

UCLA

UCLA Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

AmeriCorps Members in Urban K-12 Schools and Their Perceptions of the Communities They Serve

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7508c716>

Author

Lopez, Jonathan Joseph

Publication Date

2019

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

AmeriCorps Members in Urban K-12 Schools and
Their Perceptions of the Communities They Serve

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education

by

Jonathan Joseph López

2019

© Copyright by

Jonathan Joseph López

2019

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

AmeriCorps Members in Urban K-12 Schools and
Their Perceptions of the Communities They Serve

by

Jonathan Joseph López

Doctor of Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2019

Professor Robert Cooper, Chair

AmeriCorps Members serve as a human capacity intervention in urban education systems around the United States (Cassidy, Hicks, Hall, Farran, & Gray, 1998). Since 1994 nearly 75,000 Americans, annually, have served in AmeriCorps. The largest percentage of service provided by AmeriCorps Members is in the field of K-12 public education. Research has shown that public school students in low-income communities benefit from interactions with adults on campus who can validate and lift up their cultural capital in their learning experience (Darling, 2005; Howard, 2001; Noguera, 2003; Osei-Kofi, 2005; Tatum, 2007). Considering that AmeriCorps Members come from a variety of personal and professional backgrounds, but rarely have any experience serving in communities similar to those where they have lived, it is important for them to develop asset based perspectives of the communities they serve in order to achieve their service goals.

This research study sought to understand AmeriCorps Member perceptions of the communities they serve and how the training they received influenced their views of the community. The Community Cultural Wealth Model (Yosso, 2005) and research on the six essentials of Asset Based Community Development (McKnight, 2017) informed the design of this mixed methods study with descriptive and explanatory analyses of two sites within one AmeriCorps education program. The research process included a survey of 85 AmeriCorps Members, in-depth interviews with 11 AmeriCorps Members, and interviews with two Training Directors; one from each of the two research sites. The six forms of capital highlighted by Yosso's (2005) research (aspirational, familial, linguistic, navigational, resistant, and social) and six essential elements of Asset Based Community Development (McKnight, 2017) research (individuals, associations, institutions, physical assets, local economy, and connections) were used as coding frames for the data collection.

Findings support the need for ongoing learning experiences that support AmeriCorps Member engagement of the communities they serve. Specifically, the engagement of community members affiliated with service locations increases AmeriCorps Members' asset based views of the community. Additionally, informal learning experiences are the most impactful on the perceptions AmeriCorps Members hold of the communities they serve. AmeriCorps programs that balance informal and formal learning experiences better support AmeriCorps Members' understanding of community as a factor in their service. Finally, AmeriCorps Members who learn to recognize and value culture as a natural and normal part of the community they serve are more likely to see the community as asset based. Engaging AmeriCorps Members in guided reflection during their service experience is a strategy that supports this mindset development.

The dissertation of Jonathan Joseph López is approved.

Kimberley Gomez

Mark P. Hansen

Pedro Antonio Noguera

Robert Cooper, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2019

DEDICATION

To my matriarchs, Margarita and Francisca, thank you for teaching me how to live a purpose-filled life. To my aunts, uncles, cousins, and siblings who have supported me through the ups, downs, roundabouts, and disconnections. To my parents, Lucy and William, for always loving me and supporting my education. All that I am in life was made possible because of your consistent presence and intervention; I love you. And finally, to Marisa. May you grow up ever confident that you are protected by your ancestors, loved by your parents, and destined for greatness; “someday, someday...”.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION.....	ii
DEDICATION.....	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	ix
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	x
VITA.....	xi
CHAPTER ONE: PROBLEM STATEMENT.....	1
Background of the Problem.....	3
AmeriCorps.....	6
Statement of the Problem.....	7
Research Questions.....	8
Research Site and Populations.....	8
Overview of the Research Design.....	9
Significance of the Research.....	10
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	11
Disproportionate Negative Educational Outcomes for Black and Latinx Students.....	11
Barriers to Success.....	12
The Impact of Student-Teacher Cultural Mismatch on School Climate and Culture.....	12
The Influence of Race on the School to Prison Pipeline.....	13
Funding Disparities Across Racial Groups.....	14
Gentrification.....	14
AmeriCorps Service Programs as a Solution.....	15
AmeriCorps as a Human Capital Solution.....	15
Training Within AmeriCorps Programs.....	16
Evaluating the Outcomes of an AmeriCorps Program.....	16
The Importance of Adult Relationships.....	17
Community-Inclusive Solutions.....	19
Conceptual Framework.....	22
Critical Education.....	22
Anti-Hegemony.....	23
From Critical Race Theory to Critical Educators.....	23
Instruction.....	25
The Demand for Critical Pedagogy in Schools.....	25
Cultural Proficiency.....	26
Community Cultural Wealth Model.....	27
Conclusions.....	28

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	29
Research Design and Rationale.....	29
Strategies of Inquiry.....	30
Site and Sample Selection.....	31
Overview of the Research Sites.....	32
Site One.....	32
Site Two.....	33
Data Collection Methods.....	34
Surveys.....	34
Interviews.....	35
Data Analysis Methods.....	36
Surveys.....	36
Interviews.....	36
Triangulation.....	37
Ethical Issues.....	37
Credibility and Trustworthiness.....	38
Summary.....	39
 CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS.....	 40
Organization of Data Analysis.....	40
AmeriCorps Member Survey.....	41
AmeriCorps Member Interviews.....	42
Overview of Survey Participants.....	43
Description of Survey Respondents.....	43
Overview of Interview Participants.....	47
AmeriCorps Member Interviews.....	47
Training Director Interviews.....	50
AmeriCorps Member Perceptions of the Communities they Serve.....	53
Finding 1.....	53
Finding 2.....	57
Understanding Community Assets and Challenges Vis-à-vis Learning Experiences.....	61
Finding 3.....	61
Finding 4.....	69
Finding 5.....	79
Conclusion.....	82
 CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION.....	 84
Summary of Findings.....	85
Building Bonds to Understand Community.....	85
Honoring Linguistic Identities.....	87
Balancing the Art and Science of Community Engagement.....	89
Incidental Immersion.....	90
Guided Reflection.....	91
Limitations.....	92
Sample.....	92
Method.....	93

Recommendations for Practice.....	94
Structured Spaces for Identity Reflection.....	94
AmeriCorps Resources for Asset Based Community Engagement.....	95
Implications for Future Research.....	96
Engaging a Variety of AmeriCorps Programs.....	96
Experiences of AmeriCorps Members from Diverse Lived Experiences.....	96
Conclusion.....	97
APPENDIX A: AmeriCorps Members Survey.....	99
APPENDIX B: Interview Protocol for AmeriCorps Members.....	102
APPENDIX C: Interview Protocol for Training Directors.....	105
APPENDIX D: AmeriCorps Member Survey Email.....	107
APPENDIX E: AmeriCorps Member Interview Recruitment Email.....	108
REFERENCES.....	109

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Research Site Student Demographics.....34

Table 2. Synopsis of the Findings.....40

Table 3. Survey and Interview Administration Processes for AmeriCorps Members.....43

Table 4. Survey Respondent Demographics.....45

Table 5. Survey Questions about Learning Experiences and Asset Based Community
Development.....46

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics from Survey Results.....47

Table 7. AmeriCorps Member Interview Participants.....49

Table 8. Learning Experiences by Race.....62

Table 9. Sample Scope and Sequence of Ongoing Learning Experiences about
Community.....94

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I want to acknowledge and thank the members of ELP 24 for your encouragement, smiles, perspective, and nourishment. Secondly, my dissertation chair, Professor Robert Cooper, who inspired me to be just like him from the first day of class. I hope this is the first of many opportunities for us to collaborate. And to my committee members and the ELP faculty, thank you for imparting your wisdom and sharing your passion with me. I greatly appreciate the time and attention you gave.

