his brother had a lot of Black friends because of his involvement with the football team. He did not actively seek out friends of different ethnicities, because he said, “I’d like to say that I really don’t see any differences.”

After transferring to the University of Mississippi, he realized that “I’ve seen more racism back home in California, a ‘progressive’ state than I have ever seen in Oxford,” but admits that he had not travelled around the state much. He noted that there are “a lot of kids here
who are actually kind of just tired of being pinned as racist.” He explains having to “deal with the James Meredith incident,” and that being a fraternity leader, he had the responsibility to “explain to guys why things can’t be done a certain way and why you need to be more sensitive.” While he knew of Mississippi’s unfortunate history, he said that was not on his mind when he made the decision to attend Ole Miss, and reiterated seeing more racism in California than in Oxford.

Todd and three other students from the class worked at the Junior Spring Initiative program tutoring and playing with young children at an after-school program. During the service-learning experience in the Delta, Todd “developed a pretty good friendship with a lot of little kids.” In addition to working with the children, Todd and his classmates interacted with the staff also. He assumed that the staff might be primarily working on a volunteer basis, by may get some funding through grants. “I don’t mean to make this sound like a rude thing, or a negative thing, but they just didn’t have the nicest cars and stuff like that, so I think they take very little and just donate a lot of their time into this program.” Prior to going, Todd had heard about the Delta “being broken” and expected it to be very poor with an illiterate population; however, he felt like those stereotypes were erroneous. “It was nice to see that a lot of what I had heard was not the case.” Overall, Todd had a very positive experience during his service work and felt that the kids and staff “were very happy to have us come.”

**Will.** Will was a 20-year-old White male from Mississippi studying public policy leadership. He attended a public high school on the Mississippi coast, which had “a split demographic of Black and White,” and his friend group was very reflective of this mix. This was his first sociology class, but he seemed to have a strong understanding of many issues in the Delta, such as poverty, educational deficits, and racial disparities from his major studies. He had
an awareness of the nuance of racism and privilege that was lost on many of the other participants.

This service-learning class was not Will’s first foray into service work in the Mississippi Delta. He had served as an intern for the Sunflower County Freedom Project (SCFP) the prior summer. Will’s heightened awareness of race and privilege may have been shaped or enhanced by his time in the Delta or other experiences that he relayed during his interview. He mentioned an incident the summer during his work with SCFP where he had a group of African American students from the program on the University of Mississippi campus. While Will was with the rising 7th graders, a university student drove by and yelled “a racial epithet at the kids when we were walking back to the dorms.” This outing was supposed to be a special opportunity to reward the exceptional children in the SCFP summer program, and it “palpably disrupted that, especially for one student who was visibly shaken and just sort of out of it after that – and angry.”

His observations of differences between the one-week class and the five-week internship were insightful. The one-week program offered awareness of the challenges in the Delta, not unlike the first week of being an intern the prior summer. During the five-week internship, however, “I was able to really engage with the community in a real way, in a meaningful way…” Will felt that while a one-week service-learning experience may have had an impact on the students participating, it may not have had an actual impact on the community being served.

**Summary.** The participants in this study were all University of Mississippi students at the time of their service-learning experiences, although the classes involved different academic disciplines, were taught by different professors, and took place in different communities. In spite of the many variables among the students and their experiences, two factors remained consistent
– their being aware of and, often, imbedded in the culture of the University of Mississippi and the location of their service-learning work, the Mississippi Delta. Limiting the participants to this small, but important group allowed for examination of how students processed ideas of race and privilege and could allow for insights into how service-learning might contribute to the University of Mississippi’s diversity goals.

**Qualitative Results**

The qualitative portion of this study produced data that was collected through pre-service focus groups, post-service individual interviews, and the review of final narrative reflection that the students were required to complete for certain courses. The focus group discussions and individual interviews were recorded, and I created verbatim transcripts of all the conversations. Upon completion of the transcription, I read the transcripts and the narrative reflections making margin notes indicating key ideas, interesting narratives, and emerging themes. I then used the margin notes as a starting point to generate pertinent codes and preliminary themes. Final codes were derived from the CoBRAS factors, Critical Race Theory, Color-Blind Ideology, the literature, and were emergent from the data. The codebook is presented in Table 5. Reading through the transcripts and reflection essays a second time, I coded the documents, which allowed for more specific indicators of the frequency of student comments about particular factors. At this time, I also collected key quotes about various themes for use in the analysis and interpretation portions of this study.

**Table 5**  
*Codebook for Qualitative Analysis*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>CoBRAS</td>
<td>Awareness of Racial Privilege</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>CoBRAS</td>
<td>Awareness of Institutional Discrimination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>CoBRAS</td>
<td>Awareness of Blatant Racial Issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Color-blind Ideology</td>
<td>Color-evasion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analytic Themes

Four primary themes emerged from the data collection concerning the impact of service-learning on student perceptions of race and privilege. The first theme, Motivations, Expectations, and Experience in the Mississippi Delta, examined why students chose to participate in a service-learning class and what they expected both from the experience, as well as the environment and people in the Mississippi Delta. The second theme, Processing Notions of Race and Privilege through Service-learning, provided examples of how students process issues of race and privilege, before the service experience through classroom interaction, during the
service through in-situ critical thinking, and after the service through reflection. The third theme, *Color-Blindness as Distance that Protects*, described students’ minimization and denial of race as a factor in society, their awareness of privilege and the notion of American meritocracy, and their focus on overt and extreme acts of racism as the only indicator of contemporary racism. The final theme, *Service-learning as a Disruptor of the White Paradigm*, examined the specific revelations that students had during their service-learning experiences that allowed them to have a paradigm shift, even if temporary, where they began to see themselves and others through a different perspective, and from outside their own way of knowing.

**Motivations, expectations, and experience in the Mississippi Delta.** Students had various levels of exposure to and knowledge about the Mississippi Delta. Participants also had limited familiarity with service-learning as an instructional method. Each student was starting at a different place, and while it seems like the course content did little to provide baseline knowledge for students, many said they enjoyed the process of exploring a new place without too many preconceived notions. Some students were confused about the service-learning component of their class, but better understood the process and purpose once discussing it in detail in class and especially after spending time in the field. The following is a description of why students participate in, what they expect from, and how they first perceived their experience in the Delta.

**Reasons to participate.** Service is an integral part of life experience for many people, and there are many reasons why college students get involved in service, both within the context of a class or outside of academics. In anticipation of the service-learning experience, one student commented, “You’re actually involved and you can feel like you’ve contributed to something, were part of something bigger than just an exam at the end of the semester.” Several of the students mentioned that service makes them “feel good,” although Chris countered that statement
by saying that with true service, “It wasn’t just, ‘Okay, I’m going to go do service because it
makes me feel good.’ It’s like I’m doing service because it’s necessary.” Some participants
criticized others for whom personal fulfillment was their primary motivation. During a focus
group, a discussion even arose about negative reasons why students participate in service to the
underserved, specifically abroad. One male student said, “Sometimes I think a lot of people do
volunteer work so they feel okay about themselves…I think some people go to Africa just to
have that picture with all the little Black kids in the background.” A classmate responded, “I
agree. I’ve personally heard somebody say that’s why they were going to Africa. I guess like to
check if off their list or something.” While some students had not previously pondered the notion
of service this critically, many had really given volunteer work extensive consideration, and
service was something that most found rewarding and felt it benefited the communities or
individuals being served. They collectively supported compassion and sensitivity rather than
sympathy as important elements to positive service.

Most of the participants had not been to the Mississippi Delta previously, and even
among those who had, the visit was often brief and somewhat superficial. Some students had
been with friends or for social activities, one had been several times for high school sporting
events, some had been just passing through on their way elsewhere, and a few went for
educational activities, such as undergraduate research. The participants from places outside of
Mississippi had an even more limited awareness of history, geography, and culture of the region.
This discrepancy of knowledge was very noticeable to the Mississippi resident participants,
although a few from the area were equally unaware of the particulars of the Delta.

The vast majority of the participants did not know that there was a service component
when they enrolled in the course. Their reactions to not knowing ranged from “I was fine with it”
to “some of the students were annoyed.” In general, the students felt that prior knowledge about the service component would have improved the experience. The participants felt that advance knowledge of the service component of a class was important and might deflect students with bad attitudes about what is often perceived as extra work.

The three primary reasons that students chose to or were willing to participate in a service-learning class were: (a) an enhanced learning experience through experiential component, (b) professional experience, and (c) to help those less fortunate.

Enlightened learning experience through experiential component. Many, but not all, participants felt that the experience in the field would enhance their classroom learning. Howard was apprehensive, and said, “When it came to the service learning assignment, I was not expecting to get much out of it,” but he acknowledged that he learned that “it takes actions from many people to start to make a change in the world,” and ultimately “the service assignment truly helped to tie the course together and helped me get some real experiences when it comes to helping people.” Chris was interested in conducting service work to “see how the theories that I learned in the classroom are actually, you know, are they valid?” He also felt that his service-learning in conjunction with a sociology class gave him a unique perspective. “We were much more analytical about what we were doing than other groups,” due to their training in sociological methods.

Professional experience and gain. Many of the students cited hands-on experience as the primary attraction to a service-learning class. “I think these types of classes give you more hands-on experience than you normally get in a regular lecture-based class.” Another student pointed out that in the law school “it’s an honor to be part of the clinical program. We have to apply. Not everyone can just sign up, so you get to represent the University.” She felt that the
competitive nature of participation made the experience beneficial to include on one’s résumé. One student noted that “a lot of times our generation gets viewed as being selfish, so I think [service] makes us look better to potential employers.” She felt that having this type of course on her transcript and being able to talk about this type of experience in a job interview would help offset that perception and win her favor with a prospective employer. A female student suggested that the group was doing service to help the residents of the community to be successful in their business aspirations, but another student countered that he wanted to “get some hands-on experience and actually learn some of the practical parts of law practice.” Generally, students felt that this type of experience would help them be more competitive post-graduation.

Help those less fortunate. Some of the students expressed an interest in serving and helping others, especially those involved in service work voluntarily prior to the service-learning experience. “I thought it would be rather interesting to do because I like to volunteer…I regularly donate blood and volunteer whenever I can,” said Allen. Overall, those participants who had done service work before felt that it had been a personally fulfilling experience, and they enjoyed giving back to the community and helping those in need. Howard said, “Helping people is a great part of doing the service-learning to me,” and described the “amazing feeling” he got from the experience. “This experience made me want (sic) to go back and do it again on my own,” he wrote in his reflective essay. These non-academic service experiences seemed to prime students for participating in a service-learning class by getting them out of their element, allowing them to be part of a team with a common goal, and affording them the opportunity to learn how to navigate the world of service.

During a focus group, one student said, “I hope that this maybe can spark a fire into someone who is, for lack of a better term, ignorant to these circumstances and situations of other
people.” When explaining why he enrolled in a service-learning class, one student said that a former student had recommended it and he had said, “what a great experience it was and the fact that you get to give back” was beneficial to farmers in the Delta. One student very insightfully and optimistically suggested that there was a long-term goal for the service, as well. “If we help one person successfully establish an LLC [limited liability company], and it was a great experience for them…they can forward that message on to the next person…So a chain reaction.” She suggested that helping people to help themselves and their communities was the most productive kind of service.

**Student expectations and initial experiences.** Some participants had previously heard descriptions of the Delta’s poverty and racial disparities. Others, especially non-resident students not originally from Mississippi, had no knowledge of the Mississippi Delta and some had never even heard of the region. Jane, an out-of-state student said, “The Delta was not mentioned much among my friends, except for the odd joke, therefore, I had no clue what the Delta actually consisted of.” Table 6 provides additional verbatim comments from participants about their expectations going to the Delta.

Table 6
**Participant Expectations of the Mississippi Delta**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ellen</td>
<td>One [of the students carpooling with me] was from Michigan and the other one’s from outside DC, and they had no clue what to expect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howard</td>
<td>I didn’t really know anything about the Delta, so when I went down there, I was like, okay, I’d heard people talk about how it was a bad place and stuff, but I didn’t expect it to be that bad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lindsey</td>
<td>Well, coming here, I had no idea what the Delta was. I thought the Delta was the mouth of a river, and I thought it was going to be near southern Mississippi, which you know, any geography class that I’ve had explains to you that’s what a Delta actually is. The Delta here is an alluvial plain, which makes more sense when you talk about the fertile ground and how it’s just so rich and ready to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
grow anything you wanted to grow.

We didn’t have a primer before going there. Our teacher just said, “Hey, this is kind of what to expect. When you go, get a feel for yourself.” Which was great because we got there, and I had no expectations. It was actually very educational.

Maggie: I think there was a little bit of a mention that the clients…weren’t as well off as we are, but I think that was about it.

Melissa: Our professor kind of prepared us what to expect, and explained to us some problems that are facing the Delta, and I think everyone else was expecting to go into a crime slum or something, and some people were like, well, this just looks like my hometown in Indiana.

Todd: I think a lot of [UM students] just think it’s kind of a poor agricultural area, and I think that’s pretty much about it.

I think that [UM students] might think that it’s an area that encompasses more African Americans than Whites, but see, at the same time, I don’t know if that’s, I don’t know if that’s really something that they would think more about.

Few participants had first-hand knowledge about the Mississippi Delta, and most of those who had been to the region went for recreational purposes or had just driven through in passing. Each participant had a different scope of information about the area, with very little classroom preparation on what to expect, as illustrated by the variety of comments in Table 6.

Environment. Students had varying expectations and reactions to the environment in the Mississippi Delta, both natural and built. Students mentioned flat physical landscape and the large expanses of fields, but the dilapidated buildings were more disconcerting to them. “Low, flat land that was really strange, but I would just drive and see these…former farmhouses just abandoned and rotting away,” said Allen. The recurring theme of deserted buildings and rundown dwellings was prevalent. Some, however, noted that there seemed to be a mix of socioeconomic levels based on the homes from “lower class, middle class, upper class kind of thing. You can tell from the housing.” Some commented that it really didn’t look that different
than the rural areas they were from. “I don’t think that it’s the worst town I’ve ever driven through, but you could tell that it’s seen better days,” said Richard. A few students were very positive about what they discovered, especially given what they had been told and their initial low expectations. “… unfortunately, because of the stereotypes, I expected it to look pretty rundown, but it actually looked presentable, and I thought part of it was very pretty. It exceeded my expectations, I guess,” said Todd. Another student commented on the town she visited, “Clarksdale was better than I thought it would be.”

The University of Mississippi is situated in the manicured, affluent college town of Oxford, and many of the students, especially the out-of-state students, had not travelled elsewhere in the state, so the stark contrast between the towns in the Delta and Oxford was jarring. One student observed, “When you get outside of [Oxford], a lot of things are rundown and a lot of abandoned shacks and buildings falling apart.” Another student said, “Obviously, we know it’s way less affluent than Oxford, and Oxford is such a nice place, so going to the Delta is probably going to…shock a lot of people.” The Delta, overall, was considered a poor area with a lot of need, as exhibited by the barren landscape and collapsing structures, and very unlike the community in which the participants live as University of Mississippi students.

A variety of adjectives and phrases were used by the students to describe both expected and actual perceptions of both the natural and built environment in the Delta. Table 7 provides an array of the terms used by the participants in the focus groups, interviews, and reflections.
Participants described both the positive and negative attributes of the Mississippi Delta as illustrated in Table 7. This mixture of descriptors reflected the wide range of expectations and reactions to the physical atmosphere. The participants more fully described the landscape and structures they observed during their service-learning experiences as shown in Table 8.

### Table 7
**Words Used to Describe the Environment in the Mississippi Delta**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>Adjective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abject poverty</td>
<td>Isolated</td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural area</td>
<td>Judgment-proof</td>
<td>Shocking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dismal prognosis</td>
<td>Junky-looking</td>
<td>Stagnant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economically depressed</td>
<td>Lack of prosperity</td>
<td>Underdeveloped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnically diverse</td>
<td>Place of pride</td>
<td>Unremarkable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fertile ground</td>
<td>Pleasant surprise</td>
<td>Terrible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From another time</td>
<td>Run down</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 8
**Participant Observations of the Environment in the Mississippi Delta**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allen</td>
<td>I guess being American, you don’t see yourself as living around an area that’s third-world country. You just assume that everything is, you know, okay, until you actually go there and see how rundown or trashy, sorry, how not like Oxford a place is…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claire</td>
<td>…they weren’t as bad as I expected, but then the farm was a lot rougher than I thought it would be.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>It looked like a normal town to me. It didn’t look like the extreme poverty that we kept seeing the figures for, so it’s kind of like the numbers told a different story than what I saw.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen</td>
<td>Once we got into Clarksdale, [the students from outside Mississippi] didn’t really have anything negative to say. I don’t think they were shocked either. One girl said, “They make it sound so bad, but it really just seems like other parts of America that are in low-income communities also.” I’m sure at their prime, they were just awesome little towns, but they’re just a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The participants had a variety of reactions to the physical environment in the Delta. Some participants were more observant than others. While many participants found the area depressed and lacking, several noted that the region did not appear dissimilar to other rural, struggling communities elsewhere in the United States.

People. Participants had varying levels of interaction with people in the Delta before and during the service-learning experiences. One student described her prior experience with people from the Delta during a focus group.

Everyone that I’ve met that’s from the Delta is educated, well-mannered. They’re clearly not on the poverty line. I mean, that could be just because I’m in law school or I’m at Ole
Miss, so the people I’m meeting are a little more privileged, but my perception of the Delta until recently was – oh, must be a great place.

Several students were very positive about anticipated and actual interaction with people who live in the Delta. “I kind of expect them to be people who are concerned about their communities, who are doing something to improve it,” she described and said she looked forward to working with people who genuinely care about improving their town. Another imagined that “people in the Delta tend to be very self-sufficient, very proud to a certain extent.”

Race did not seem to be on the participants’ minds regarding the composition of the Delta population. Some mentioned vague terms such as “demographics,” but no one elaborated on what that meant exactly. Todd did mention that students might expect to see more African American people than White, but suggested that most students probably were not even thinking about that. Participants mentioned financial hardship and an education gap that likely impacted the communities of the Delta, but when asked directly if they had had any classroom conversations about issues of race and ethnicity in preparation to their work in the Delta, students responded with comments such as “I hadn’t even thought about that,” “It hadn’t entered my mind once,” and “That didn’t generally cross my mind either.”

Once the participants had been to the Delta, they had a better understanding of the racial and socioeconomic climate of the communities in the Delta. Chris observed the following:

… despite what the statistics show, you know the poverty rates, the unemployment, the inequalities, the racism. People still have dreams; they still worry about the same things we do and most everyone, White, Black, poor, rich, just wants to do better for themselves. And so I think that was a really big revelation for a lot of us. The literature
says this is overwhelming, and so we were expecting to find people who were overwhelmed, and we didn’t find that.

Maggie observed, “People were living in shacks without roofs and other terrible conditions. You know, you sympathize with them and want to help them.” Several students noticed the dynamics of leadership in the communities. In Mound Bayou, the mayor was African American, as were many of the city leaders. At [Spring Initiative], all of the people in positions of responsibility were White and they were serving exclusively Black children. So the students acknowledged that disparities existed, but were philosophical rather than practical about resolving the issues they encountered. Table 9 provides a list of common descriptors of student expectations and impressions of people in the Delta.

Table 9
Words Used to Describe People in the Mississippi Delta

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>From another time</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bitter</td>
<td>Hopeful</td>
<td>Proud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurial spirit</td>
<td>Less educated</td>
<td>Underprivileged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendly</td>
<td>Naïve</td>
<td>Welcoming</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the participants did have some stereotypical notions about the people they would encounter, they generally were very open-minded and positive regarding their engagement with Delta community members. Participants were cautious in their descriptions of the people with whom they interacted or observed while they were conducting service work. Table 10 includes participants’ perceptions of the people in these communities and illustrates the somewhat guarded responses they provided.
### Table 10

**Participant Observations of the People in the Mississippi Delta**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allen</td>
<td>They’re very local. They don’t leave there, is what I got.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridget</td>
<td>And so I would say that’s kind of been one of my big take-aways, is just how much pride there is in these small towns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>I think maybe people tried to present things…to us in a better light than they actually were. That they didn’t want – in one instance it came from a place of pride, not wanting pity, but then also trying to prove that maybe we’re just as good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claire</td>
<td>…I was surprised that most of the people there were White, actually, because they had kept saying it is such a Black area, so I was surprised when only maybe one or two couples of farmers were actually Black, besides the owners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>Well, the people in charge were White and the students were Black, but it never felt like an unequal thing. It didn’t feel like they were looking down upon them in any way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen</td>
<td>All of the students were Black, and the two staff were White.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>It was just a very slow moving, laid back kind of attitude.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lindsey</td>
<td>There’s nothing that the government can do. There’s nothing that the other communities can do because it starts with the people that are living there today. They’re not doing anything to help the situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melissa</td>
<td>Being from Cleveland, we always had the perception of like, well, if you’re from Mound Bayou, why don’t you just move to Cleveland instead of complaining that you don’t have food. And so it was kind, I understood why, these people are from here, this is their home, they shouldn’t have to move if they don’t want to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard</td>
<td>…maybe there is some underlying problems in the Black community where, for whatever reason, it doesn’t seem like the same emphasis is placed on academia. It just seems like whereas maybe in my family, we were always expected to go to college. Maybe in other families, it’s, you know, in Black families, it’s not as common an expectation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandy</td>
<td>People are really friendly. They were friendly to us, you know. They weren’t unfriendly, but we were definitely out of our demographic…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shannon</td>
<td>I just didn’t realize how poor some people in our own country were.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The participant’s descriptions of the people in the Delta varied in detail, with racial descriptors only given in response to direct questions about the individual's race or ethnicity. The accounts included speculation about the intentions or feelings of the Delta residents.

**Summary.** The participants each began the service-learning experience at a unique starting point regarding their awareness and knowledge of the Mississippi Delta. Some based their assumptions in fact or past experience. Some based their expectations on stereotypes and myths. Some were very guarded in discussing their expectations or experiences, particularly those related to the actual residents of the Delta region. Overall, the participants had quite varied expectations for and experiences with their service-learning work in the Delta – some quite positive and others despondent with the experience providing few new insights, perspectives or motivations. The next section describes how student processed notions of race and privilege within the stages of a service-learning course.

**Processing notions of race and privilege through service-learning.** Service-learning can be an effective way to connect classroom instruction with real world experiences (Carver, 1996; Dewey, 1938; Miettinen, 2000). In all of the courses included in this study, participants had the opportunity to explore the course content in the context of the Mississippi Delta. Each course covered a different academic discipline, but aspects of race and privilege impacted all the
participants by default when conducting service in an underserved region with a history of racial disparities such as the Mississippi Delta, even if the course content did not explicitly address those topics. This section presents data focusing on how participants processed ideas of race and privilege, specifically pre-service preparation, in-situ critical thinking, and reflection as pedagogy.

**Pre-service preparation.** Participants began thinking about their service-learning experience prior to actually traveling to the Delta. The undergraduate classes had more structured preparation about the Delta region, although the extent of which race and privilege were specifically addressed varied widely. Chris explained that the sociology service-learning class read *Worlds Apart: Poverty and Politics in Rural America* (Duncan, 1999) a book about poverty in Appalachia, the Delta, and New England, which helped prepare them for the experience. The class also read journal articles on topics including education, health, income, and community development. The course syllabus noted that “issues of race will be woven into our readings and discussions throughout the semester.” Chris felt that this process was helpful because it allowed him to examine what the literature said about the region, and then the class got to see for themselves the conditions in the area. The political science class also had many readings, including books *Dead Aid* (Moyo, 2010) and *Just Give Money to the Poor* (Hanlon, Barrientos, & Hulme, 2010), plus articles from publications such as *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, and *Foreign Affairs*. Race and privilege were not explicitly mentioned in the political science course syllabus, but were likely addressed within the lecture topics, which included economic growth, the legacy of colonialism, the role of foreign aid, and health in developing countries.

At the graduate and professional levels, students were expected to take initiative in preparing for the service experience. Richard explained that in law school, “They expect you to
rise to the occasion without really being told,” so the students really had to take the initiative in researching the Delta. Some did, it seems, and others did not. Lindsey was an example of one of those who did extensive independent research on the Delta prior to her service work, and the impact of that inquiry was evident during her individual interview.

In addition to the readings, the faculty prepared the students for the service-learning experience through lectures and discussions. Ellen recalled the importance of her professor preparing students to have the right approach to service. The professor issued a caveat. “Do not sign up for [Spring Initiative] if you’re going to pity these kids. The organizers will be the first to say you can go home if you’re going in with [that] mindset.” The professor very explicitly warned against adopting a deficit mentality about the community in which the service-learning work was taking place. Clearly, the organization which tutors primarily minority children from underserved communities had experienced volunteers with these detrimental attitudes previously and wanted to dissuade that kind of negative contact. While the professors gave some attention to the role of the service experience, most of their preparation focused on the subject area content rather than the social, cultural, and racial aspects of service work in an underserved minority community.

**In-situ critical thinking.** Some participants seemed engaged in “reflection-in-action,” as defined by Scöhn (1995). This phenomenon is where students reflect spontaneously in response to a triggering event during the service-learning work. Interestingly, several participants mentioned such an occurrence. For the purposes of this study, I am describing those events as in-situ critical thinking. Some of the participants’ inquiries about race and privilege are described below.

Howard questioned why there were so many Black people living in the Delta and why
was it “so bad.” He actively tried to determine whether the Black people made it bad or if outsiders were not trying to help improve the region because it was a predominantly minority community, therefore the Delta simply remained in a state of decline. Allen questioned why virtually all of the children at Spring Initiative were Black. He pondered whether it was just because the parents wanted their children to attend to learn more or if there was a stigma associated with participating that kept White families away. Ellen also questioned why there were no White children at Spring Initiative. “I thought for sure there was going to be at least a couple of White kids, but there were none.” She was curious about the demographics of the actual school, and wondered if there was a correlation between race and socioeconomics that impacted participation in the after-school program.

Three of the participants (15%) said that they had imagined how their experience might have been different had they been African American. Ford, who interviewed an elderly White woman in Marks, Mississippi, questioned how the interview responses might have differed had he been Black. He wondered if she would have “hypercorrected or not on some of the answers to things I was asking.” Melissa speculated that the farmers at Farm Day in Durant “may have walked up to us more if we were Black instead of White.” Jane also wondered how the interaction with those being served might have differed. “[The children at Spring Initiative] might have acted a little different if they had someone of their same skin color,” but she felt like it did not hinder her interaction with the children.

Participants made connections between the literature they encountered prior to their service-learning and the actual experience. Ford reflected on his service-learning experience and determined that “if you’re just looking at numbers, you say, ‘Oh, I can manipulate that. I can use statistics to show that this is happening,’ but you don’t have a connection with that. If you could
talk to those people that it happens to, you sort of understand why it’s important.” Elizabeth said that she observed a discrepancy in the statistics about the Delta and what they experienced. She explained that “the numbers told a different story than what I saw,” and the students worked to reconcile this inconsistency. Lindsey, on the other hand, felt that her pre-service research and exploration of the literature gave her context and a deeper understanding of the underlying, and sometimes unseen, challenges in the Delta.

The participants at one site also interacted with students from two other universities. A couple of the participants noted the patronizing manner of some of the students from other academic institutions who were also doing work at one of the service sites. Through observation of the other groups, two participants described shortcomings in the quality of service, but Will said the ability to evaluate the effectiveness of the service work ended there. “There were times when we as a group…[were] so quick to be critical of others, so quick to be critical of community leaders, of other university groups, but be so slow to be self-critical.” It appeared that observing others conducting service has a potential instructional benefit, although in this case, the class did not actively assess their own work as a group.

In discussing their visit to the Delta, Melissa said that she considered some of it “touring” more than service. “It was just kind of an information gathering stage rather than…service.” Originally from the Delta herself, she expressed concern about how a group of White Ole Miss students traveling through the Delta would be perceived. She was empathetic to the minority residents, and felt uncomfortable with the idea that some residents might think, “Ole Miss people, they’re going to come and sweep in and save everybody.” Bridget spoke about the importance of learning from the community, a key goal of well-designed service-learning. “I think that was something I learned…just being that much more aware when you are in a
community [with which] you’re not familiar…learning from them. Learning from others in the community…remind yourself that you’re here to learn from others.” Students left their comfort zones and experienced a new environment. Bridget confirmed that learning came from the challenge to preconceived notions and the ability to image new perspectives, which helped in generating intercultural competence.

**Reflection as pedagogy.** The importance of reflection as a pedagogical tool is well documented in service-learning literature (Eyler, 2009; Kolb, 1984; Molee et al., 2010). Many service-learning experts consider the actual service experience to be comparable to a textbook in a traditional class. The reflection is where the actual learning occurs according to educational theorists such as Kolb (1984). The linguistics, political science, and sociology classes each had a written reflective component. Linguistics required three field reflections that focused on the methodological experience of the students’ service work. A single post-service response paper was a requirement for the political science course. The sociology course required a service-learning journal with daily entries during the week-long experience. The students also had daily group discussions about how the community perceived them and how they could improve their interactions for the next day. The sociology requirements were more in keeping with best practices for service-learning courses. Ongoing reflection allows students to process the experience, make adjustments in their actions, ask questions, and seek clarity. The use of continuous reflection is considered more beneficial than a single post-service reflective essay or discussion (Eyler, 2009). In contrast, the law class focused on content-related work products rather than reflective essays, and students created legal documents evolving out of their service work as their final submission. The participants that generated written reflections used them to examine various aspects of the service-learning experiences, including the connections between
the literature and field experiences, as well as to critique the service-learning experience itself.

**Summary.** Experiential education, and service-learning in particular, provides students with a means to explore the connection of course content and theory to the lived experience. Developing intercultural competence and the ability to understand the experience of people from different racial and ethnic groups is often an outcome of service-learning. This section outlined the ways in which students began developing awareness of race and privilege before, during, and after a service-learning experience, through pre-service preparation, in-situ critical thinking, and written reflection. The next section examines participant responses in the context of various aspects of color-blindness, including minimization and denial that race is a factor, their awareness of privilege and perceptions of America as a meritocracy, and their focus on overt and extreme acts of racism.

**Color-blindness as distance that protects.**

Color-blindness, as described more fully in Chapter 2, is an ideology under which people minimize, or even deny, that race is an influential factor in the lives of individuals, the organization of institutions, and the structure of society. In theory, this ideology might sound ideal, but it is impractical and even detrimental in a society where racial disparities exist (Awad et al., 2005; Gushue & Constantine, 2007). In addition to denial and minimization, which foster color-evasion, color-blindness is also perpetuated through power-evasion, which includes the denial of racial privilege and the belief in meritocracy. Additionally, a focus on blatant acts of racism as the only real manifestation of bigotry serves to negate the everyday bias that people of color face.