This dissertation would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of my colleagues. I especially want to thank José for trusting my work and Sofia for her instrumental partnership.

Finally, to my family and friends who have carried me through this journey. Especially FOURMATION, the Wolfpack, Kriste, O'Donovan and Seth, Davin and Michelle, Chelsea and Ryan, Amanda and Liz, Ric, Heather, Jesus, Jorge, and Emily. Some say I am a better man for completing this process. I know that I am very fortunate to have you all by my side.

El camino ni te quita ni te da. Te enseña. I embarked on this journey as a doctoral student at UCLA to achieve dreams of a better tomorrow. The process illuminated a new path, and I am so grateful for this moment.

VITA

2004	B.A. Political Science and Spanish College of the Holy Cross Worcester, Massachusetts
2004 – 2006	Multiple Subject Teacher John Adams Middle School Los Angeles, California
2006	M.Ed., Elementary Education Loyola Marymount University Los Angeles, California
2006 – 2007	National Recruitment Director Teach For America Florida and Puerto Rico
2007 – 2008	Fourth Grade Teacher Camino Nuevo Charter Academy Los Angeles, California
2008 – 2010	Parent and Student Services Coordinator Camino Nuevo Charter Academy Los Angeles, California
2010 – 2012	Assistant Principal Camino Nuevo Charter Academy Los Angeles, California
2012 – 2016	Senior Service Director City Year Los Angeles Los Angeles, California
2016 – 2019	Managing Director, Impact City Year Los Angeles Los Angeles, California
2019 – Present	Founder and Owner 21Trio Partners Los Angeles, California

CHAPTER ONE: PROBLEM STATEMENT

In 1993, President Clinton signed the National and Community Trust Act into law, creating the Corporation for National Service (CNS) and establishing the AmeriCorps Program (Simon & Wang, 2002). CNS, later renamed the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), administers the AmeriCorps Program; a national network of service programs working in the community to implement creative solutions to traditional challenges in the areas of education, economic opportunity, veterans and military families, disaster services, healthy futures and environmental stewardship (“Be the Greater Good,” n.d.). Since 1994 nearly 75,000 Americans, annually, and more than 1,000,000 Americans in total have served in AmeriCorps programs (“AmeriCorps Fact Sheet,” 2018). The program was expanded in 2009 when President Obama signed the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act into law; authorizing a 200% expansion of AmeriCorps Member slots from 75,000 to 250,000 by 2017 (“Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act of 2009,” 2011).

AmeriCorps Program participants, also known as AmeriCorps Members, receive various benefits in return of their service. AmeriCorps Members receive a living allowance stipend, disbursed in equal installments throughout their service. They also receive an education award to repay student loans or pay for future postsecondary education or vocational training upon completion of their service (Frumkin et al., 2009). AmeriCorps programs also provide professional development and transferable skill development.

AmeriCorps leverages a four-part mission to uphold a long tradition of encouraging and rewarding national service: 1) get things done for the betterment of communities; 2) invest community members in a social commitment to their wellbeing and that of their broader community; 3) supporting communities by recruiting volunteers to provide service, and 4)

providing volunteers with training, professional experience, life skills, and an educational voucher (Cassidy, Hicks, Hall, Farran, & Gray, 1998).

AmeriCorps State Commissions and the National program make up the largest of the CNCS national service portfolio. The AmeriCorps State Commissions are comprised of governor-appointed State Service Commissions, which administer and govern the dissemination of grants to local public and nonprofit organizations to support AmeriCorps members. In fiscal year 2018, the CNCS budget for these programs was nearly 1.64 billion dollars, a \$30 million increase over their 2017 budget (“Fiscal Year 2018 Budget,” 2018).

Historically, White, college-educated Americans are more likely to pursue service opportunities compared to Blacks (Musick, Wilson, & Bynum, 2000). According to CNCS, over 53% of program participants in each fiscal year from FY15 through FY17 identified as White. In the context of service to urban education systems, these percentages do not mirror the demographics of the student populations. In the three largest urban public-school districts in the United States--New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago--the percentage of students who identify as White are 15%, 10%, and 11% respectively. Musick et al. found that systemic socioeconomic disparities between racial groups contributes to the lower rates at which people of color apply to and are selected for service opportunities (2000).

These disparities mirror the racial profiles of urban public school teachers compared to the student population (Barton & Coley, 2010; Howard, 2008; Howard, 2010; Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Milner, 2013; Noguera, 2009). Research by Lindsey, Roberts, and Campbell Jones (2013) has illuminated the negative impact that this cultural mismatch can have on students’ sense of belonging and investment in school. The researchers encourage educators to adopt a framework in service of students and communities by

acknowledging the impact of cultural mismatch while committing to incorporating cultural needs and values into their instruction (Lindsey et al., 2013).

Given the large annual fiscal investment of over \$1 billion made by the United States' federal government in AmeriCorps programs, the demographics of AmeriCorps Member participants, and the need for more culturally competent adults engaging with urban public school youth it is important to ask certain questions: how do AmeriCorps Members serving in K-12 urban schools perceive the challenges and strengths of the communities they serve?; how do AmeriCorps Members perceive the learning experiences they received as part of the program?; and what role, if any, does an understanding of community assets and challenges play in the ongoing learning experience of AmeriCorps Members?

Background of the Problem

Racialized systems in the United States influence the experiences of Black and Latinx members of society. Evidence of this impact is seen in the way the United States education system produces disproportionate outcomes for students of color (Noguera, 2003; Yosso, 2005; Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; Warren, 2017). Studies have identified the disparity of learning outcomes for Black and Latinx students compared to their peers as early as 3rd and 4th grades (Logan, Minca, & Adar, 2012). Logan et al.'s (2012) quantitative analysis of English Language Arts and Mathematics standardized assessments for 4th, 8th, and 10th grade students across the nation used data to compare the performance of schools attended by mostly Whites and Asians against those schools attended by Blacks, Latinx, and Native Americans. The analysis showed that school performance is closely tied to poverty rates, which in turn are closely related to racial compositions of schools.