The discussion below describes three themes that emerged illustrating color-blind ideology as a means by which participants distanced themselves from issues of race and
privilege: (a) denial and minimization that race is a factor, (b) privilege and the myth of the meritocracy, and (c) focus on overt and extreme acts of racism.

**Denial and minimization of race.** Prior to the service-learning experiences, the focus groups captured participants’ expectations about the upcoming time in the Delta. Participants rarely described the Delta residents by race, possibly because they were unaware of the demographics of the population, although discomfort with talking about race and ethnicity might have contributed to that omission.

During the individual interviews, participants described their perceptions of the role that race played, if any, in their service-learning experiences. Just over half (55%) of the participants minimized or denied that race played a role at all in their experience in the Mississippi Delta. For instance, Shannon stated, “I don’t think it played any. I mean, until you mentioned it, I never really took into account the fact that everyone in that little development of Habitat homes was Black. I never even realized that.” Other comments such as “Race is never brought up,” or “It was not an issue,” were typical responses for a majority of the participants. A couple of the participants seemed to equate questions about race with inquiry about racism. When asked what role race played in the experience, Todd said, “I think racism is kind of taught, and so the people that are [at Spring Initiative] with these kids are not teaching them things like that.” Todd interpreted the teaching of racism as something overt, and because he did not witness the children at his service site being “taught” racism, he felt that it did not exist. Todd also declared that “the kids didn’t really see any difference with us except for maybe that I didn’t talk like them.” Lindsey downplayed race as a factor in her experience at Farm Day in Durant, and both she and Anna felt that socioeconomic status and gender caused more of a divide than race. Chris, too, felt that the class division made connecting with people more challenging than did racial
division.

Many participants assumed that cordial or friendly interactions were an indication that race and racism were not issues for the people at their service sites. Howard described the atmosphere, “Everybody got along good and no racism.” Todd even described forming bonds with children at his service site after only two visits. “I developed a pretty good friendship with a lot of little kids.” He explained further his sense that race was not an issue. “I honestly don’t think that the little kids saw any differences…Some of the older kids did see differences, but never treated us like we were different.” Participants seemed to equate sociability and friendliness with a lack of racial tension or inequality.

The participants wanted to find the common ground between them and the people they were serving, and describing their differences as primarily socioeconomic and educational, helped them rationalize that racial differences did not exist. Many participants made comments such as “We’re all just people,” or “It was very egalitarian.” Richard said, “It’s just us helping people,” and that race did not matter. Allen explained that his service-learning experience with Spring Initiative “just reinforced my own idea that everyone’s equal and [that it] just depends on their setting or what they do with their time that gives them their status really.” Participants also minimized their own race. Greg said, “I didn’t really see myself in that way, as White or as a race…or I wouldn’t be able to connect. I saw myself being there to help, and so if a White or African American wanted to contact me, it wouldn’t have changed my [legal] advice.”

Many of the participants seemed to view the local residents’ circumstances through a middle-class, White normative lens. Even before going to the Delta, one student in a focus group anticipated that students might compare the people they interact with in the Delta with their own life expectations. “I can definitely see where some people would struggle with [being
judgmental] a little bit, and just naturally think, ‘Thank god I don’t live this way.” Allen referred to the people he encountered as “very local,” explaining that they think “going to Tupelo was a big deal,” when he would “drive to Jackson just to go see my uncle and wouldn’t think twice about it.” Richard recalled a conversation with his brother about whether “there is some underlying problems in the Black community where, for whatever reason, it doesn’t seem like the same emphasis is placed on academia.” Perhaps the inability to examine the circumstances they were observing from another’s perspective came from being sheltered or insular. The students in one of the focus groups felt that education and maturity can help minimize judgment in service-learning experiences and allow students to be open-minded and thoughtful during their interactions with those being served.

Some (40%) of the participants acknowledged the impact that race has in the lives of minority individuals, the organization of institutions, or the structure of society. Although the interviewee for his service was White, Ford was able to discern discrepancies between the elderly woman’s accounting of history in her town of Marks and historical facts and statistical data regarding the community, especially with regard to racial disparities when he mentioned that “her answers were totally opposite of what was directly observable.” Howard questioned why the people in the Delta were poor and why they were predominantly Black. He felt like there was a connection between the two and that their economic struggle was likely related to race. Allen wondered if race played a role in why children participated in Spring Initiative and even remarked how “Black people haven’t had the most advantage because of all the Jim Crow laws and stuff like that, so they’ve been hindered a lot more than any White person because of that…”

Privilege and the myth of the meritocracy. In the prior section, denial and minimization
of race was discussed, which can be categorized as color-evasion, one of the two tracks of color-blind racial ideology. The other track is power-evasion, where a person rejects the notions of power given to White people and the power withheld from people of color. Many participants described a society where everyone had equal opportunity and how people have the same access in society “…if everybody would get back to basics of America, pull yourself up by the bootstraps, get out there in some good, hard work. I [as a White woman] am not getting anything easy, you know.” Sandy went on to clarify that someone like Bill Gates had privilege, rather than someone like her. “I don’t feel that I have privilege. I feel like I have opportunity, and I feel like everybody has opportunity,” Sandy stressed. With respect to a scholarship he received, Richard felt like racial privilege did not play a role in that award. “I feel like the scholarships that I’ve earned were because I worked for them and made good grades and did service projects. I don’t have anything in my direct past that let’s me think that I was just privileged to be White.”

Although only a few (20%) of participants actually articulated the idea of American society being a meritocracy, the data from the CoBRAS survey overwhelmingly leaned toward that ideology. The first item on the instrument states, “Everyone who works hard, no matter what race they are, has an equal chance to become rich.” Half of the participants (50%) rated that statement at a 5 or 6 (strongly agree), indicating a belief that race is irrelevant to financial success in the United States. Another 25% rated that statement at a 3 or 4, the midpoint of the scale. The remaining 25% rated it at 2 or 1 (strongly disagree), representing an awareness of the advantage that some races have over others regarding economic attainment.

Participants focused on tangible manifestations of privilege, like wealth and education. When asked about the role of privilege in her service-learning experience, Bridget said, “I know that probably my race is factored into, well, probably not so much my race, but definitely my
educational background…can play into it.” Acknowledgement of socioeconomic status and educational level seemed to be aspects of advantage that were much more easily discussed. Greg noted that context was important in privilege. “I’d definitely say that [privilege was a factor], because I feel like the students were definitely better dressed and [had] more formal education, but I think if you put us out on a farm, they’d have probably survived better.” Another student strongly objected to the word “privilege.” Sandy challenged a friend who brought up White privilege, “If you can point something out to me and tell me where my Whiteness got me something and you wouldn’t have, please tell me, because I see that people have different skills, talents.”

The participants typically understood privilege only as economic advantage, which sometimes led to educational advantage, but none discussed privilege in terms of social advantage. Economic advantage, such as higher salary and net worth, job security, and ease of getting a loan are part of racial privilege; however, so are less tangible factors such as social status, inclusion, and individualism. Some students recount their economic hardships, without recognizing intangible benefits that they might receive due to their race.

Some participants did acknowledge their privilege when it came to how other White people interacted with them. Howard, who is African American, commented on an intangible privilege. He noted that one advantage to being White was that if you had financial challenges, people would not assume you were lazy and just wanted a handout, a common stereotype surrounding African Americans that was discussed in a public opinion class he previously took. If a person were White, Howard suggested, it would be assumed that you were trying to remedy your own situation. Lindsey actively tried to diminish others’ perception that she might have privilege by dressing down for Farm Day in the Delta. “I wanted to make sure I assimilated as
much as I could.” White privilege was also a factor when interacting with other White people. Ford felt that “Maybe as a White person, [my interviewee] gave me straighter answers, less sugar-coated, less hypercorrected answers because she recognized me as the same, in the same ‘in’ group.” Although the Delta is heavily African American and also very economically deprived, poverty does cross racial lines in the Delta. There is, Chris acknowledged, White poverty in the Delta, but White privilege counters it because “even if they are poor, they’re not Black, so they can move easily about society more. So in that regard, obviously race just kind of permeated the whole experience.”

Focus on overt and extreme acts of racism. The lack of awareness of racism in any terms other than individual racism was prevalent. When asked about situations of racial conflict in secondary school or college, students overwhelmingly talked about overt, blatant episodes of racism perpetrated by individuals. The “James Meredith statue incident,” which involved three University of Mississippi students defacing the Civil Rights Memorial with a noose and a former Georgia flag containing the Confederate battle flag, was mentioned by many (79%) of the participants who were attending the institution at the time. Even one of the participants who was in undergraduate school elsewhere mentioned the event. Participants’ commentary about the occurrence ranged from “overblown” to “horrible.” Students could easily identify that incident as racial conflict, although some were quick to point out that it was perpetrated by just a few people and was not reflective of the climate or attitude on campus overall. One student bemoaned the fact that the fraternity to which the vandals belonged was removed from campus, when it was really only a couple of people perpetrating the offense.

Some participants recognized more subtle forms of racism. Chris and Will who traveled to the Delta with a sociology class described racial tension surrounding two competing cultural
organizations memorializing Emmitt Till. One was founded by a local African American man, and the newer, better funded institution was created by a White alumnus from the University of Mississippi. Both Chris and Will explained how the two facilities presented different accounts of the murder of Emmitt Till and how there seemed to be no collaboration or cooperation between the two founders. Will explained, “It was just sort of clear that they weren’t really collaborating...and it just seems sort of odd that this man was starting this new museum when there’s already been this existing one.” They felt that this was a prime example of racial conflict that they witnessed during their service-learning experience.

When asked about racial conflict, Lindsey was the only participant to acknowledge that “it’s not just racism in hate crimes. It’s racism in economic disparity. It’s racism in lack of opportunity.” She did extensive research about the role of race in the Delta in conjunction with her service-learning class in preparation for a symposium focusing on race and sustainability. She attributes her perspective to her diverse upbringing, but primarily on her academic exploration of the topic. “I have read so much on it, and its current literature, current articles that point out that, hey, this is still going on.” Richard felt that the defacing of the James Meredith statue ultimately had a unifying effect. “It seemed like everybody thought that was pretty low and nobody liked it, so I didn’t see that as any type of problem-making. It was just some racists being jerks, and I think everybody saw that for what it was.” What Richard did not comprehend was that his White privilege gave him the luxury of being able to view the incident in that light, rather than a source of intimidation and hostility.

**Summary.** Color-blindness often serves as a way for White individuals to distance themselves from contemporary racism. If one denies that it exists, than people are absolved of the responsibility to do anything about it. Additionally, it does not disrupt the privilege bestowed
upon White Americans through societal and institutional systems. Many of the participants minimized the role of race in contemporary society, although a few had a good understanding of the role that race continues to play in the lives of African Americans and in society, in general. Most students had a simplistic view of privilege, equating it only to economic advantage and having a lack of awareness of the intangible impact of White privilege. Finally, almost all of the participants focused on overt acts of racism when asked about racial conflict, completely missing the subtle and nuanced role that racism and discrimination play in society and the lives of people of color. The next section describes how service-learning in the Mississippi Delta served to unseat the participants’ perspective of the world through a White lens. The experience often positioned them as the racial minority in their service-learning setting, brought into view issues of power and paternalism, challenged them to talk about race, and moved them toward intercultural competence, thus disrupting their White paradigm.

Service-learning as a disruptor to the White paradigm. The participants in this study were predominantly White college students at the University of Mississippi. While half were from Mississippi, the majority of the out of state students were from the South. In spite of the racial demographics in the region, many had had minimal interaction with people of color in high school and even in college. While exposed to a more diverse population while at the University of Mississippi, their engagement both in and out of the classroom with non-White peers was limited. As a result, their own perspective as a White, middle class college student is rarely challenged and a White normative paradigm is reinforced in their everyday interactions. Cognitive dissonance, the disequilibrium that occurs as students try to make meaning of information or encounters that contradict their past socialization, has been identified as a means for learning in service-learning research (Espino & Lee, 2011; Eyler, 2009). The service-learning
experience was an awakening for some participants. Allen said, “…there’s still that culture shock kind of thing, because what’s happening in rural Africa can’t possibly be going on in our backyard…but it is, it is.” While not all participants could identify the specifics of the culture shock that they might have encountered, four common themes emerged that were indicators of service-learning being a disruptor to the White paradigm with which most of the participants were comfortable: (a) being the minority, (b) awareness of power and paternalism, (c) challenges of talking about race and privilege, and (d) a movement toward intercultural competence.

**Being the minority.** Even though many participants described their experience at the University of Mississippi as more diverse than during past stages of life, as White students, they are still in the majority. Some participants also described the role their own race played in class on the University of Mississippi campus. Howard, the solitary African American student in the study, did describe being a minority in his political science classes at the University of Mississippi. In the Delta, although he was not a racial minority, Howard still felt a little awkward because he typically associates with White people. He said that he has always found them easier to talk to, and he said that he “felt like I could trust them more than the Black people.” Two White participants, Elizabeth, a student in the Croft Institute for International Studies, and Richard, a student in the Honors College, commented on the lack of diversity in their programs. Elizabeth said, “Croft is an international studies program, but it’s super selective, and so I’m wondering if with the racial disparities in Mississippi, that maybe that’s causing not as many impoverished African Americans in our classes. I don’t know.”

During the interview process, participants were asked what role, if any, their own race played on their service-learning experience in the Delta. Participants were aware of their own race to varying levels. Bridget was aware of being White only when she was practically “the
only White person in the room.” She said that being in the minority made her self-conscious and made her cautious to stay engaged and not subconsciously distance herself from others. Ashley said she was aware of her race when talking to someone African American, but not at all if she was engaged with another White person. Ford also noted that he was only cognizant of his race if he was the singular White person in a space. “I’m never aware of my own race unless I’m in an exclusively different environment…only if I’m the minority in a particular situation. That’s the only time I’m very aware of my race.” Ford also admitted having little awareness of his race during his service-learning experience, “but that’s because I wasn’t interviewing a minority, so I didn’t recognize race as an issue.”

For some participants, the anticipation of being a minority was more stressful than the actual reality of the situation. “I was probably more aware [of my race] on the way down there because I was thinking, this is going to be a day,” Claire said, “but really we were still the main race there. It was mostly White.” For Claire, once she realized that they were not the only White people in the environment, she was put at ease. Another participant spoke of expected anxiety. Ellen recalled thinking about being White at her predominantly minority service site. “I kind of thought there would be a little bit of an elephant in the room, so to speak, but I really didn’t feel like that was ever an issue.” Others commented on awareness of difference, but felt like it was more about the university students being strangers in the community, rather than a racial difference per se. Sandy recalled that during a lunch break at a McDonald’s near Tutwiler, that the locals noticed her group from the University of Mississippi. “I think that we didn’t fit. We were obviously outsiders, so you know, everybody kind of looked at us funny.” She recalled “the tiniest little bit of tension,” during the encounter. She stressed that she never noticed race herself until after her mother became “adamant about what color people were” during a relationship with
an African American Civil Rights activist. Once race became an ever-present issue in her family life, she became cognizant of both her own race and that of others. In general, the White participants rarely, if ever, considered their own race unless they were the minority in a setting. As a key component of intercultural competence, this self-awareness was the first step toward understanding and appreciation of people unlike themselves.