In *Why Race and Culture Matters in Schools: Closing the Achievement Gap in America's Classrooms*, Dr. Tyrone Howard illustrates how the racial composition of schools has played a significant role in the educational experiences of Black and Latinx students (2010). Numerous studies cited in his research showed the propensity for adults on campus to racialize students when discussing their academic performance or behavior in the classroom while struggling to speak on the impact of racial identity on the relationships between students and adults in the schoolhouse.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) scholars have argued that these findings are rooted in the fact that race continues to be a significant factor in determining inequity in the United States (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Furthermore, the intersection of race and wealth has created a lens through which we can understand social and, by extension, school inequity (Ladson-Billings, 2009).

In 2005, Tara Yosso built on the work of these theorists to articulate the ways in which dominant culture perspectives traditionally fail to acknowledge or recognize the variety of preexisting capital in historically marginalized communities (Yosso, 2005). Yosso's conceptual framework, labeled Community Cultural Wealth Model, identifies six forms of capital that should be validated: aspirational, familial, linguistic, navigational, resistant, and social.

Fresh perspectives on the barriers to educational equity, like the Community Cultural Wealth Model, are important because of the persistent failure of the United States' federal and state education systems. Nearly forty years after The National Commission on Excellence in Education published *A Nation at Risk* in 1983; disparities in educational outcomes persist for Black and Latinx students (Howard, 2010). Between 2007 and 2012, the national school-age poverty rate grew from 16% to 21% (Baker, D.B., Farrie, D., & Sciarra, D., 2015). During the

same period, the number of low-income students residing in districts with a poverty rate above 30% doubled from 1.7 to 3.9 million. Baker et al. propose that the increased poverty rates put greater strain on educational systems to expand the scope of services they provide students; beyond academics to basic living needs (2015).

As poverty in America is on the rise, there is an ever-widening gap between what public schools are resourced to provide and the increasing needs of student populations (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2006). Education researcher, Gloria Ladson-Billings views this gap as an *educational debt* that is owed to students in low-income communities across the United States (Ladson-Billings, 2006a). For years, children and families have been deprived access to high-quality education. From post-Reconstruction Freedom Schools to *Brown vs. Board of Education*, from mandated integration to California's recent Local Control Funding Formula, there has been a constant reminder of the ways educational funding creates a system of haves and have-nots.

Compounding this educational debt is the existence of additional challenges across the current education systems. Increased rates of English Language Learners, high student-teacher ratios, heightened demand for Special Education instruction, and less access to qualified teachers are contributing to the systemic educational debt (DePaoli et al., 2015). The research identifies strategies for positively decreasing these disparities, ranging from increased targeted staffing (Baker et al., 2016) to promoting professional development of school principals to prepare them for the intricacies of system change leadership (Noguera et al., 2011). However, funding these strategies in low socioeconomic communities requires systemic infrastructures that provide the additional resources required.

AmeriCorps

These realities create a context for services like those provided by AmeriCorps programs. AmeriCorps programs are tasked with identifying local needs and providing a human capital solution in collaboration with local governments and nonprofit organizations (Carpenter, 2017). AmeriCorps Members lend their service to one of six focus areas: education, economic opportunity, veterans and military families, disaster services, healthy futures and environmental stewardship (“Be the Greater Good,” n.d.). One of AmeriCorps’ largest foci is service to low-income public schools (Nesbit & Brudney, 2010). AmeriCorps Members serve in nearly 12,000 low-income schools to “improve students’ academic achievement by increasing their engagement and providing one-on-one time with a concerned, involved adult” (Frumkin et al., 2009). AmeriCorps provides school communities with access to after school programming, tutoring, mentoring, school-wide family engagement events, and whole-class teacher support.

Is AmeriCorps successful? The literature on AmeriCorps and national service has helped scholars and practitioners understand who is attracted to public service and how public service motivation in individuals may be cultivated or how it changes over time (Perry & Imperial, 1999; Perry & Katula, 2001; Perry & Thompson, 1997). However, little is known about how participants are engaged to think about the communities they serve. Studies on AmeriCorps programs have focused almost exclusively on quantifiable outcomes within the communities they serve. A study by Perry and Thomson (1997) examined the community-building effects of the AmeriCorps program in five locations. Findings revealed that school leaders reported their students’ attendance had improved at all six schools in which AmeriCorps Members worked. In addition, teachers perceived better attitudes and eagerness to learn among

students. However, these studies often fail to include the perspective of the community members receiving services.

Researchers have concluded that AmeriCorps members can support communities by building problem-solving capacity and by meeting concrete public needs. However, the emphasis on problem-solving is akin to fixing broken communities with no recognition given to the embedded assets and values of the community (McKnight & Block, 2011; McKnight, 2017). Critical Race Theory scholars suggest the need to examine the way in which this orientation of human capital to socialize imperfect communities is detrimental to the communities served (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2006).

Statement of the Problem

AmeriCorps Members serve as a human capacity intervention in urban education systems around the United States (Cassidy, Hicks, Hall, Farran, & Gray, 1998). Research has shown that public school students in low-income communities benefit from interactions with adults on campus who can validate and lift up their cultural capital in their learning experience (Darling, 2005; Howard, 2001; Noguera, 2003; Osei-Kofi, 2005; Tatum, 2007). Considering that AmeriCorps Members come from a variety of personal and professional backgrounds, but rarely have any experience serving in communities similar to those where they have lived, it is important for AmeriCorps Members to recognize the various forms of capital existing in the communities they serve in order to achieve their outcome of social-emotional and academic goals for students. There is limited research focusing on the AmeriCorps Members' perceptions about the communities they serve. According to the research literature, if students are to be successful, all adults they engage with need to be committed to creating a context where student culture is valued (Anyon, 2009, Howard, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2006, Zeichner and Flessner,

2009). Knowing that human capital solutions, like AmeriCorps, are only as good as the degree to which the humans involved are prepared (Hager, 2004), a better understanding of AmeriCorps Members' perceptions of the communities they serve will inform AmeriCorps sites, AmeriCorps State and National Programs, educational leaders, and policy-makers who are pursuing community-centered interventions. Therefore, this research study sought to understand AmeriCorps Members' perceptions of the communities they served and how the ongoing learning experiences they experienced influenced their views of the community.

Research Questions

This mixed methods study with descriptive and explanatory analyses investigated AmeriCorps Members' perceptions of the communities they serve and their experience with ongoing learning experiences during the program. These topics were studied through the following research questions.

1. How do AmeriCorps Members serving in K-12 urban schools perceive the challenges and strengths of the communities they serve?
2. How do AmeriCorps Members perceive the learning experiences they received as part of the program?
 - a. How do those perceptions vary by participants' background?
3. What role, if any, does an understanding of community assets and challenges play in the ongoing learning experience of AmeriCorps Members?

Research Site and Populations

The research sites for this study were two locations of a national education portfolio AmeriCorps program, called City Year, serving urban K-12 school districts in two Western states. The selection of this program was based upon the fact that it enrolls nearly 3,000

AmeriCorps Members annually, representing the largest percentage of education-focused AmeriCorps slots, or terms of service, awarded by state and national programs. With programs in over 29 cities across the country, City Year has been named one of the nation's top 100 IDEAL Employers by Universal Globum (2013) and has received fourteen consecutive four-star ratings from Charity Navigator. Additionally, this program has plans to expand to more sites.

The program recruits 17 to 26 year-olds who dedicate 10 months of service as tutors, mentors, and role models to students in low-SES communities, where schools meet the federal threshold of Title 1 status defined by more than 40% of the students living in low-income families. The program participants--or AmeriCorps Members--are placed in teams, ranging in size from six to sixteen members, to serve at elementary, middle, and high schools within their respective communities. AmeriCorps Members receive an on-boarding orientation prior to serving full-time at their service sites. Program administrators offer up to 340 hours of professional development throughout the year to ensure members are prepared to execute their role as tutors, mentors, and role models. At the point when this proposed study was conducted, members had completed just over 90% of their 10-month service term.

Overview of the Research Design

The research design was a mixed methods study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) of two sites within one AmeriCorps education program. The research process included interviews with Training Directors at each site, a survey of 85 AmeriCorps Members across the two sites, and in-depth interviews with 11 AmeriCorps Members across the two sites.

The objective of the AmeriCorps Members interviews was to understand the extent to which AmeriCorps Members (ACMs) felt that learning experiences informed their perception of the communities they served. The interview protocols were heavily influenced by Yosso's

Community Cultural Wealth Model (Yosso, 2005) and the Asset Based Community Development Institute's research on community engagement (McKnight, 2017).

Interviews with Training Directors supported an understanding of the extent to which community strengths and challenges, perceptions of self, and reflections on self vis-a-vis the community were embedded into the learning experience. Additionally, I inquired about the intended objectives and motivations for providing the ongoing learning experiences that were offered. Through these strategies, data was triangulated to give a comprehensive exploration of the research problem (Creswell, 2013).

Significance of the Research

Given the large fiscal investment made in AmeriCorps programs as a human capital solution, it is important to ascertain the ways in which the programs train members to view the communities they serve with an asset based orientation. Empirical research on best practices will enable state service commissions and the Corporation for National and Community Service to offer guidance and resources for AmeriCorps Member training. With nearly 60,000 members serving annually, and over \$1 billion in funding, the scope of this research could have far-reaching results.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter highlights the challenges low-income students face in urban K-12 public education systems, challenges Ladson-Billing (2006a) framed as *educational debt*. The chapter also provides an overview of AmeriCorps programs as a strategy intended to address that debt. Next, the research, and gaps, on AmeriCorps programs are examined. Then, an overview of the research on Critical Education Theory as a framework for supporting educators in sustaining equitable learning environments for their students is provided. Finally, the Community Cultural Wealth Model is introduced in detail as a paradigmatic lens for AmeriCorps Member service and learning experiences.

Disproportionate Negative Educational Outcomes for Black and Latinx Students

Low public high school graduation and post-secondary readiness rates in the United States highlight the need for reform in educational systems. Research has shown school policies, procedures, and the relationships between students and teachers to perpetuate disproportionate realities for students of color (Noguera & Wing, 2006). A study by Greene and Forster (2003) calculated a 30% attrition rate for all public school system students before graduation. This figure is greater for Black and Latinx students compared to their White and Asian peers. Greene and Forster (2003) argue that these disproportional outcomes are born out of systemic failures in the public K-12 education system's ability to educate Black and Latinx students.

These systemic failures led some scholars to predict Black males will perform significantly worse in educational outcomes than their peers in other demographic groups (Palmer, Davis, Moore III, & Hilton, 2010). These realities are rooted in barriers well documented by research on the educational attainment experiences of Black and Latinx students.

Barriers to Success

The impact of student-teacher cultural mismatch on school climate and culture. Low graduation rates of Black and Latinx students have a linear relationship with school climate and culture that creates a welcoming environment for students and families (Knight, Norton, Bentley, & Dixon, 2004). Knight et al. (2004) highlight the ways in which schools participate in student engagement practices that hinder access to college-going resources and disproportionately impact Black and Latinx students. For example, the research consistently calls out schools for failing to build more inclusive family involvement programs that do not require familial physical presence in schools. To address these challenges, researchers have called on school systems to promote learning opportunities that engage reflection about race and promote culturally relevant curriculum (Cooper & Chizhik, 2015; Warren & Hotchkins, 2015).

Engagement with students and families is just one of the structural design flaws negatively impacting Black and Latinx students. The lack of empathy for cultural diversity in classrooms impacts the effectiveness of teachers in urban settings (Warren, 2014). The proclivity of schools to sort students into academic tracks and ability groups have had an adverse impact on equitable college preparation levels for students across race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (Venezia & Kirst, 2005). Once tracked into these academic funnels, students receive different messages and supports throughout the college preparation process. Venezia and Kirst (2005) highlight the scarcity of resources, like college counselors to advise all students. These realities leave the majority of low-income students to fend for themselves as they learn about and make their way through the college going process.

Scholars, like James A. Banks (2009), have argued for increased fluency in multicultural issues from teachers serving diverse populations.

The influence of race on the school to prison pipeline. While most educational systems under-resource the amount of academic supports students have access to, the judicial system has a history of disproportionately targeting Black and Latinx students. Researchers have illustrated the connections between the perceived “achievement gap” and the over-disciplining of students of color (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010).

The frequency with which Black and Latinx youth in the United States are suspended, expelled, or arrested in response to violations of laws and behavior expectations has increased since the introduction of “zero-tolerance” policies in the 1990s (McIntosh, Girvan, Horner, & Smolkowski, 2014). The reliance upon zero tolerance has reframed the purpose of schools from centers of education to gateways to penitentiary systems; creating what is commonly referred to as the “school to prison pipeline” (Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2005; Wallace Jr, Goodkind, Wallace, & Bachman, 2008; Rogers & Freelon, 2012; McIntosh, Girvan, Horner, & Smolkowski, 2014; Losen et al., 2015).

A 2008 study of the Racial, Ethnic, and Gender Differences in School Discipline among U.S. High School Students from 1991-2005 found that Black, Latinx, and Native American youth were two to five times more likely to be suspended or expelled compared to their Asian or White peers (Wallace Jr, Goodkind, Wallace, & Bachman, 2008). Similarly, a 2016 report published by the American Civil Liberties Union of California found Black students account for 8.5% of school enrollment in Los Angeles Unified School District, but 46.6% of arrests involved a Black student (“The Right to Remain a Student ACLU,” 2016).

Additional studies by Anyon et al. (2014) indicate that students disciplined in school are at greater risk to experience a host of academic and psychological problems across their lifespan. These outcomes highlight the systemic ways Black students, in particular, experience challenges

in maintaining positive academic engagement, participation, or outcomes. Absent educators' collective ability to understand the social worlds that students of color navigate the school-to-prison pipeline will continue to move them along the path to educational debt (Kirkland, 2013).