*The experience of power and paternalism.* One of the criticisms of service-learning in underserved communities is the lack of sensitivity to the power dynamic to which service groups are either contributing or challenging. Some of the participants described this power disparity and potential for a paternalistic presence. “My biggest concern going into it was that kids were going to think, oh, it’s just some more White people coming in to help us because they think we need it…but I really didn’t get that vibe from any of the kids,” said Ellen. Jane expressed surprise that all the instructors were White. On one hand, she felt that it helped her fit easily into that role, but she also said that “it would have been nice if they could have seen an Ole Miss student who was Black coming to help them.” Even though she didn’t articulate it as such, Jane concluded that her racial privilege had an impact on her experience. Many participants went beyond simply noticing the racial imbalance at their service sites. Jane commented, “…there was an obvious divide because all of the adults and instructors were White and all of the kids were Black, except for one.” When asked about the role of race in her service-learning experience, Elizabeth explained, “Well, the people in charge were White and the students were Black, but it never felt like an unequal thing.” She went on to say that this seemed to be the norm for those doing service. A step toward intercultural competence would be for her to then determine if it felt “like an unequal thing” to the Black children and staff – to develop an empathic perspective.
Will identified the community leaders involved with his service work, and they were both primarily Black organizers. This scenario gave the students contemporaries from different racial backgrounds with whom to work, as opposed to service-learning work with children, where the power dynamic skews the relationship. Intercultural competence can be fostered by interactions with healthy, strong individuals from other cultures (Sue, 1999), and Will’s experience provided that exposure. Previously, Will had spent several weeks interning in the Delta, said that he understood that he was a minority and an outsider “…but being aware of the idea of some outsider of a different race coming in and ‘fixing’ thing, there’s a lot of different tactful ways to approach the whole service aspect of it that I was aware of.” His awareness and sensitivity were heightened due to the extended time he spent at his service-site, in his opinion.

Both students and faculty were aware of the potential for a paternalistic perspective when approaching service-learning in the Delta. During a focus group, a White male student brought up the subject of the “White savior complex” and how important it was for their group to avoid thinking, “Oh, look at me and my civilized ways. I’m going to help these people, because they just can’t help themselves.” The political science class had received direction from their professor to not approach the service-learning project from a deficit perspective, especially at Spring Initiative. She explained that the organization did not want volunteers who came in feeling pity for the children, and that they would likely be dismissed from service if the leaders suspected such. Additionally, other student groups that were working in the Delta at the same time as the sociology class from the University of Mississippi were criticized by some of the participants. “So their perception of working with, they were just working for them, trying to help them. Whereas, we were trying to really understand, so our relations with the people were a lot more genuine…really trying to get to know these people…” Chris’s perception was that the
students from another institution were trying to do things for the people of the Delta rather than working collaboratively with them. One young African American girl wanted to help build a planter one day, but the students from American University wouldn’t let her help and it hurt her feelings. Chris’s goal was to do service, but also to “make human connections,” and the encounter that he witnessed was contrary to his hopes for the experience.

**Challenges of talking about race and privilege.** Talking about race and White privilege are clearly sources of discomfort for many individuals. For both White students and faculty, contemplating the role that race plays in everyday life, especially for people of color, is foreign, at best, and for many disconcerting or even gratuitous (Sue, 2013). As noted in the review of the literature, resistance to discussing race often stems from three primary conceptions: (a) race and racism are considered inappropriate topics of conversation, (b) the notion of a meritocracy contradicts the existence of discrimination, therefore it must not be real, and (c) individuals do not learn how to effectively engage in conversations about race and are often prone to avoid the topic (Harper, 2012; Tatum, 1992). In addition to individuals lacking the skills to adequately discuss issues of race and privilege, these ineffective practices are often modeled at the institutional level at colleges and universities (Harper, 2012). In the classroom, race is most typically discussed in historical rather than contemporary terms, since it is much more challenging to discuss race and its present-day relevance.

Participants’ comfort levels in talking about race and privilege varied. During the two focus groups that were conducted, students often mentioned socioeconomic status and educational levels when speculating about the Delta communities, but did not mention the anticipated racial compositions of those communities at all. Of the participants interviewed, only seven (35%) seemed truly comfortable and engaged when speaking about issues of race and
privilege, while only four participants (20%) seemed to wish to avoid discussion completely. The other participants fell somewhere between those two extremes. When asked about the issue of privilege, the vast majority (85%) spoke of it only in terms of financial privilege, citing material advantages as the only manifestation of privilege. Participants identified three particular deterrents to freely discussing issues of race: (a) inability to competently discuss race, (b) fear of being identified as a racist, and (c) feeling that race is discussed too much in American society.

*Ineptitude or disinterest in discussing race.* Some participants empathized with their Black peers’ negative feelings about racist events, but did not feel a personal affront, so did not feel compelled to join the conversation. Ashley recalled her thoughts after the “James Meredith incident” when she was serving as a community assistant in a women’s resident hall. “It didn’t really affect my floor very much.” She noted that the girls on her hall were “all from the same general background that I was. White, probably upper middle class…” While she and her residents thought the racist event was horrible, “it wasn’t an attack on any of my girls.” She felt like there was a distance between racist actions and White University of Mississippi students that made discussing them less urgent and made them as White individuals less versed in talking about such events.

Not all participants avoided discussing race while participating in service-learning work in the Delta. Some were willing to discuss race, although their level of skill and tact varied. Will relayed a scene where a White fellow student initiated a conversation with his classmates in the field, including one African American student, about the word *nigger.*

He decided that we need to talk about the n-word, and use the n-word…Obviously, I don’t think that came out of any, I mean, that’s a very racially charged conversation. I’m not sure you can attribute it to racism, I don’t think, but it was sort of delicate. Sort of
Although the sociology class had many conversations about race and privilege during their week of service-learning, Will was not comfortable with the bluntness of this conversation. Will was also aware of the fact that the one Black student in his class grew weary of discussing race while they were traveling in the Delta, saying that “people are going to be constantly looking for your affirmation” if you are the singular minority student in a class. What was a novel topic for the White students was a source of fatigue for the lone Black student, according to Will.

*Fear of being identified as a racist.* Fear of saying something wrong and being labeled a racist stops a lot of White students from having conversations about race, especially publicly. Three participants cited incidents in the national press where a White speaker attempted to start a dialogue and was reduced to being labeled a racist. Allen pointed out that “anytime someone says anything mildly racist…they are just destroyed by it because of the Black communities and the Civil Rights leaders trying to make a statement that anyone who has a racist thought should be silenced.” He went on to say that this stifles a dialogue about race. Ford was concerned about offending someone, if he were in a predominantly Black group. “I know that’s terrible. It’s probably racist itself, but I would have been in a different frame in my, mental frame if [the interviewees] were Black.”

*Feeling that race is discussed too much.* Some participants (15%) said that there is too much talk about race. Shannon said, “I feel like it’s talked about more than it needs to be. And I feel like it’s from the other side.” When asked to clarify, she expressed frustration at what she saw as an overreaction to the “James Meredith thing” and said that she hears the Black community complaining about things a lot. “I almost feel like if you stop talking about it so much, that maybe it would go away.” The fact that some participants felt that talking about race
perpetuates racism might be key to why they do not feel comfortable discussing it. Some students, however, felt that talking about race was an important aspect of their experience. Allen felt that service-learning experiences that are diverse could help move dialogue about race forward, because “it’s just another way to interact and see that we’re not different.”

**Movement toward intercultural competence.** Describe extensively in the literature review, intercultural competence is an ongoing process through which individuals learn to employ critical thinking, respect and curiosity, and multiple perspectives in order to better understand and appreciate cultures different from one’s own (Deardorff, 2011). Following his service-learning experience in the Mississippi Delta, Chris’s conclusion was the following:

I can’t be ignorant of what goes on in the Delta anymore, because I know people there.

I’ve interacted with people there, and I can’t plead ignorance, so if I don’t do thing to help it change, I am complicity in maintaining the status quo.

Will explained that in the first week of his internship, he began to understand the challenges facing the Delta, but in his extended stay during a summer internship, he was able to form relationships and develop understanding, which helped him to provide more effective service to the community. He speculated that students going on very short-term service-learning experience might experience the initial awareness, but they would not have time or exposure to fully understand and be of benefit to those they are serving. “There’s no real impact to be made in a week,” he believed.

Greg said that the experience “definitely got me excited about doing more of this type of pro bono stuff or helping. Charity isn’t the right word, but volunteering, I think would be more accurate.” When asked about his distinction between charity and volunteering, Greg explained that he differentiates “because I don’t think that these people are looking for a handout.” Bridget
reinforced the benefit of service-learning. She reflected that students must remember that they are there to learn from the community, not just provide a service.

In discussing their visit to the Delta, Melissa said that she considered some of it “touring” more than service. “It was just kind of an information gathering stage rather than…service.” Originally from the Delta herself, she expressed concern about how a group of White Ole Miss students would be perceived. She was empathetic to the minority residents, and felt uncomfortable with the idea of “Ole Miss people, they’re going to come and sweep in and save everybody.” Melissa was the only student who identified that need in the state is not limited to the Delta. “We’re in a food desert here in Oxford. You consider how high-end some of the stores are on the square and then people two miles away don’t have access to food. I never thought about that. Ever.” For her, the experience was transferable to her everyday experience in Oxford. A goal for intercultural competence is for students to be able to apply their newfound awareness to other areas of engagement. This transmission seemed to occur with some of the participants.

Summary of Themes

After analyzing qualitative data from multiple sources, four primary themes emerged about impact of service-learning on student perceptions of race and privilege. The first theme, *Motivations, Expectations, and Experience in the Mississippi Delta*, examined why students chose to participate in a service-learning class and what they expected both from the experience, as well as the environment and people in the Mississippi Delta. The second theme, *Processing Notions of Race and Privilege through Service-learning*, provided examples of how students process issues of race and privilege, before the service experience through classroom interaction, during the service through in-situ critical thinking, and after the service through reflection. The third theme, *Color-Blindness as Distance that Protects*, described students’ minimization and
denial of race as a factor in society, their awareness of privilege and the notion of American meritocracy, and their focus on overt and extreme acts of racism as the only indicator of contemporary racism. The final theme, *Service-learning as a Disruptor of the White Paradigm*, examines the specific revelations that students had during their service-learning experiences that allowed them to have a paradigm shift, even if temporary, where they began to see themselves and others through a different perspective, and from outside their own way of knowing. Through these four themes, the impact of service-learning in the Mississippi Delta on University of Mississippi college students’ perceptions of race and privilege, and ultimately any impact on their intercultural competence development, can be better examined and understood.

**Quantitative Results**

The quantitative portion of this study utilized the Color-blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS), an instrument created to evaluate a person’s awareness of three aspects of color-blind ideology, White privilege, institutional discrimination, and blatant racial issues. While secondary to the qualitative data, the instrument served to capture objective data about each participant which would buttress the qualitative data, allow for triangulation, and help offset researcher bias. The participants were asked to take the survey before completing service-learning in the Mississippi Delta and after. Because some students were enlisted in the study after they had completed their service, some students only completed the second survey, not allowing for a pre- and post-service comparison. Only the surveys of those participants who completed both surveys were included in the statistical analysis. Nine of the 20 participants’ surveys were analyzed. A one-tailed paired samples t test revealed that students’ pre-service CoBRAS scores (m=78.22, s=18.48) decreased on the post-service survey (m=71.33, s=17.09) after participating in a service-learning experience, t(8)=2.264, p≤.05. The research hypotheses
for this study was as follows:

\( H_0 \): There is no significant difference in student scores on the Color-Blind Racial Attitude Scale (CoBRAS) after participating in a service-learning experience in the Mississippi Delta.

\( H_a \): There is a significant decrease in student scores on the Color-Blind Racial Attitude Scale after participating in a service-learning experience in the Mississippi Delta.

While the comparative quantitative data collected through the Color-blind Racial Attitude Scale was minimal, the results did support an overall increased awareness of racial privilege, institutional discrimination, and blatant racial issues after participation in service-learning; however, when analysis was conducted individually on each of the three factors, the score changes became less impactful, with enhanced awareness only apparent in the area of racial privilege. The resulting statistical analysis of the individual factors presented as follows:

- **Factor 1 – Unawareness of racial privilege**: A one-tailed paired samples \( t \) test revealed that students’ pre-service CoBRAS scores for unawareness of racial privilege, \((m=30.11, s=7.34)\) decreased on the post-service survey \((m=27.56, s=6.21)\) after participating in a service-learning experience, \( t(8)=1.915, p \leq .05 \).

- **Factor 2 – Unawareness of institutional discrimination**: A one-tailed paired samples \( t \) test revealed that students’ pre-service CoBRAS scores for unawareness of institutional discrimination, \((m=29, s=7.08)\) decreased on the post-service survey \((m=26.11, s=6.75)\) after participating in a service-learning experience, \( t(8)=1.803, p \geq .05 \).

- **Factor 3 – Unawareness of blatant racial issues**: A one-tailed paired samples \( t \) test revealed that students’ pre-service CoBRAS scores for unawareness of blatant racial issues, \((m=19.67, s=5.29)\) decreased on the post-service survey \((m=17.67, s=6.69)\) after
participating in a service-learning experience, $t(8)=1.395$, $p\geq .05$.

The $H_a$ for the overall CoBRAS score can be accepted, given the statistical significance of the decrease in scores, indicating that participants became more aware of racial privilege, institutional discrimination, and blatant racial issues. The significance for the individual factors was less impactful and will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

**Summary**

The use of mixed methods research design and the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data created a multi-layered study that incorporated both narrative and numerical data, in keeping with the recommendations of experts in the field of service-learning research (Furco, 2003; Goldberg & Coufal, 2009; Deardorff, 2011; Hayward & Charette, 2012; Simons & Cleary, 2006). In addition to providing for triangulation and validation, this study allowed for a more in-depth exploration of how students process issues of race and privilege when conducting service-learning in a predominantly minority, underserved community. Through focus groups, individual interviews, pre- and post-service CoBRAS surveys, and written reflections, data was collected that allowed for an overview of how University of Mississippi students participating in service-learning in the Mississippi Delta begin to process issues of race and privilege and how their intercultural competence is increased through these educational experiences.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

The primary purpose of this mixed methods constructivist case study was to examine the impact that service-learning classes conducted in the Mississippi Delta had on students’ perceptions of race and privilege. The study utilized qualitative methods of focus groups, individual interviews, and document analysis, as well as quantitative pre- and post-service surveys of student awareness of racial privilege, institutional discrimination, and blatant racial issues. Through these complementary data collection methods, I was able to examine how students process issues of race and privilege prior to, during, and after participating in service-learning in the Mississippi Delta. I was also able to assess whether indicators of increased intercultural competence surfaced after participating in short-term service-learning in the Delta. The constructivist perspective used in the design of this study corresponded to the unit of analysis being the individual student. The data was analyzed, and indicated that the individual experience of each participant depends upon the individual’s prior experience and value system, along with the design and implementation of each service-learning experience. Each student’s starting point, along with his or her movement toward intercultural competence, exists on a series of continua.

Participants in this study were students at the University of Mississippi, a 4-year public research institution, when they participated in a service-learning class. They were a mix of undergraduate, graduate, and professional students from four different disciplines, with the common factor being that each course had a service-learning component in the Mississippi Delta,
a region made up of 18 counties which has a long history of poverty and racial disparities (Delta Center for Culture and Learning, 2014). Service-learning courses appropriate for this study were identified through conversations, by e-mail solicitations, and at the suggestion of other faculty members. Participants were recruited from four courses in-person and via e-mail. Twenty-one participants were included in this study. Of those, 12 participated in a focus group, 9 participated in both pre- and post-test surveys, 20 had individual interviews, and I received permission from 9 to include their class written reflections in my data collection. Of this sample, 8 were male and 13 were female. This chapter provides discussion and analysis of the research findings in the context of the current literature and through elements of four theoretical frameworks, including Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings, 1998, 2005, 2007), Color-blind Ideology (Neville et al., 2000; Sue, 1999, 2001, 2013), Intercultural Competence (Deardorff, 2011; Deardorff & Edwards, 2013), and Perry’s Theory of Intellectual and Ethical Development (Perry, 1970). Finally, discussion of implications of the research finding for higher education will be discussed.

**Overview of the Study**

The objective of this mixed methods research study was to explore two primary research questions: (a) how do students process issues of race and privilege prior to, during, and after participating in service-learning in the Mississippi Delta? and (b) how is intercultural competence impacted among students who participate in short-term service-learning in the Mississippi Delta?

In order to answer these questions, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected through focus groups, individual interviews, document analysis, and pre- and post-service surveys using the Color-blind Racial Attitude Scale (CoBRAS).

**Qualitative findings.** Two focus groups were conducted. The smaller law group had very
active participation by all students. I attribute that to the students already being a cohesive group, being at least second-year law students. The larger political science class had mixed levels of participation, with some students very active and engaged, and others completely silent. Unfortunately, not all of the political science focus group participants followed through with involvement in the study, because some very relevant discussion came about during the focus group that might have expanded on the resulting themes.

Twenty interviews were used in the study. Two additional interviews were conducted, but the interviewees were VISTA volunteers accompanying the service-learning classes, and I made the decision to limit the sample to participants who were actually enrolled University of Mississippi students at the time they partook in service-learning in the Delta. All but a few of those interviewed were very active and candid during their interviews. They generally offered personal accounts of experiences involving race during their youth and while in college. Fewer spoke with depth about how race and privilege played a role in their service-learning experiences in the Delta. Among the possible reasons why they spoke less about race and privilege in the context of their service are the following: (a) race was truly not a factor influencing the dynamics in the Delta, (b) the students were simply not cognizant of the dynamics of race and privilege, (c) the students minimized the role of race and privilege to lessen their own feelings of guilt, discomfort, or anxiety, (d) the community members downplayed racial inequities around visitors from outside the community, thus diminishing its presence with the students, or (e) they did observe race and privilege at play, but did not know how to articulate it or chose not to for fear of saying the wrong thing and sounding racist. In the interviews, some participants mentioned the last two factors, downplay by the community and discomfort in discussing race, as issues of which they were aware.
As described in the individual profiles, participants tended to see racism simply as isolated incidents rather than ongoing circumstances. While a culture of racial discrimination and disparities is less obvious to those not directly impacted, the outcomes are no less problematic. Lack of understanding of societal and institutional racism does not allow participants to fully understand the environment and communities in which they are working. While perhaps not directly relevant to the course content, avoidance of these issues is a missed opportunity for students, faculty, institutions of higher education, and the community to gain valuable insights and increase intercultural competence. This enhanced knowledge and understanding is what ultimately will most profoundly “serve” these communities in the future.

Finally, self-selection may have played a role in the results of this study. The various elements of the study may have alerted participants to their deficit in the area of intercultural competence or brought to light their discomfort with discussing the topics of race and privilege, leading to their abandonment of participation. In other words, there is a possibility that the students with more anxiety about interaction with minorities or discomfort in thinking about issues of race self-selected out of the study once they better understood the content of the research topic. This could have greatly skewed the findings, and yet even among those who participated, there was a wide swath of values, attitudes, and levels of baseline intercultural competence. This possible self-selection suggests that the spectrum of students’ initial perspectives is likely even wider than this study indicates.

**Quantitative findings.** The quantitative portion of this study allowed me to capture the student stances on issues surrounding race and privilege utilizing an objective measure, which probed students about general attitudes, rather than specific questions about their service-learning experience as asked during the focus groups and interviews. This component was
included for several reasons. First, the literature urges the use of mixed methods research design as a means to lend credibility and integrity to service-learning research (Furco, 2003; Goldberg & Coufal, 2009; Hayward & Charrette, 2012; Simons & Cleary, 2006). Second, a quantitative element also minimizes the effect of researcher bias by providing an objective source of data (Guba, 1981, Krefting, 1991). Finally, social desirability can be an issue when discussing sensitive topics such as race (Bell, Horn, & Roxas, 2007; Constantine and Ladany, as cited in Gushue & Constantine, 2007; Simons et al, 2011), so the use of this impersonal instrument allowed objective data to be collected from students who might be guarded in what they reveal through qualitative measures, such as focus groups, interviews, or reflective essays.

The possible composite score for the CoBRAS ranged from 20 to 120, with a high score indicating unawareness of racial privilege, institutional discrimination, and blatant racial issues. The participants’ composite pre-service scores ranged from 41 to 96, with the mean being 78.22. Their post-service composite scores ranged from 36 to 90, with a mean score of 71.33. Only two of the students (22%) had composite scores that increased after participating in a service-learning experience in the Mississippi Delta, indicating a decline in awareness of color-blindness overall.

The difference in statistical significance between the composite CoBRAS score and those for the individual factors was interesting. In only one of the three factors, the unawareness of racial privilege, was there a statistically significant decrease in score, which indicates an increase in awareness. Given the deficit in the participants’ understanding and awareness of racial privilege revealed in the qualitative data, this area of growth is not unanticipated. It does, however, lead me to question why the other two areas of awareness are not increasing. For both Factor 2 and 3, three of the students (33%) actually had an increased score, and one of those students increased in all three areas after the service-learning experience. Interestingly, that same
student did not show up for her originally scheduled interview and did not respond to a request to reschedule.

Some shortcomings of the CoBRAS were identified once the survey was in use. One deficiency is the double-sided wording of some of the questions, which when answered, and depending upon your intention, could be an indication of either keen awareness or complete denial of racial circumstances in the United States. For example, the last statement on the survey states “Race plays an important role in who gets sent to prison.” A participant responding “strongly agree” could mean that Black people get sent to prison disproportionately compared to White people convicted of the same crime, indicating an awareness of the institutional discrimination to which Michelle Alexander refers in *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (2012). The participant, however, could have answered “strongly agree” because they believe that more Black people commit crimes worthy of incarceration, therefore more end up in prison, perhaps indicating a lack of understanding of the role that institutional discrimination has in perpetuating stereotypes. Another aspect of the CoBRAS that warrants additional consideration is the lack of clear direction on how to interpret that information if it is not comparative, either for one participant or within a group of participants.

**Overview of Findings**

After compiling and organizing the data, inductive content analysis revealed four analytic themes: (a) *Motivations, Expectations, and Experience in the Mississippi Delta*, (b) *Processing Notions of Race and Privilege through Service-learning*, (c) *Color-Blindness as a Distance that Protects*, and (d) *Service-Learning as a Disruptor of the White Paradigm*. Four theoretical frameworks informed the data analysis of this study: (a) Critical Race Theory, (b) Color-blind Ideology, (c) Intercultural Competence, and (d) Perry’s Theory of Intellectual and Ethical
Development. Elements of the first three theories helped to describe how college students process issues of race and privilege during service-learning work in the Mississippi Delta and how that progression fits into the larger cultural context of race and privilege in contemporary American society. The fourth theory aided in examining the students’ progress in meaning-making, considering duplicity, multiplicity, and relativism, and how service-learning can move students toward more complex thinking and advanced intercultural competence. The existing theory also allowed me to surmise whether service-learning increased cultural competence in the participating students and whether it, in fact, has the potential to do so given certain criteria.

The first theme, *Motivations, Expectations, and Experience in the Mississippi Delta*, revealed why students chose to participate in a service-learning class and what they expected both from the experience, as well as the environment and people in the Mississippi Delta. Students participated in a service-learning class for three primary reasons – to enhance learning through an experiential class, to gain professional experience that would help them upon graduation, or to help those in need. Some of the participants were unaware of the service-learning component when enrolling in the course. Most agreed that it would have been preferable to know in advance of the service expectation. Advanced awareness of this element of the class could be beneficial for two distinct reasons. First, students having an interest in service-learning might be drawn to the course if there was indication that it included a service experience. Second, students who are disinterested in participating in service could opt to avoid a service-learning class, minimizing the chances that disgruntled students would be engaging with community partners and enthusiastic students, thus possibly tainting the experience for all.

The participants who expressed interest in professional experience looked forward to having an opportunity to gain hands-on experience in their field of study. This motivator was
more prevalent among graduate and professional school students than undergraduate students. The final reason, helping those in need, was fairly common among participants, as several had previous volunteer experience that they enjoyed. Interestingly, this reason for participating was mentioned more during focus groups than during individual interviews. It is unclear whether there was some “peer pressure” to sound altruistic when discussing motivations for participating in a service-learning class, or if they simply were unaware of the professional benefits until they were actually in the field.

Participants’ expectations and experiences in the Mississippi Delta were varied. Many had virtually no fact-based knowledge of the Delta region, and if they did have expectations, they were often based on peer perceptions and experiences with the environment and people of the Delta. The tone of that second-hand information varied greatly. Racial disparities in the Delta are significant, and White residents and Black residents often have radically different existences and perceptions of the Delta. The participants being primarily White and having predominantly White peer groups presupposed that the insights they got about the Delta from their peers were filtered through a White, and often socioeconomically advantaged, lens. Some participants, however, had more evidence-based information about the Delta, either through in-class briefings or individual research. These participants seemed to have a deeper and more accurate view of the layers of complexity that exist in the region, and in interviews, they were able to speak more specifically about their expectations and more critically about their experiences.

The second theme, *Processing Notions of Race and Privilege through Service-learning*, examined how students process issues of race and privilege, before the service experience through classroom interaction, during the experience through in-situ critical thinking, and after the service through reflection. The level of pre-service preparation varied among classes and
individual students. The sociology course in which intercultural competence, or some similar outcome, was a learning objective included more pre-service instruction about the demographics of the Delta region, its economic challenges, and its cultural climate. When going into communities, whether domestic or abroad, where the residents are racially, ethnically, and culturally very different than the service providers, it is critical to provide students with background on the region and its population for two primary reasons. The first benefit is so students will have the necessary information to engage in respectful and authentic service by having a better understanding of the community in which they are working. Second, the experience will have an added layer of depth if the students understand the complexities of the community, thus enhancing the educational aspects of the service. In addition to variations in pre-service preparation, each individual student arrived to the experience with a particular set of values and base of knowledge, which greatly impacted how they processed new information. These layers of understanding will be discussed in-depth later in this chapter.

The most effective learning happens during the service-learning experience for students who are respectful, open, and curious according to Deardorff (2006). Many of the participants recalled insights that they gleaned during their service experiences. Some participants had questions about racial disparities that arose during their service-learning experience, but it seems that they did not feel comfortable asking those in charge or their professors about their observations. Establishing a mechanism for inquiry, possibly even an anonymous means to inquire so students would not be hesitant to ask difficult questions, would enhance the dialogue.

Reflection, considered the place where the most profound learning actually takes place, is an important tool to enhance learning outcomes (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Fitch, Steinke, & Hudson, 2013; Westrick, 2004). The importance of continuous reflection, as occurred in the sociology
class, is well documented (Eyler, 2009). While formal guided reflection is important, informal conversational reflection with classmates seemed to be beneficial. The conversations that occurred after hours and while in transit during the sociology class brought about some of the more interesting discussions about race and privilege that were reported by the participants.

The third theme, *Color-Blindness as a Distance that Protects*, described students’ minimization and denial of race as a factor in society, their awareness (or lack thereof) of privilege and the notion of American meritocracy, and their focus on overt and extreme acts of racism as the only indicator of contemporary racism. Denial and minimization was one of the methods that participants used to insulate themselves from both the impact of racism and the responsibility to address it. Some participants discussed discrimination and a social divide based on class rather than race. Pre-service orientation might include a discussion about the connection between race and socioeconomic status, particularly in Southern states such as Mississippi. Additionally, an historical overview of the role of institutional and systemic discrimination can arm students with evidence-based information that will help them put their experience into perspective. As mentioned previously, this information can enhance the depth with which students can assess the societal factors contributing to poverty and need in the communities in which they are conducting service. With regard to privilege, a dialogue about the meaning and ways it is manifested in society can help students understand that privilege extends beyond economics. With constant discourse, students can better understand that privilege is not something that White Americans necessarily seek or chose, but rather is a part of societal structure through which certain individuals benefit and others do not. Finally, an understanding of racism beyond individual, overt actions is important for students conducting service in underserved communities. Like the participants in this study, if students go into communities and
do not witness what they define as “racist acts,” then the assumption is that racism does not exist in those areas. Being aware of the more subtle forms of discrimination can add to the students’ insights into the environment in the community and allow them to better understand the dynamics of power and privilege that might not be immediately evident. Denial of systemic and institutional discrimination absolves White beneficiaries of having to institute change, not because they are necessarily against change, but simply because they are either unaware of these issues or are choosing the path of least resistance. Critical Race Theory calls upon researchers to utilize findings to further social justice, thus these findings suggest intentionality in dealing with issues of race and privilege, and students can best be intentional if they have adequate information and tools to take action.

The fourth and final theme, Service-Learning as a Disruptor of the White Paradigm, explored the specific revelations that students had during their service-learning experiences that allowed them to have a paradigm shift, even if temporary, where they began to see themselves and others through a different perspective, and from outside their own way of knowing. The participants in service-learning classes in the Mississippi Delta described experiences in four realms that disrupted the White paradigm. They commented on being the minority in an otherwise African American environment, the became aware of the existence of power and paternalism in that environment, they became mindful of the challenges of talking honestly about race and privilege, and some recognized a newfound level of empathy for the community members with whom they were engaging, striving to consider experiences through their worldview, a first step toward increasing intercultural competence.

Making students aware that, in spite of being a “melting pot,” American culture tends to default to White cultural norms; therefore, certain segments of society are not considered on their
own merits, but rather judged by how closely they emulate White mainstream culture. Shifting participants away from their comfort zone, challenging their assumptions, and creating experiences that cause cognitive dissonance all contribute to the learning process (Eyler, 2009). Most of the participants described moments of awareness that they were processing new information or experiencing something in a new way.

Through service-learning, some students make gains in intercultural competence. Some, however, may have stereotypes reinforced if they are not personally and academically prepared to enter an environment with no foundation of understanding on which to build. While many of the participants in this study developed empathy, increased their intercultural understanding, and engaged in dialogue about race and privilege, some did not. I propose that two critical components of this transformative experience are self-awareness on the part of the student and understanding on the part of the instructor, so both can be cognizant of the multiple strata by which students process issues of race and privilege. The variations in both qualitative and quantitative data reflect the notion that students are made up of layers of understanding, and they can increase in one and decrease in another because they are not static or even linked, but coexist to create a foundation where intercultural competence in service-learning begins. The following section expands on the description of these individual layers of understanding suggesting how college students process issues of race and privilege and how service-learning may impact their intercultural competence.

The guiding research questions in this study are as follows: How do students process issues of race and privilege prior to, during, and after participating in service-learning in the Mississippi Delta? How is intercultural competence impacted among students who participate in short-term service-learning in the Mississippi Delta? Each participant had an individual starting point in the
process, and for those students without prior engagement with a diverse array of people, it appears that without guidance and direction from the instructor, they may not increase their intercultural competence. Most participants had little pre-college contact with minorities. Even in college, minority interaction was limited. If first contact with diversity is primarily with underprivileged communities, one risks reinforcing stereotypes rather than broadening the students’ perspectives and worldviews. It is important for students to interact with minority leaders, as well as engage underserved populations which will help students understand that the African American community is not homogenous, but a varied and rich part of American society, and that even individuals have layers of identity, and no one interaction should define an entire population.