Funding disparities across racial groups. When exploring the root causes of these realities many researchers have turned to education finance policy. The ever-widening gap between the resources public schools provide and the increasing needs of student populations is another factor disproportionately affecting high-poverty public schools (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2006). For example, increased rates of English Language Learners, high student-teacher ratios, heightened demand for Special Education instruction, and less access to qualified teachers are leading to adverse effects on students (DePaoli et al., 2015). Subsequent sections in this chapter will focus on opportunities for progress.

Gentrification. Researchers have highlighted gentrification's inability to spur a positive difference to local public schools (Bloom, 2015). When neighborhoods are populated by an increasing number of childless households, school enrollment declines and schools lose counselors, teachers, administrators (Ewing, 2018). As a result, schools struggle to meet student needs given the lack the of personnel capacity. Ewing (2018) argues that this pattern has historical connections to systemic racial segregation; namely red-lining. Gentrification produces experiences of marginal harm for lower-income residents as they struggle to navigate and access the shifting landscape of social services. Furthermore, students starting school in a gentrified neighborhood show no advanced academic performance compared to their peers in non-gentrified neighborhoods (Keels, Burdick-Will, & Keene, 2013).

AmeriCorps Service Programs as a Solution

In 1993, President Clinton signed the National and Community Trust Act into law, creating the Corporation for National Service (CNS) and establishing the AmeriCorps Program (Simon & Wang, 2002). CNS, later renamed the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), administers the AmeriCorps Program; a national network of service programs working in the community to implement creative solutions to traditional challenges in the areas of education, the environment, and disaster relief (“National Service.gov,” n.d.). Since 1994 nearly 75,000 Americans, annually, and more than 1,000,000 Americans in total have served in AmeriCorps programs (“AmeriCorps Fact Sheet,” 2018). The program was expanded in 2009 when President Obama signed the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act into law; authorizing a 200% expansion of AmeriCorps Member slots from 75,000 to 250,000 by 2017 (“Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act of 2009,” 2011).

AmeriCorps as a human capital solution. AmeriCorps programs aim to work in the community to implement creative solutions to traditional challenges. Achieving predetermined outcomes for the community members served by each program is a major emphasis (Simon & Wang, 2002). Examples of predetermined outcomes in K-12 schools include improved attendance rates, increased graduation rates, and reduced adult-student ratios.

A study of AmeriCorps Members serving in an early childhood setting in North Carolina showed that the members’ presence decreased the staff-child ratios, resulting smaller ratios than the benchmarks set by the North Carolina early education-licensing agency (Cassidy, Hicks, Hall, Farran, & Gray, 1998). The literature also shows this added human capacity to be an indicator of a quality childcare environment (Burchinal, Roberts, Nabors, & Bryant, 1996; Helburn, 1995; Whitebook et al, 1989). However, researchers have been critical of AmeriCorps

programs, arguing that they lack concrete evidence of providing quantifiable benefits outside of their provision of cheap labor (Frumkin et al., 2010).

Training within AmeriCorps programs. AmeriCorps programs provide an influx of lay people with limited skills or experience to address complex challenges in the education sector. As AmeriCorps Members are onboarded to their programs, what forms of ongoing learning experiences do they receive? Hager (2004) found that education programs represented the least average adoption of training for volunteers compared to human services; health; arts, culture, and humanities; and education. In fact, regardless of a nonprofit organization's size there is, on average, a small degree of adoption of the best practices of training and professional development opportunities for volunteers (Hager, 2004). Furthermore, a 2016 report on the AmeriCorps School Turnaround Grant evaluating the best practices for program implementation found that AmeriCorps members reported feeling underprepared for the conditions of their service. The study found a need for cultural competency training for individuals working in diverse school settings and additional training regarding the demographics and conditions of the schools ("School Turnaround AmeriCorps National Evaluation: Final Evaluation Report," n.d.). Hager (2004) asserted that such inconsistent training adoption is detrimental to the volunteer experience because training has the second highest positive influence on their experience, after recognition activities.

Evaluating the outcomes of an AmeriCorps program. In spite of Hager's (2004) research calling for an emphasis on training of volunteers, there is a dearth of literature on training in AmeriCorps programs. Instead, the majority of AmeriCorps program studies have focused on the impact of program participation on program participants. Results from a study of over 2,000 AmeriCorps Members deployed in over 100 AmeriCorps-State and National

programs, indicated that upon completion of the program participants self-assessed a positive increase in their civic engagement, connection to community, knowledge about problems facing their community, and participation in community-based activities (Frumkin et al., 2009).

A 2016 report on AmeriCorps Alumni Outcomes showed similar results (Friedman, Freeman, Phillips, Rosenthal, Robinson, Miller, & Porowski, 2016). The impact of AmeriCorps participation on members' career pathway choices, civic engagement levels, post-secondary outcomes, and employment status was analyzed by reviewing nearly 4,000 survey responses (Friedman et al., 2016). Respondents reported growth in all areas analyzed. However, the survey makes no mention of the quality or impact of training received during their service.

While previous studies of AmeriCorps programs have not focused on training, it is important to understand the ways AmeriCorps Members learn about the communities they serve. Future research into this area will build off the existing research on the power of relationships in a child's life.

The importance of adult relationships. The research covered below underscores the importance of positive adult-youth relationships in urban public schools and the need for those adults to develop cultural competence in their engagement of students (Banks, 1988; Banks & Banks, 2009; Warren, 2017). One example is Howard's study of four urban elementary schools in a large city in a Northwestern state of the United States examining the students' perceptions and reactions to instructional pedagogy employed by teachers that the students deemed to be culturally responsive for Black students (Howard, 2001). The results of the study indicated that students valued teachers' ability to infuse the students' cultural capital into their classroom-learning environment. The study supported the literature that calls for educators to create

learning environments that embrace and lift up the cultural identities held by students in the classroom.

Factor analyses were used to study 1,000 Black and 260 Latinx third graders' perceptions of their school environment (Slaughter-Defoe & Carlson, 1996). The researchers, through their analyses of the 24-item measure, found that Black students viewed their relationships with teachers to be most important in evaluating the school context. These relationships centered on not only schoolwork but also personal problems that the Black students wanted to discuss with their teachers. Latinx students stressed that notions of fairness, care, and praise for putting forth effort were most important in their interactions with their teachers. This study suggests that relationship building and sustaining them can have an influence on how welcome students feel in an environment and also demonstrate how school-dependent youth can rely on relationships to help them construct positive attitudes about school and consequently put more effort in their schoolwork.

Gloria Ladson-Billings is a preeminent scholar on preparing pre-service teachers and co-collaborator on the introduction of Critical Race Theory discourse to the field of education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2006a; Ladson-Billings, 2006b; Ladson-Billings, 2009). Ladson-Billings argues for three key action steps to overcome the shortcomings of teacher education concerning culture. The first is to provide pre-service teachers with opportunities to engage with students in the local community.

Ladson-Billings argues that through this engagement pre-service teachers will begin to see their students as individuals who are influenced by the cultural context in their communities while simultaneously challenging the prospective teachers to reflect on their own culture, as it relates to that of their students. Therefore, Ladson-Billings' second recommendation is that

teachers are given structured opportunities to engage with the concept of culture. These opportunities open up periods of reflection about the beliefs, values, and mindsets they hold about the cultural composition of a classroom learning environment.