The participants in this study processed issues of race and privilege before, during, and after their service-learning experience at four primary levels – cultural, emotional, intellectual, and social. The cultural track refers to each participants’ own personal history with diversity, people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds, and familial past messages (i.e. distance, divisiveness, understanding, inclusion). The intellectual track involves how participants understand and interpret the history, sociology, and psychology of race and privilege (i.e. Civil Rights Movement, American history, racial identity, stereotyping, societal discrimination). The emotional track refers to the way participants connect to the previous aspects of race and privilege, including how they feel about engagement with people who are different, their comfort level, their response, and how they have been made to feel about their attitudes surrounding race and privilege (i.e. guilt, anxiety, curiosity, empathy). The final track is social, which involves where the student currently exists in a social context and where their predominant peer group and
others with whom they have strong relationships lie in relation to the three previous tracks (i.e. PWI institution, diverse Greek organization, political organizations, religious affiliation).

All four of these layers contribute to how participants processed issues of race and privilege. Because it is unlikely that students within a single service-learning class are all at the same place in each layer of understanding, instructors must be aware of the disparities in aptitude and create a multi-layered approach to informing and educating students on how to best process their experiences when conducting service in underserved, predominantly minority communities. Simply teaching about the Civil Rights Movement and assuming students will translate that historical information into an understanding of contemporary societal discrimination, will most likely fail as a pedagogy. A student with a more developed intellectual and cultural understanding of race and privilege might be more likely to make those connections than a student with little or no positive personal history with diversity and inclusion. It is important for the instructor to guide the student in discovering those connections.

Implications for Higher Education

The findings of this study have several possible implications for higher education practice. The discussion below addresses recommendations for institutions of higher learning and faculty, along with strategies for implementation. Additionally, implications for students are described. While not part of the discussion below, tangentially, these implications can impact the communities being served, an often-neglected consideration of service-learning course design and implementation (Kezar & Rhoads, 2014; Miron & Moely, 2006). Furthermore, these recommendations can be utilized in the administration of co-curricular service and community volunteerism, since the potential benefits and detriments of intercultural service also exist outside the higher education setting.
Institutions of Higher Learning. The role of service-learning and its potential as a means to increase intercultural competence among college students can be enhanced in the following recommended ways: (a) institutionalize service-learning and other experiential learning opportunities, (b) make service-learning accessible to students across diverse groups and programs, (c) expand the role of intercultural competence as a learning objective, and (d) offer faculty development opportunities to enhance teaching and learning.

Institutionalization of service-learning can create a foundation for this transformative pedagogy. Fostering the successful development of service-learning begins with an institutional framework that supports the faculty – the content experts – in enhancing the students’ learning through the incorporation of an experiential element into a course. This support can emerge in four primary ways. First, the institution can centralize resources for service-learning. These resources might include pedagogical guidelines and information about best practices in the fields, as well as assistance with enhancing cultural, racial, and socioeconomic understanding for both faculty and students. A clearinghouse of resources will provide the faculty with a toolkit of tested course design options that can enhance their teaching and student learning.

Second, in response to many participants in this study expressing frustration with lack of information about the service component of a class, specific designations should be given to service-learning classes in the course registration system so students who are seeking a service-learning experience can easily find courses with that element. An additional benefit is that students who are uninterested in service can opt out if they are made aware of the service expectation in a particular course. The use of this self-selection will, hopefully, eliminate the inclusion of resentful participants in a service experience.

Third, the creation of a database of community partners that faculty can peruse can
facilitate the development of a service-learning course. An instructor can examine the list of local and regional sites, find current contact information, and review information about past service projects at a particular agency. This database can also be used as a tracking mechanism to monitor which courses are engaging with which partner, and to control the number of service providers being disbursed to each site in response to the organization’s capacity. Finally, through institutionalization, universities can nurture partnerships between the institution and community partners, creating consistent and meaningful relationships which will benefit the university, the students, and perhaps most importantly, the partnership agency or organization.

The second recommendation is to make service-learning accessible to students across diverse groups and programs, which will allow more students to take advantage of this dynamic learning experience. Institutions should encourage course development across a wide variety of academic disciplines. Diverse student participation in service-learning courses can help promote interculturalism by fostering engagement among students from various backgrounds. Diverse enrollments can be prompted by marketing service-learning courses to a diverse student population through a multi-pronged advertising plan utilizing a variety of media and messages. Intentionality toward accommodating students with special needs can help increase broad student participation. Universities must take into account mobility issues, dietary restrictions, religious practice, and other needs that may make a student reticent about participating in experiential learning. Rigid service times and locations may deter some students from pursuing a service-learning experience, so providing service options that allow students to balance academic, work, and family obligations with their field experience may increase participation. Finally, as noted by some of the participants in this study, transportation can be hindrance for some students. Providing group transportation can accommodate students without a car, reduce the stress of
navigating a new locale, minimize the added expense for the students, and can even provide an opportunity for informal reflection as they travel to and from the service site.

The third recommendation is to expand the role of intercultural competence as a learning objective. This important attribute can help students better navigate a global environment both on campus and upon graduation. Three key strategies can foster intercultural competence across the institution. The first is for the administration to proactively embrace diversity beyond simply increasing numbers of minority students. They must foster engagement among students, faculty, and staff from various races, ethnic groups, and national origins. As Espino and Lee suggest, “interculturalism” is the operative part of a truly diverse campus (Espino & Lee, 2011) and requires cross-cultural interaction rather than simply minority enrollments.

A second strategy for advancing intercultural competence is facilitating engagement with people of color who serve as community leaders, organizational heads, and others in authority roles. Unfortunately, most campuses still have a dearth of minority faculty and administrators, so students do not have a chance to interact with or even see African American leaders in action. Connecting students with leaders, innovators, and visionaries of color in Mississippi communities can help students realize that minority individuals are not part of a homogenous group, but rather a collection of people from various socioeconomic, educational, religious, political, and cultural backgrounds.

The final strategy for implementation is a review of the language used in institutional documents to avoid deficit-based descriptors, thus avoiding the perpetuation of stereotypes. Diversity plans, which encourage and sometimes mandate diversity in student recruitment, employment, curricular programs, and community engagement, should be carefully examined to verify that the language used promotes intercultural awareness and understanding. The
University of Mississippi has such a plan, *Diversity Matters*, the University’s 2013 diversity plan, which includes a goal that could be directly impacted by increased attention to intercultural competence through service-learning. Board Goal 3 of the plan is “Enhancing the overall curriculum by infusion of content that enhances multicultural awareness and understanding” (University of Mississippi, 2013a), which addresses the incorporation of diversity content into the curriculum, but also describes service-learning specifically as a means to that end. Putting intercultural competence, and specifically the goals of mutuality and reciprocity, at the forefront of the service-learning experience makes diversity and multiculturalism objectives more authentic and sincere.

The language regarding service-learning in the plan, however, could benefit from better alignment with best practices for well-designed service-learning courses described throughout this document. The current text reads as follows:

There is a growing trend among students at UM to engage in service learning courses and projects. Service learning often brings students into direct contact with groups of individuals who are in need (the poor, disabled, elderly, etc.), thus broadening their perspectives and life experiences. Additionally, a wide variety of cultural opportunities are available to UM students through extracurricular activities (University of Mississippi, 2013a).

The term “direct contact” implies lack of engagement, mutuality, or reciprocity, whereas the phrase “individuals who are in need (the poor, disabled, elderly, etc.)” implies a deficit model and that interaction with minorities is by default interaction with those “in need.” Given the findings in this study, the University should re-evaluate the goals and terminology used in the diversity plan to ensure that the methods and objectives have substance and depth.
The fourth and final recommendation to institutions of higher learning is to offer faculty development opportunities to enhance teaching and learning. When discussing institutionalization above, the idea of faculty as content experts over skilled service-learning practitioner was discussed. While each campus may have some faculty who are seasoned service-learning practitioners, many faculty have innovative ideas about incorporating service into a course, but lack the expertise to execute a successful course, especially in their inaugural offering. Institutions would serve faculty and students alike if they provided faculty development sessions focusing on service-learning best practices to help instructors make the best use of this instructional method.

The second strategy involves faculty education on student development and racial identity theory. An awareness of theory can help faculty navigate the complexities of student development and racial identity development. A theoretical foundation can aid the instructor in anticipating and managing the challenges that arise in working with students in an experiential setting. It can also provide guidance when issues such as the students’ own personal identity, emotional responses, and intellectual curiosity take the student, and often their instructor, into uncharted territory.

The final strategy is to educate faculty on the role of race and privilege in service-learning with a focus on intercultural competence, which ultimately can improve the campus climate for all. Regardless of whether race and privilege are part of the academic content of a class, once a group arrives in an underserved, predominantly minority community to provide service, a stratified situation with an inherent power dichotomy can occur (Phillipsen, 2003). An understanding of how college students process issues of race and privilege is critical information for faculty and administrators who are charged with enhancing student learning and transforming
college campuses into authentic multicultural environments. These faculty development opportunities can be as basic as organizing a workshop led by experienced, knowledgeable on-campus faculty, student affairs staff, or diversity professionals. Attendance at a professional conferences could foster increased awareness. The Gulf South Summit, an annual meeting focusing on service-learning, and the annual meeting of the National Society for Experiential Education, a professional association serving faculty and administrators involved in service-learning, internships, and other experiential learning programs, are two recommended professional conferences. Another individualized option might be to pair new service-learning faculty with a professional mentor who is a seasoned practitioner and can provide more one-on-one, informal feedback on course development, theoretical perspectives, and the role of race and privilege in service-learning experiences.

Table 11 gives an overview of the general recommendations for institutions of higher learning as determined by this study, as well as an abbreviated description of the key strategies to help realize those recommendations.

Table 11

<table>
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<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>Strategies for Implementation</th>
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| Institutionalize service-learning and other experiential learning opportunities | - Centralize resources for service-learning, especially assistance with cultural, racial, and socioeconomic exploration for faculty and students  
- Incorporate a specific registration designation for service-learning courses  
- Create a network of community partners as a resource for faculty developing service-learning courses  
- Nurture partnerships between the institution and community partners, to create consistent and meaningful relationships |
| Make service-learning accessible to students across diverse groups and programs | - Offer courses in a variety of academic disciplines  
- Promote service-learning courses to a diverse student population  
- Accommodate students with special needs, such as |
<table>
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<th>Recommendations</th>
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| Mobility issues, dietary restrictions, or religious practice | • Provide service options that allow students to incorporate them into schedules including academic, work, and family obligations  
• Provide transportation for students for whom that may be an obstacle |
| Expand the role of intercultural competence as a learning objective | • Proactively embrace diversity beyond simply increasing numbers of minority students, but rather fostering engagement among students and faculty from various races, ethnic groups, and national origins  
• Create programs that expose students to people of color as leaders and authority figures, not simply as impoverished and underprivileged  
• Review language used in institutional documents, specifically diversity plans, to avoid deficit-based descriptors when describing service-learning |
| Offer faculty development opportunities to enhance teaching and learning | • Apprise faculty of best practices in service-learning course design  
• Inform faculty about student development and racial identity theory  
• Guide faculty on the role of race and privilege in service-learning |

**Faculty.** Faculty have the opportunity to present transformative experiences for students through well-designed, thoughtful service-learning courses. The following recommendations for faculty will enhance potentially transformative service-learning experiences: (a) examine the many facets of service-learning and its potential for student learning and development, (b) generate purposeful and intentional service-learning course design, (c) encourage open communication and enhanced reflection, and (b) create opportunities where students can learn from one another.

*Faculty must examine service-learning and its potential for student learning and development.* Four key strategies can aid an instructor in embracing the benefits of service-learning. First, explore cultural, racial, historical, and socioeconomic context of a service
location and its community. Students may only be in a community for a brief time, so it is important for the instructor to have a deeper understanding of the community and its people so he or she can help the students have more than a superficial knowledge. Some faculty lack awareness of the roles race and privilege can play in a service-learning experience. As described in the previous section, some instructors may not make the connection between the academic content of their course and issues of race and privilege, but in order to ensure participants who are sensitive and respectful, it is important that faculty, and in turn students, are cognizant of the impacts of societal and institutional racism and racial privilege in many underserved communities. Diversity professionals, veteran service-learning faculty, or others skilled in intercultural competence training can work with faculty to ensure that they are aware of the dynamics of race, privilege, and power when planning and implementing service-learning work – awareness that can then be passed on to the students. The third strategy is for faculty to explore student development and racial identity theory to better understand the various ways their students might process a service-learning experience in a poor, minority community. The students may confront situations that are unfamiliar and unsettling, and an instructor’s first instinct may be to divert them to more comfortable surroundings; however, through cognitive dissonance, students can make strides in their own development. An instructor unfamiliar with the way students process information, engage with their experiences, and progress through various stages of intercultural competence, psychosocial development, and cognitive thought may not recognize learning when it is taking place experientially. The plus-one intervention model for student development stemming from Perry’s Theory of Intellectual and Ethical Development could be one of the most effective ways for students to advance in intercultural competence. It is worthwhile for faculty to have an understanding of this, and other student
development theories. Finally, faculty should consider the layers of understanding involved in intercultural competence, for both themselves and students. People are not necessarily on the same layer of understanding culturally, emotionally, intellectually, and socially in the realm of intercultural competence. At one moment the instructor may assess the student to be very progressive and enlightened, and the next moment the student may make a statement that is terribly insensitive and regressive. This divergence simply illustrates that the student has a variety of levels of understanding about race and privilege, and the instructor needs to help him or her build upon strengths, examine weaknesses, and continue to gain understanding in all four layers.

Generate purposeful and intentional service-learning course design. It is important for faculty to understand best-practices in service-learning course design. This instructional method can be transformative when done well, and potentially damaging when done poorly. At risk for poorly designed courses are student learning, community relationships, and institutional reputation. An initial consideration in planning a service-learning course is whether the course goal is simply exposure or if true engagement is expected. Faculty need to evaluate the goal of the service-learning to determine if the design will actually achieve those objectives. Short-term programs may achieve the goal if it’s simply to observe poverty, racial disparities, etc., but if the course goal is to provide impactful service that generates lasting benefit to the student, short-term programs seem to have minimal value, according to some of the participants in this study. Another consideration is whether a direct or indirect model of service-learning works best to achieve the course learning objectives. Direct service involves interaction with the people being served and creates a service experience that addresses an immediate need. Indirect service involves interaction with an agency or organization that serves a need. Instructors need to
carefully consider whether charitable service or experience with social justice or community development better serve the learning objectives for their course. Faculty should provide contextual information to students prior to the service experience to help create depth in the experience. This pre-service instruction can include various media, including documentary films, literature, photographs, news articles, art, music, demographic data, or other media that can convey the cultural and historical context of the region to be visited. Finally, in order for service-learning courses to be truly accessible to students regardless of racial, socioeconomic, and educational status, the instructor must design a course that allows for students from various backgrounds to excel, even if they do not each develop in the same way or advance at the same rate. Movement toward intercultural competence, regardless of the starting point, is the primary consideration. Additionally, care to not put minority students in an exploitive or “automatic expert” situation is critical. Development of intercultural competence should not be the responsibility of students of color in the service-learning class, nor the responsibility of community members at the service site (Sperling, 2007).

The third recommendation is to encourage open communication and enhanced reflection. First, encourage dialogue before, during, and after the service experience, both with the instructor and amongst the other students. As students move through the service-learning experience, the conversation will change. They will begin with expectations and past experience, then during the service, talking about it with their peers may help them process the experience. After, the students can reflect on the experience and put it in perspective, based both on what they learned in class prior to the service and their own background, as well as hearing multiple perspectives if group reflection is an option. A second strategy is to provide students with vocabulary to facilitate dialogue about service-learning experiences and their responses to those
experiences. Often students do not know how to discuss challenging issues, and race seems to be a topic that many participants in this study were apprehensive about tackling. One of the primary reasons they were anxious was that they were afraid they would say something that would be construed as racist. Helping students work through appropriate language to articulate their observations, inquiries, and emotions can give them more communication options and increase confidence in their ability to engage in dialogue about race and privilege. Faculty should create an atmosphere where conversations about race and privilege are encouraged. Forethought about issues of race and privilege in the service-learning environment could help faculty anticipate challenges and opportunities when students interact with groups different from themselves, as well as better equip instructors to discuss issues of race and diversity, which can overflow to their classroom engagement, as well.

Reflection is one of the more important aspects of service-learning, and considered by many the place in the process where the true learning takes place (Eyler, 2009). Unguided reflection, however, may not be as effective as reflection led by specific prompts and probes that are relevant to the learning objectives. Without some level of guidance, reflection can become simply superficial documentation of activities rather than a more complex examination of the experience. The instructor should create a safe, open environment for questions and conversation about challenging topics, setting ground rules and establishing expectations for respectful, civil communications. Finally, the instructor might consider a means for anonymous questions for particularly challenging inquiries, so the topic can be broached, but an individual student would not face any repercussions for posing possibly naïve or problematic questions.

*The final recommendation is to create opportunities where students can learn from one another.* Provide opportunities for a cohort of students to serve at a site. While not always
feasible, this study suggests that structuring the service in this way allows the students to have a shared experience makes discussion more constant and meaningful. The participants who traveled as a group to the service site engaged in conversation while traveling to and from the Delta, an opportunity that would not have presented itself had they not had that time in transit. Those conversations led one student to reflect on how each student brought a different perspective to the discussion, and noted that he felt this occurred because of their different cultural backgrounds and life experiences. Another strategy is to facilitate group reflection. The participants who had the opportunity to debrief about the experience with their peers seemed to process the service-learning experience more thoroughly than those who were only required to submit an individual written reflection. If the class structure does not allow for a full class discussion, perhaps assigning partnered written reflections could foster dialogue among two or more students, if not the entire class. Finally, the instructor should help students recognize the layers of understanding to foster empathy among classmates from different backgrounds. Too often, one ill-informed or insensitive comment about race or privilege can shut down a dialogue. Students need to realize that they, their peers, and even their instructor are processing these challenging topics on four parallel continua – cultural, intellectual, emotional, and social – and that just because a student does not possess complete competence in one area does not mean that they are not moving toward intercultural competence. Being open to dialogue sometimes brings misstatements that can be awkward or even offensive, but being aware that each person brings unique cultural, emotional, intellectual, and social understanding to an experience can help students help each other in moving toward intercultural competence.

Based on the findings of this study, Table 12 provides an overview of recommendations for faculty and a brief description of multiple strategies for implementation.
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<tr>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>Strategies for Implementation</th>
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| Examine the many facets of service-learning and its potential for student learning and development | • Explore cultural, racial, historical, and socioeconomic context of service location and its community  
• Understand the role of race and privilege in service-learning experiences  
• Explore student development and racial identity theory  
• Consider the layers of understanding involved in intercultural competence, for both faculty and students |
| Generate purposeful and intentional service-learning course design | • Understand best-practices in service-learning course design  
• Consider whether the course goal is exposure or engagement and plan accordingly  
• Determine if a direct or indirect model of service-learning works best to achieve learning objectives  
• Establish whether charitable or social justice outcomes better advance the course goals  
• Provide students with contextual information about the service environment before a service-learning experience  
• Design a course that allows for students from various backgrounds to excel |
| Encourage open communication and enhanced reflection | • Encourage dialogue before, during, and after the service experience  
• Provide students with vocabulary to facilitate dialogue about service-learning experiences and their responses to those experiences  
• Include specific prompts and probes for reflection  
• Create a safe, open environment for questions and conversation about challenging topics  
• Provide an option for anonymous questions for particularly challenging inquiries |
| Create opportunities where students can learn from one another | • Provide opportunities for a cohort of students to serve at a site  
• Create opportunities for group reflection  
• Help students recognize the layers of understanding to foster empathy among classmates from different backgrounds |
Future Research

Many service-learning scholars have called for increased research on the outcomes of service-learning pedagogy, as well as continued exploration of the potential impact this type of instruction has on college students’ intercultural competence (Cabrera, 2011; Desmond, Stahl, & Graham, 2011; Endres & Gould, 2009; Espino & Lee, 2011; Heinze & DeCandia, 2011; Smith, Johnson, Powell, & Oliver, 2012). Through conducting this study, I have several suggestions for future research, both enhancements to and expansion of this study. To enhance the findings of the current study, I suggest the following:

- Examine service-learning courses with controls for variables, such as two sections of the same course taught by the same instructor, one with a service-learning component and one without.
- Inquire about the impact participation in this research might have had on students’ notions about their service-learning course. For some students, the individual interview may have been the only time they were asked to think about issues of race and privilege.
- Examine service-learning in the Delta using interview questions specifically addressing the four tenets of processing issues of race and privilege.
- Explore whether the race of the researcher had an impact on the participants’ willingness to participate in the study and/or their willingness to respond openly?
- Ask specific questions about their awareness of when and how students formed racial attitudes and opinions.

For future research that expands upon this study, I recommend the following:

- Develop an instrument specific to intercultural competence measures in the context of experiential learning.
• Examine faculty awareness of potential impact of service-learning on intercultural competence.

• Study long-term gains vs. short-term gains by creating a longitudinal study that follows participants into post-graduate experiences.

Summary

After compiling and organizing the data, inductive content analysis revealed four analytic themes: (a) Motivations, Expectations, and Experience in the Mississippi Delta, (b) Processing Notions of Race and Privilege through Service-Learning, (c) Color-Blindness as a Distance that Protects, and (d) Service-Learning as a Disruptor of the White Paradigm, which were discussed in-depth in this chapter in the context of the literature, the theoretical frameworks that informed the analysis, and contemporary practice. This study, its findings, and the implications for practice in higher education will contribute to the existing body of knowledge related to how students process issues of race and privilege and how service-learning can move students toward increased intercultural competence. The findings may help colleges and universities determine whether service-learning can help achieve institutional goals of diversity, multiculturalism, and interculturalism. The recommendations for institutions of higher learning provide ways in which colleges and universities can institutionalize service-learning to create a stronger presence, increase access to service-learning for all students, expand the role of intercultural competence as a learning objective, and offer faculty development opportunities to support good practice in service-learning and increased impact on student development. The recommendations for faculty include suggestions to examine service-learning and its potential for student learning and development, to generate purposeful and intentional service-learning course design, to encourage open communication and enhanced reflection, and to create opportunities where students can
learn from one another. These recommendations, along with the strategies for implementation, can lead to service-learning courses that are more effective in generating student learning outcomes, student development, and specifically, intercultural competence.

**Overall Conclusion**

The University of Mississippi has had a long history of racial divide, yet during the past year, students across racial lines have proven to be more outspoken about injustice, articulate about matters of race and privilege, and determined to move the university forward; however, work has yet to be done to foster intercultural competence both on this campus and beyond. Active intercultural engagement, rather than passive diversity, is critical for creating an authentically welcoming and inclusive campus. Students have the opportunity to become better campus citizens and ambassadors for the institution by learning to view the world through multiple perspectives. Many experts believe that service-learning can foster interculturalism and this study suggests that, when well-designed, thoughtful, and intentional, it can help improve the campus climate for all and help students to successfully navigate an increasingly diverse world.

Overall, this mixed methods study examined how college students participating in a service-learning class in the Mississippi Delta process issues of race and privilege, and assess whether these experiences impact their intercultural competence. The findings suggest that the answers to both questions hinge on the students’ past cultural, emotional, intellectual, and social experience with and understanding of race, privilege, and diversity, and how the service-learning class is designed and implemented. Movement along the intercultural competence spectrum is a shared responsibility between instructor and student. Understanding the complexity of the issues, feeling comfortable and supported in navigating these topics, and having an interest in gaining understanding about cultures beyond one’s own are important attributes. Helping students
process and better understand matters of race and privilege will ideally help students on our college campuses, and society at large, connect through better intercultural awareness, engagement, and understanding.

Mutual understanding of how participants process experiences confronting race and privilege can help students from all racial and ethnic backgrounds better understand each other. This study revealed that four layers of understanding - cultural, emotional, intellectual, and social - contribute to how participants processed issues of race and privilege. Acknowledgement that no group’s attitudes exist in a vacuum is important. Students who might be perceived as “racist,” “insensitive,” or “bigoted” may have a deficit in one or more of the layers of understanding. They may be advancing in one area, but because another layer is underdeveloped, they present as uncaring, unenlightened, or disinterested in understanding people different from themselves. The acknowledgement that attitudes regarding race and privilege exist on a continuum can help benefit all parties, as it helps students move toward better understanding, openness, and acceptance of their place in the world and that of people who may look different than they do.

While the University of Mississippi may be a particularly challenging environment in which to promote intercultural competence due to its history and ongoing racial tensions, incorporating practices that actively engage students in critical thinking about race and privilege can be a first step toward creating an environment in which intercultural growth is the rule rather than the exception. The challenges and victories that the University has undergone in the past two years suggest that the path to intercultural competence is not direct, but that small ripples of progress create large waves of change when people from various backgrounds work to engage and understand one another.
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LIST OF APPENDICES
APPENDIX A: SAMPLE CLASS SOLICITATION LETTER
APPENDIX A
SAMPLE CLASS SOLICITATION LETTER

25 February 2015

Dr. John Doe
The University of Mississippi
307 Smith Hall
University, MS  38677

Dear Dr. Doe:

I am currently pursuing my doctoral degree in Higher Education Administration at the University of Mississippi. My research focus is service-learning, specifically student perceptions of race and privilege before, during, and after performing service in underserved, predominantly minority communities. I am contacting you because of your work in service-learning in the Mississippi Delta. My study will contribute to the existing literature on intercultural competence outcomes of service-learning, and I would like to include your students in that study. My dissertation chair is Dr. Amy Wells Dolan. She is an Associate Professor of Leadership and Counselor Education and the Associate Dean of the School of Education at the University of Mississippi. You can contact her at (662) 915-5710 or aewells@olemiss.edu.

Using service-learning as a means to foster true integration among diverse students is an idea with much promise. The literature reveals that intercultural competence is one of the most powerful, but least researched student outcome of service-learning (Deardorff, 2011; Espino & Lee, 2011). This study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge in that area. Additionally, the research may produce information that will help instructors better prepare students for intercultural service-learning experiences and help them anticipate intercultural issues in the field. Finally, the data and analysis may help colleges and universities determine if service-learning could aid in achieving institutional goals of diversity, multiculturalism, and interculturalism.

The qualitative portion of this study will carry the most weight; therefore, as an emergent study, these specific research questions provide an initial framework for the study and guide the quantitative hypothesis, but may be amended as the research progresses. The research questions are as follows:

• How do students process issues of race and privilege prior to, during, and after participating in service-learning in the Mississippi Delta?

• How is intercultural competence impacted among students who participate in short-term service-learning in the Mississippi Delta?

The null hypothesis for the quantitative portion of the study is as follows:

• There is no significant difference in student scores on the Color-Blind Racial Attitude Scale (CoBRAS) after participating in a service-learning course in the Mississippi Delta.
If you allow me to solicit student participants from your current or future class, the procedure would be as follows:

1) Focus Group: Each student will complete a short demographic data questionnaire and, if willing to participate in the study, will participate in a short focus group discussing expectations of the upcoming service experience.

2) Pre-service Survey: Students will be contacted to take the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Survey (CoBRAS) pre-test.

3) Post-service Survey: After the service work has been completed, the participants will take the CoBRAS post-test.

4) Interviews: Individual interviews will be scheduled within three days after their service work and conducted no more than ten days after scheduling.

Time and schedule permitting, all five components of the study would be implemented. Under certain circumstances, fewer components might be employed. I am happy to provide you with a copy of the CoBRAS survey for your review, upon request. I am appreciative of whatever time you and your students can make available.

All participation is voluntary, and a participant can opt to terminate participation at any time without penalty. All data collected from the participants will be confidential. Students will have the opportunity to review the transcript of their interview and correct and/or remove any material. Students will receive $20 for participation in the study. Pseudonyms will be used in the results for all participants, the professor, and the course name.

Thank you, in advance, for your consideration of participation in this study.

Best regards,

Laura Antonow
(662) 801-3034
antonow@olemiss.edu
APPENDIX B: IRB APPROVAL
APPENDIX B

IRB APPROVAL

From: irb@olemss.edu
Subject: IRB Exempt Approval of 14x-205
Date: March 24, 2014 12:56:57 PM CDT
To: Laura Antonow <leantono@olemiss.edu>, Laura Antonow <leantono@olemiss.edu>
Cc: AMY EILEEN WELLS DOLAN <aewells@olemiss.edu>, Timothy Letzring <tdl@olemiss.edu>

Ms. Antonow:
This is to inform you that your application to conduct research with human participants, “Perceptions of Race ” (Protocol #14x-205), has been approved as Exempt under 45 CFR 46.101(b)(#2).

Please remember that all of The University of Mississippi’s human participant research activities, regardless of whether the research is subject to federal regulations, must be guided by the ethical principles in The Belmont Report: Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research.

It is especially important for you to keep these points in mind:
• You must protect the rights and welfare of human research participants.
• Any changes to your approved protocol must be reviewed and approved before initiating those changes.
• You must report promptly to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated problems involving risks to participants or others.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the IRB at irb@olemiss.edu.

Jennifer Caldwell, PhD
Senior Research Compliance Specialist, Research Integrity and Compliance
The University of Mississippi
212 Barr
University, MS 38677-1848
U.S.A.
+1-662-915-5006
irb@olemiss.edu | www.olemiss.edu

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APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Title: Perceptions of Race and Privilege: Intercultural Competence and Service-Learning in the Mississippi Delta

Investigator
Laura Antonow
Department of Leadership and Counselor Education
104 Yerby Conference Center
The University of Mississippi
(662) 915-6511

Advisor
Amy Wells Dolan, Ph.D.
Department of Leadership and Counselor Education
137 Guyton Hall
The University of Mississippi
(662) 915-5710

☐ By checking this box I certify that I am 18 years of age or older.

Description
This study examines college students’ perceptions of race and privilege before, during, and after a service-learning experience connected to an academic course. With classes that will be performing service-learning as a group, the researcher will conduct a class focus group, administer a pre- and post-service survey, and conduct post-service individual interviews. For classes where students may be conducting their service-learning individually, the researchers will administer the pre- and post-service surveys and conduct interviews upon completion of the survey.

Risks and Benefits
Some students may find issues of race and privilege difficult or uncomfortable to discuss. Others may find it intellectually and emotionally challenging, but positive overall. The information gathered might help faculty and institutions design service-learning courses that improve intercultural competence among students and improve the multicultural environment on the college campus. The study will contribute to the body of knowledge about how students process issues of race and privilege while participating in service-learning.

Cost and Payments
The focus group should last approximately 30 minutes. The pre- and post-service surveys should take approximately 10 minutes each. The concluding individual interviews will take approximately 45 minutes. Participants will have the opportunity to review their interview transcript for accuracy, which might take approximately 1 hour. Participants completing any portion of the study will receive a $20.