The third recommendation centers on schools of education promotion and support of prospective educators studying abroad with an emphasis on exposure to different cultural influences on education. Through this engagement teachers might be able to see the best practices of learning theory blended with the niche cultural context of the location within which they are immersed.

This final recommendation calls for educators to be aware of the community and cultural contexts in which they work. Bang, Faber, Gurneau, Marin, and Soto (2016) argue for the need to place community at the center of any intervention. Absent community involvement, along with historical context, there is a risk of implementing programmatic solutions that contradict the ethos of the community served (Bang et al., 2016). Conversely, when we invest in relationships with adults we move towards community-inclusive solutions.

Community-inclusive solutions. The extant research on the organization of schools illustrates a distinction between the bureaucratically and communally organized school (Hallinan, Kubitschek, & Liu, 2009). Bureaucratically organized schools are highly centralized and have clear lines of hierarchical authority. For example, the principal is the primary decision maker whose function is to coordinate school activities while the teachers are specialized into a well-defined instructional role.

In contrast, the communally organized school, is home to a principal who acts as a communal leader. Teachers are encouraged to view their role as encompassing personal involvement and concern for their students' wellbeing. As a result, these schools have a strong

academic program for all students and stress the formation of personal character and commitment to the school mission (Hallinan, Kubitschek, & Liu, 2009).

Empirical research shows that communally organized schools provide students with a number of advantages, including higher academic achievement (Coleman and Hoffer 1987; Bryk et al. 1993; Shouse 1996). In addition, communally organized schools show a more equitable distribution of achievement gains (Lee and Smith, 1995). Students also benefit socially from belonging to a communally organized school system. Empirical analyses demonstrate the positive effects with student's positive attitudes, such as interest in academics and staying in school, expectancy of success, and schoolwork (Goodenow, 1993). Students who attend communally organized schools are also less likely to be absent (Bryk et al. 1993).

These benefits are all rooted in the climate and culture of a communally organized school. The beliefs, values, skills, and behaviors of teachers and students at a communally organized school all align with the mission and vision of the school (Hallinan, Kubitschek, & Liu, 2009). Therefore, the advantage of the human capital that communally organized schools provide is maximized when students perceive their schools as places where they feel belonging and support.

AmeriCorps education programs providing interventions to school communities find themselves in the middle of this theoretical intersection. One example of such a program, and the focus of this study, is called City Year. City Year predates the creation of the AmeriCorps program and has been considered a partner organization since AmeriCorps' founding in the mid-1990s. City Year's original focus was to get things done for communities which manifested in a variety of service foci including AIDS prevention, foster youth programming, homeless relief, and beautification projects in community spaces. However, the bulk of City Year's work has

always been with school partners so in the early 2000s when the organization embarked on a reorganization of its focus it decided to bring all of its programming under one umbrella: school service.

Today, City Year recruits nearly 3,000 17 to 25 year-olds annually to dedicate a year of service to an elementary, middle, or high school in one of 29 cities around the United States. Members serve nearly 350 schools in communities with historically low high school graduation rates in teams ranging in size from six to sixteen. Together they leverage their proximity in age to build “near-peer” relationships with students and provide academic and social-emotional support.

City Year has developed its Whole School Whole Child (WSWC) service model over years of school and community service. WSWC builds on the research that highlights the value of a caring school-based adult relationship in the life of a student. Leveraging these relationships as a foundation, City Year AmeriCorps Members support small groups of 10 to 15 students to stay on track for high school graduation. City Year aims to serve in feeder patterns; elementary schools that feed to middle schools that feed into high schools, so students can have a City Year AmeriCorps Member in their academic life from third through ninth grade because research shows the adverse effects of falling off-track during these years (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2006).

AmeriCorps Members focus their support of students on increasing low attendance, building character strengths, and elevating academic achievement in English Language Arts and math. City Year’s model is rooted in research that shows a student is three times as likely to graduate if they improve in just one of these areas (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2006). AmeriCorps Members also collaborate with teachers and school staff to develop a positive school climate and culture.

With three decades of experience serving communities around the United States and extensive history of designing ongoing learning experiences that support AmeriCorps Members in urban public schools, City Year makes an ideal AmeriCorps program to study for best practices related to educating its members about the communities they serve.

Conceptual Framework

This study will use Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth Model as a paradigmatic lens to examine the ways in which in-service learning experiences at AmeriCorps education portfolio programs do, or do not, influence the beliefs AmeriCorps Members express about the communities they serve. To date, the Community Cultural Wealth Model has been applied as an analytical lens examining the experiences of Latinx undergraduate students (Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009) and the ways stories are told about gentrified communities in Los Angeles (Yosso & García, 2007). The application of this emerging concept to this study will provide insight into how AmeriCorps Members do, or do not, recognize and value the preexisting capital, or assets, of a community.

Critical Education. The term "critical education" was born out of the work of prominent scholars including Paulo Freire, Michael Apple, Henry Giroux, Ira Shor, bell hooks, Joe Kincheloe, and others. The primary focus is helping students to become critical thinkers and agents of social change who negotiate the relationships between theory and practice, critical analysis and common sense, and learning and social change (Teitelbaum, 2009). Additionally, it is an attempt at clearly delineating an anti-hegemonic approach between educational and cultural practices, rooted in "the struggle for social and economic justice, human rights, and democratic community, to enhance critical understandings and emancipatory practices for the purpose of progressive social and personal transformations" (Teitelbaum, 2009, p. 312).

Anti-hegemony. Critical Education's focus on challenging normative social structures is rooted in classic anti-hegemony theory. Antonio Gramsci, a Marxist political theorist in Italy during the early twentieth century, articulated "hegemony" as the way in which institutions directly, or indirectly, influence the way individuals perceive society (Teitelbaum, 2009). Hegemony reinforces dominant power dynamics as normal ways of life and denies counter storytelling. To challenge hegemony, critical educators give voice to counter storytelling; supplanting monolithic views of the world order with more equitable forms (Teitelbaum, 2009).

From Critical Race Theory to critical educators. The foundation of critical education is heavily influenced by the insights of earlier theorists whose scholarship focused on the cross pollination of power, domination, oppression, justice, equality, culture, agency, identity, and knowledge. Critical Race Theory is a tool for understanding how race and racism intersect under the processes of teaching and learning (Warren & Hotchkins, 2015). In these ways, the critical educator's ideology is grounded in the Critical Race Theory work of Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995). Contemporary activists for critical education, like their inspirational predecessors, influence the educational landscape by questioning the beneficiaries of our current educational systems (Teitelbaum, 2009).

One of the more promising approaches to addressing sustained change in professional behavior is what the literature calls *Critical Professional Development* or CPD (Avramidis, 2005). CPD gives educators the space to reflect on privilege and assumption and helps create safer schools by encouraging educators to engage with the discomfort while preparing for their role in leading students (Loutzenheiser & Moore, 2009).

There are diverse opinions discussed in the literature regarding the necessary components of cultural proficiency professional development for teachers. One school of thought argues for

teachers to self-identify cultural proficiency training as a professional development need and give them voice in designing what the training looks like (Landa, 2011). A separate approach underscores the value of process-oriented models of cultural development that envision cultural proficiency as a fluid learning continuum with stages (McAllister & Irvine, 2000). The later model allows for attention to the individual development of professionals supported by corresponding strategies to encourage their movement along the continuum.

Both Clair and Adger (1999) and Duke (2007) write that professional development should provide opportunity for immediate application of new skills in the classroom and should foster critical reflection. These learning spaces incorporate highly interactive training with discussion and reflection opportunities. Green (2015), Lindsey, Robins, and Terrell (2009) all underscore the importance of teachers, first, identifying and reflecting on their own culture, identity, and history to understand the values and biases they bring to teaching.

Research shows that investing in these forms of professional development can lead to various benefits for educators and students. One byproduct of these sessions is the development of curriculum, instruction, and assessment that align with the given student populations (Lindsey, Robins, & Terrell, 2009; Green, 2015). Another benefit is the interdepartmental, cross-specialization, engagement of teachers. For example, when educators who work with English Language Learner, Special Education, and core content teachers share learning experiences there is an inherent value of perspective development. Finally, Trumbull and Pacheco (2005) state that "professional development for cultural competency should group out of and be nested in a larger school-based plan that is part of a district, or school, wide vision for student success to which teachers and administrators are committed." Collectively, these experiences have proven to have an impact on the educational outcomes of students.

Instruction. Teachers who have been exposed to CPD are expected to demonstrate instructional behaviors that honor their role as critical educators (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Grouping strategies or rote teaching pedagogy has disproportionately negative impacts on Black students (Ladson-Billings, 2009). However, the high stakes-testing environment caused by NCLB in 2004 incentivizes schools to prepare students for test-taking success, not critical learning or engagement. High stakes tests have negative effects for the pressure of teacher employment, school governance and operational autonomy, and student access to more rigorous learning opportunities.

Similarly, several pressures hamper teacher education programs from creating critical education projects (Wong, 2009). In-service training budgets at low-income schools often do not leave room for funding of innovative training from university partners. Furthermore, the pressure of NCLB and testing created little room in the professional development scope and sequence of educators, where one might dive into critical education topics. Finally, large research universities' emphasis on publication makes it difficult for faculty to make time to create and deliver critical education training (Wong, 2009).

The demand for critical pedagogy in schools. Gentrification, the scarcity of jobs paying a living wage, and the rising cost of postsecondary education create opportunities for society to push for equity (Anyon, 2009; McKnight & Block, 2011; McKnight, 2017). Communities that are negatively impacted by oppressive systems can leverage their situation to push back on the hegemonic structures. Movements reclaim existing institutions and turn them into vehicles of social entrepreneurship. For example, Black churches across America transitioned from places of worship to hubs of political mobilization during the 1950s (Anyon, 2009). Similarly, critical educators reimagine schools as incubators of social change. These spaces will mobilize actors,

not through philosophical discourse, but through engaging them in political action and giving them exposure to the role they can play in generating new possibilities (Chrzanowski, Rans, & Thompson, 2018).

The schoolhouse is one example of the social networks where future political actors can create a sense of belonging among a community of activists. Teachers who expose students to a pedagogy that values critical engagement with their community are introducing students to the first networks of systemic change. Furthermore, students develop a sense of volition, or belief in their ability to impact change. First, teachers need to examine the common mental models that prevent them from seeing the communities as assets and sources of knowledge (Vollmer, 2010).

Cultural proficiency. A critical educator's role in service to their students, facilitating experiences that lead to liberation from oppressive systems (King, Akua, & Russell, 2013), is a fundamental component of cultural proficiency work (Lindsey, Roberts, & Campbell Jones, 2013). The Guiding Principles of Cultural Proficiency honor this asset based approach towards working with diverse communities; encouraging educators to frame their work in service of students and communities, as opposed to fixing or saving them. These guiding principles also offer a practical guide to addressing the Barriers to Cultural Proficiency. For example, when educators or systems of education are resistant to change or view change as needing to be done by students, the guiding principles reminds educators of the unique cultural needs of every cultural group and that the best of both worlds enhances the capacity of all (Lindsey, Roberts, & Campbell Jones, 2013). While the guiding principles and barriers to cultural proficiency offer up a moral model, the Essential Elements support educators in developing their values, behaviors, policies, and practices.

Lindsey et al. outline the five essential elements of cultural competence as: assessing cultural knowledge, valuing diversity, managing the dynamics of difference, adapting to diversity, and institutionalizing cultural knowledge (2013). These elements support educators in assessing the strength of their curriculum, the effectiveness of instructional strategies, the quality of professional development, the equitable nature of assessments, policies, and the impact of family and community outreach (Lindsey, Roberts, & Campbell Jones, 2013).

Community Cultural Wealth. Similar to Lindsey et al.'s advocacy for the incorporation of community and culture into the instruction of K-12 public educators, Tara Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth Model highlights six forms of capital that empower historically marginalized groups to challenge deficit thinking about their communities. The six forms of capital include aspirational capital; familial capital; linguistic capital; navigational capital; resistant capital, and social capital.

Aspirational capital refers to the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers (Yosso, p. 77). *Familial capital* refers to those whose cultural knowledge is nurtured among kin *familia* (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory and cultural intuition (Yosso, p. 79). *Linguistic capital* includes the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style (Yosso, p. 78). *Navigational capital* refers to skills of maneuvering through social institutions (Yosso, p. 80). *Resistant capital* refers to those knowledge and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality (Yosso, p. 80). *Social capital* can be understood as networks of people and community resources (Yosso, p. 79).

Districts, schools, and teachers that are able to leverage these forms of capital can have a positive impact on their students' educational experiences. For example, research has identified the value of investing in Social Capital strategies for increasing college readiness for low-income and Black and Latinx students (Roderick, Nagaoka, & Coca, 2009). This was accomplished when schools increased their ability to support families by providing the resources, strategies, and expertise of counselors and teachers who supported students throughout the college planning process.

Conclusions

Racialized systems in the United States lead to lower academic attainment rates for Black and Latinx students. Education portfolio AmeriCorps programs are intended to serve as creative interventions for these challenges. The extant research on Critical Professional Development, the tenets of the Community Cultural Wealth Model, and the Asset Based Community Development framework underscore the need for research on training in AmeriCorps programs. Therefore, I aimed to study the ways in which AmeriCorps programs in K-12 urban education settings created ongoing learning experiences that help AmeriCorps Members develop asset based outlooks of the communities they served.