Confidentiality
While the researcher will know the identity of the participating students, no identifying information would be included in the final report. The researcher will be transcribing the focus groups and interviews, so no other individuals will be able to identify the participants. Raw data will be available to the developer of the CoBRAS instrument upon request, but all identifying
information will be removed from the data. Pseudonyms will be used in the report, and after five years, all the data will be destroyed. The surveys and transcripts will have an identification number, and the key to the identifying number and participant name will be stored separately from the actual surveys and transcripts.

Right to Withdraw
You do not have to take part in this study. If you start the study and decide that you do not want to finish, please inform Laura Antonow by letter, by e-mail, or by telephone at the Division of Outreach, 104 Yerby Conference Center, The University of Mississippi, University MS 38677, or antonow@olemiss.edu, or (662) 915-6511. Whether or not you choose to participate or to withdraw will not affect your standing with your class, your academic department, or with the University.

IRB Approval
This study has been reviewed by The University of Mississippi’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). If you have any questions, concerns, or reports regarding your rights as a participant of research, please contact the IRB at (662) 915-7482 or irb@olemiss.edu.

Statement of Consent
I have read the above information. I have been given a copy of this form. I have had an opportunity to ask questions, and I have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

_________________________________________________________________________
Signature of Participant __________________________ Date ______________________

_________________________________________________________________________
Signature of Investigator _________________________ Date ______________________
APPENDIX D: RELEASE FORM
APPENDIX D

RELEASE FORM

UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI

Release of Rights to Recorded or Written Information
My signature below indicates that I release all rights, including copyright rights for the use of any recorded or written information that I provided during this study. With this release, I grant the University of Mississippi and the aforementioned researchers the permission to use, reproduce, copy, and distribute my words associated with this study in whole or in part into derivative works without limitation. I indemnify and hold the University and the researchers harmless from any claims of infringement of copyright by any third party regarding my words. I agree that I will receive no further consideration and no royalty payments for the use of my words.
I understand that my participation is voluntary. My refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. I understand that I may discontinue my participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits.

_____ I approve the use of my verbal comments provided during the interview conducted by the researcher.
_____ I approve the use of the written final reflection or essay submitted to my instructor.

Name: ________________________________________________ Date: ______________

Signature: ________________________________________________
APPENDIX E: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE
APPENDIX E

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Please complete the following demographic questionnaire. This information will be used to link your future survey responses and interview transcript. This form will also serve as your contact information for future segments of this study, should you choose to participate. All of the information on this questionnaire will remain confidential and will only be used for the purposes of this study. Upon completion of the project, the documents will be stored in a secure location for the requisite time and then will be permanently destroyed. The researcher will be the only person with access to your information. No identifying information will appear in the final research report.

1. First Name _________________________ Last Name _________________________
2. E-mail address _________________________________________________________
3. Mailing address _________________________________________________________
4. Phone number _________________________________________________________
5. Gender: M F
6. Please select your age: 18 19 20 21 22 23 or older
7. Please select your ethnicity: Hispanic or Latino Not Hispanic or Latino
8. Please select your race (all that apply): American Indian or Alaskan Native
   Asian
   Black or African American
   Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
   White
9. Please select your classification at the University of Mississippi:
   Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior Graduate Student
10. Please indicate if you are a Mississippi resident or a non-resident:
    Mississippi resident Non-Mississippi resident
11. If a non-resident, please indicate your home state: _________________________
12. Are you a transfer student to the University of Mississippi? _____ Yes _____ No
13. If yes, from which institution did you transfer? _____________________________
14. Please indicate your major at the University of Mississippi: _____________________
15. Course number in which you are conducting service-learning: _____________________
16. Please identify your service site and location:
    Name of agency _______________________________________________________
    Type of agency _______________________________________________________
    City/County _______________________________________________________
APPENDIX F: FOCUS GROUP SCRIPT AND PROMPTS
APPENDIX F

FOCUS GROUP SCRIPT AND PROMPTS

Good morning/afternoon. My name is Laura Antonow, and I am a doctoral student in Higher Education. I am conducting a study on University of Mississippi students who are participating in service-learning courses in the Mississippi Delta. The study is an examination of students’ perceptions of race and privilege and the impact service-learning might have on those perceptions. This focus group is the first of five parts to the study, which, in addition to this focus group, will include a survey before and after your service activity, one day of on-site observation, and individual follow-up interviews. Once we’re completed the focus group, you’ll be asked if you are willing to continue in the study, which involves taking the surveys and being interviewed.

Let’s begin by setting a few ground rules for our conversation. First, let’s talk one at a time, so that you can hear the comments of others. Second, please listen to your classmates. Something they say may prompt an important comment that you have. Third, I’d like this to be a safe space for student to share any comment, concern, or thoughts about your upcoming service. Please do not share the comments of others outside of the class. Finally, the conversation we have today will be transcribed using pseudonyms, so you will not be identified with any comments you make during this focus group.

This focus group should last approximately 30-45 minutes. Thank you, in advance, for your time.

1. Why do students enroll in service-learning courses?
   
   Prompt 1: Are they typically required class?
   Prompt 2: Why would students select this particular class?
   Prompt 3: What do you think students will find different about a service-learning class rather than a traditional classroom class?

2. What are students’ expectations regarding the environment at their service sites?
   
   Prompt 1: How much do you think students know about the type of service their site provides?
   Prompt 2: What do you think students know about the Mississippi Delta?
   Prompt 3: Have most students spent time in the Mississippi Delta previously?

3. What are students’ expectations regarding the people at their service sites?
   
   Prompt 1: What do you think students expect the population being served will be like?
Prompt 2: What do you think students expect the staff will be like? Culturally? Educationally?

4. What are students’ doing to prepare themselves for this service experience?

Prompt 1: What knowledge do you think students have about the culture, demographics, or other characteristics of the Mississippi Delta region?
Prompt 2: Have most students discussed issues of race and/or ethnicity in preparation for their work in the Delta?

5. What challenges do you think students will encounter doing service-learning in the Mississippi Delta?

Prompt 1: Educational challenges?

6. What do you think students hope to accomplish?

Prompt 1: Educational outcomes?
Prompt 2: Professional outcomes?
Prompt 3: Personal outcomes?

Thank you all for your time, and for a lively and informative discussion. I look forward to meeting with you again individually after your service experience. In the meantime, I’ll see you briefly at your service site and will be in touch about your pre- and post-service surveys.

Thanks, again, for your input.
APPENDIX G: COLOR-BLIND RACIAL ATTITUDES SCALE
# APPENDIX G

## COLOR-BLIND RACIAL ATTITUDES SCALE

### COLOR-BLIND RACIAL ATTITUDES SCALE SCORING INFORMATION


**Directions.** Below is a set of questions that deal with social issues in the United States (U.S.). Using the 6-point scale, please give your honest rating about the degree to which you personally agree or disagree with each statement. Please be as open and honest as you can; there are no right or wrong answers. Record your response to the left of each item.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td><strong>____</strong> Everyone who works hard, no matter what race they are, has an equal chance to become rich.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td><strong>____</strong> Race plays a major role in the type of social services (such as type of health care or day care) that people receive in the U.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td><strong>____</strong> It is important that people begin to think of themselves as American and not African American, Mexican American or Italian American.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td><strong>____</strong> Due to racial discrimination, programs such as affirmative action are necessary to help create equality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td><strong>____</strong> Racism is a major problem in the U.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td><strong>____</strong> Race is very important in determining who is successful and who is not.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td><strong>____</strong> Racism may have been a problem in the past, but it is not an important problem today.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td><strong>____</strong> Racial and ethnic minorities do not have the same opportunities as White people in the U.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td><strong>____</strong> White people in the U.S. are discriminated against because of the color of their skin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td><strong>____</strong> Talking about racial issues causes unnecessary tension.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td><strong>____</strong> It is important for political leaders to talk about racism to help work through or solve society’s problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td><strong>____</strong> White people in the U.S. have certain advantages because of the color of their skin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td><strong>____</strong> Immigrants should try to fit into the culture and adopt the values of the U.S.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
14. _____ English should be the only official language in the U.S.

15. _____ White people are more to blame for racial discrimination in the U.S. than racial and ethnic minorities.

16. _____ Social policies, such as affirmative action, discriminate unfairly against White people.

17. _____ It is important for public schools to teach about the history and contributions of racial and ethnic minorities.

18. _____ Racial and ethnic minorities in the U.S. have certain advantages because of the color of their skin.

19. _____ Racial problems in the U.S. are rare, isolated situations.

20. _____ Race plays an important role in who gets sent to prison.

The following items (which are bolded above) are reversed score (such that 6 = 1, 5 = 2, 4 = 3, 3 = 4, 2 = 5, 1 = 6): item #2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 12, 15, 17, 20. Higher scores should greater levels of “blindness”, denial, or unawareness.

Factor 1: Unawareness of Racial Privilege consists of the following 7 items: 1, 2, 6, 8, 12, 15, 20

Factor 2: Unawareness of Institutional Discrimination consists of the following 7 items: 3, 4, 9, 13, 14, 16, 18

Factor 3: Unawareness to Blatant Racial Issues consists of the following 6 items: 5, 7, 10, 11, 17, 19

Results from Neville et al. (2000) suggest that higher scores on each of the CoBRAS factors and the total score are related to greater: (a) global belief in a just world; (b) sociopolitical dimensions of a belief in a just world, (c) racial and gender intolerance, and (d) racial prejudice. For information on the scale, please contact Helen Neville (hneville@uiuc.edu).
APPENDIX H: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND PROMPTS
APPENDIX H

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND PROMPTS

Good morning/afternoon. My name is Laura Antonow, and I am a doctoral student in Higher Education. Thank you very much for agreeing to be interviewed today. A reminder that the conversation we have today will be transcribed using pseudonyms, so you will not be identified with any comments you make during this interview. Please be as honest as possible in responding to these questions. There are no right or wrong answers. Our goal is to understand the experience of students participating in service-learning in the Mississippi Delta and how that experience might impact their perceptions of race and privilege. This information will contribute to the body of knowledge about service-learning as a method of instruction in higher education. This interview should last approximately 45 minutes. Please feel free to ask for clarification on any question, especially if I use a term with which you are unfamiliar. Thank you, in advance, for your time.

• Describe your racial and ethnic identity. (Define “racial identity”: the group with which you identify based on appearance and culture, Define “ethnic identity”: the group with which you identify based on national origins, language, and culture)
  • Prompt 1: Do you consider yourself Hispanic or Latino/a?
  • Prompt 2: What race do you consider yourself?
  • Prompt 3: How connected are you to your family’s national origins?
  • Prompt 4: Are there people from different racial or ethnic groups in your family?

• What prompted you to participate in a service-learning course?
  • Prompt 1: Was this a required course?
  • Prompt 2: Were you aware of the service component when you enrolled in the course?
  • Prompt 3: Did you receive input from your advisor or a professor when considering enrolling in this course?
  • Prompt 4: Did you receive input from a parent when considering enrolling in this course?

• Tell me about your experience in the field.
  • Prompt 1: What was the environment like at your service site? Facilities?
  • Prompt 2: With whom did you interact at your service site?
  • Prompt 3: How did you relate to the people at your service site?
  • Prompt 4: What were your observations of life in the Mississippi Delta?

• How would you describe your exposure to and attitude toward people from other racial or ethnic groups?
  • Prompt 1: To what extent were you around people from other racial or ethnic groups in high school?
  • Prompt 2: Do you recall any conflicts in high school surrounding issues of race?
  • Prompt 3: In college, to what extent are you around students from other racial or ethnic groups?
  • Prompt 4: Do you recall any conflicts in college surrounding issues of race?

• What role did race play in your service-learning experience in the Delta?
  • Prompt 1: Tell me about any conflict that you might have encountered or observed.
• Prompt 2: Did you observe any subtle racist behavior? [Define “subtle racist behavior”: a set of often unconscious beliefs and attitudes that negatively impact one's thoughts about and actions toward a person or group based on race (National Research Council, 2004)]
• Prompt 3: Did you observe any blatant racist behavior? [Define “blatant racist behavior”: overt and aggressive negative thoughts about or behavior toward a person or group based on race]

• What role did your own race play in your experience?
  • Prompt 1: How aware of your own race were you during your service experience?
  • Prompt 2: How did you experience your own race during this experience?
  • Prompt 3: What role did racial privilege play in your experience? [Define “racial privilege”: unearned advantage that an individual or group of individuals receive based on their race]
  • Prompt 3: What benefits, if any, did your race provide in this setting?
  • Prompt 4: What challenges, if any, did your own race create in this setting?

• Did you observe or get a sense of discrimination of any sort while at your site? [Define “discrimination”: behavior or treatment that disadvantages one group over another (National Research Council, 2004)]
• In general, what challenges did you face at your work site or in the community?
• What positive experiences made the strongest impact on you?
• What did you learn about yourself during this experience?
• In general, what is the most important thing that you will take away from this experience?

VITA

Laura Antonow
662 801 3034
antonow@olemiss.edu

Education
2010-present Ph.D. Candidate, Higher Education, School of Education, The University of Mississippi, University, MS


1989 BS, Interior Design, School of Architecture and Environmental Design, University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington, TX

Academic Honors
Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi

Related Professional Experience
2013-present Director, Office of College Programs, Division of Outreach and Continuing Education, The University of Mississippi, Oxford, MS

2012-2013 Project Manager, Division of Outreach and Continuing Education, The University of Mississippi, Oxford, MS

2006-2008 Senior Project Administrator, Division of Outreach and Continuing Education, The University of Mississippi, Oxford, MS

1995-2011 Adjunct Assistant Professor of Art, Department of Art, The University of Mississippi

Conference Presentations
2013 “No Passport Required: Models for Domestic Study Away Programs within Global Education” with Paul Paparella (Duke University) and Phil Smith (Elon
University), NAFSA (Association of International Educators) Region VII
Conference, Raleigh, NC, October 27-30

2010 “Study USA – When a Classroom Isn’t a Classroom,” NAASS (North American
Association of Summer Sessions) Annual Conference, Portland, ME, November
6-10

Invited Lectures and Presentation
  2012 Closing Reflection: “How We Serve,” The Big Event, The University of
  Mississippi

  2012 Interactive Reflection: “Meaning of Service Civic Reflection,” College Corps
  Orientation, The University of Mississippi

  2011 Interactive Reflection: “Meaning of Service Civic Reflection,” College Corps
  Orientation, The University of Mississippi

University Service
  2015-present Chancellor’s Commission on the Status of Women, Chair

  2015-present Diversity Leadership Council

  2014-present Building, Grounds and Renovations Standing Committee

  2012-present Council on Community Engagement, McLean Institute for Public Service and
  Community Engagement

  2012-present Delta Internship Initiative Selection Committee, a collaborative effort between
  Lott Leadership Institute, the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College, the
  Division of Outreach, and the Office of the Provost

  2014-2015 The Ole Miss Experience: Transfer Experience Supplement, contributor

  2014-2015 Algernon Sydney Sullivan Award Nominations Committee

  2014-2015 Recreational Facilities Standing Committee

  2012-2014 Friends of the Museum Board of Directors, University Museum

  2013 Chair, Search Committee for Coordinator of College Programs, Division of
  Outreach and Continuing Education

  2012 The Big Event Advisory Committee

  2005 Department of Art Reunion Committee

Professional Affiliations and Service
  2015-present American Association of University Women, member
Mississippi AAUW State Executive Committee, international chair
Mississippi AAUW State Convention co-organizer

2015-present  American Educational Research Association, member

2012-present  International Association for Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement, member

2010-present  National Society for Experiential Education, member

2013-2015  Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement, guest reviewer

2005-2007  NAFSA: Association of International Educators, member