This research referenced in this literature review highlights the effectiveness of ongoing work in pre-service teacher education programs and in-service professional development across the United States. My goal was to design a study that surfaced an understanding of how well, if at all, similar practices are leveraged in the ongoing learning experiences of AmeriCorps Members in K-12 urban education settings.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Rationale

I conducted a mixed methods study with descriptive and explanatory analyses of two sites that are implementing the same AmeriCorps service program, City Year's Whole School Whole Child model. Throughout the research I looked for links between ongoing learning experiences and its impact on AmeriCorps Members' perception of the communities they serve. To accomplish this, I generated a survey rooted in the Asset Based Community Development Institute's research on community engagement (McKnight, 2017). These surveys were administered to a broad sample of AmeriCorps Members to triangulate perceptions about the ongoing learning experiences against the assumptions and beliefs of the individuals interviewed. The quantitative investigation allowed for insight into the perspective held by participants in the AmeriCorps Program and supported the research in making claims about the impact ongoing learning experiences have on AmeriCorps Member perceptions about the communities they serve.

Next, I collected qualitative (open-ended questions) data through interviews. Through one-time interviews of AmeriCorps Members, this study used the findings to understand how individuals serving in urban, low SES schools described their community and their reflections on their ongoing learning experiences (Fowler, 2008; Merriam, 2009; Creswell, 2018). Additionally, the qualitative approach of this study helped give a deeper understanding of not only attitudes and perceptions of AmeriCorps Members, but also offered some explanations for differences among ongoing learning experiences across the two sites (Creswell, 2018).

Finally, I conducted interviews with Training Directors to support an understanding of the extent to which community strengths and challenges, perceptions of self, and reflections on

self vis-a-vis the community were embedded into the learning experience. Additionally, I inquired about the intended objectives and motivations for providing the ongoing learning experiences that were offered. Through these strategies, data was triangulated to give a comprehensive exploration of the research problem (Creswell, 2013).

Strategies of Inquiry

There are over 100 AmeriCorps education portfolio programs. However, this study focuses on one, City Year. The selection of this program was based upon the fact that it enrolls nearly 3,000 AmeriCorps Members annually, representing the largest percentage of education-focused AmeriCorps slots, or terms of service, awarded by state and national programs. With programs in 29 cities across the country, City Year has been named one of the nation's top 100 IDEAL Employers by Universal Globum (2013) and has received fourteen consecutive four-star ratings from Charity Navigator. Additionally, this program has plans to expand to more sites.

When AmeriCorps Members join City Year, they are given up to five weeks of professional development. The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) requires the following trainings: Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) guidelines, CPR certification, mandated reporter orientation, and training on the history of national service in the United States. CNCS and state service commissions also require individual programs, like City Year, to provide members with additional training that is pertinent to the members carrying out the service as outlined in the grant application. In the case of City Year this includes providing attendance, behavior, and academic (ELA/Math) interventions to students in elementary, middle and high schools in low income urban education systems. AmeriCorps programs have access to CNCS and state commission training resources.

To become a member of City Year, applicants must complete an online application process, followed by a phone or in-person interview. As of 2017, three of every 5 applicants who submitted a completed application were admitted to the program.

City Year sites engage local public school systems to partner with schools to provide their services. In 2017 more than 250 schools around the United States partnered with City Year programs. The majority of these schools were traditional district schools with a handful of charter school partners. For example, City Year New Orleans partnered with a singular charter management organization for all AmeriCorps Member placements. All schools that partner with City Year are considered low income; defined as having a concentration of over 75% of students who receive free or reduced priced lunch (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). In the state of California, City Year partnered with 53 schools across six school districts in three cities - Los Angeles, Sacramento, and San José – in 2019. The distribution of school types is eighteen elementary schools, fifteen middle schools, seventeen high schools, and two span, or K-12, schools. In total there were 412 AmeriCorps Members serving in these programs as of December 1st, 2018.

Site and sample selection. This study used purposeful sampling. All AmeriCorps Members who participated in this study met the following criteria: they served at one of the City Year sites in this study and had a start date in the program of August, 2018. I selected sites in two Western states due to feasibility of access. One program was authorized by a state commission and the second by both a state commission and the national commission, the Corporation for National and Community Service. In preparation for the chance that one of the sites was unable to participate, the next closest sites would have been asked to participate. I introduced the purpose of my study to administrators at each site and was provided access to a

database with the names of all members serving at these sites during the study. I did not plan on interviewing all 188 AmeriCorps Members, because of the volume. Instead, an email written by me, the researcher, was sent to all 188 AmeriCorps Members by a local staff member inviting them to participate in the study. Site administrators promoted participation in their communication with AmeriCorps Members. All communication emphasized that the names of AmeriCorps Members who participate in the individual interviews would not be used in the study. In total, 85 AmeriCorps Members responded to the survey. Of these 85, 48 expressed a willingness to participate in one-on-one interviews. I prioritized a purposeful sampling of 48 AmeriCorps Members based on gender, ethnicity, childhood socioeconomic status, and education level with the intention of matching the demographics of the 85 survey respondents. In the end, 11 AmeriCorps Members were interviewed for this study.

Overview of the Research Sites

City Year Site One and Site Two were selected for this study because of program size, years of experience working in the respective communities, and the profile of students served at their school partnerships. The following section provides key details about each site. These details help frame the interview responses shared by AmeriCorps Members during the in-person interviews.

Site One. In 2019 City Year Site One celebrated its 25th anniversary of operation in Site One. Like all City Year programs nationwide City Year Site One initially focused their service on a variety of issue areas. In 2006 the site shifted their service focus to supporting the success of K-12 schools. For the last 13 years City Year Site One has had a partnership with the Blue Oak School District. In the last five years they have expanded their work to nearby Foxtail High School District. The commitment to the Site One community is consistent with the

organization's mission to address the dropout crisis by providing direct student-services in high-need communities.

In 2019 City Year Site One partnered with 14 schools across Blue Oak School District (BOSD) and Foxtail High School District (FHSD). When this research was conducted, City Year Site One partnered with nine elementary schools and three middle schools within BOSD and two high schools in FHSD. A total of 86 AmeriCorps Members served on teams at one of 14 partnership schools and were supervised by a full-time City Year Program Manager. City Year employed one Program Manager for each of the 14 schools for a total of 14 Program Managers.

Table 1 below shows a breakdown of the student demographics for Blue Oak School District and Foxtail High School District, respectively. In BOSD 98.1% of students identify as students of color with Hispanic/Latinx (78.2%) and Asian (11.8%) constituting the predominant ethnic populations. The BOSD student population is comprised of 41.3% of English Language Learners and 82.5% of students qualify for free or reduced lunch; a federal benchmark of disadvantaged socioeconomic status. In FHSD 94.5% of students identify as students of color with Hispanic/Latinx (44.4%) and Asian (36.9%) constituting the predominant ethnic populations. The FHSD student population is comprised of 16.8% English Language Learners and 55.1% of students qualify for free or reduced lunch.

Site Two. In 2019 City Year Site Two celebrated its 21st anniversary of operation in Site Two. For the last nine years they have worked with elementary and middle schools in the Trout Public Schools system. In 2019 City Year Site Two partnered with 11 schools; nine elementary and two middle. All 11 schools are located in the Site Two communities. A total of 102

AmeriCorps Members served on teams at one of 11 partnership schools in 2019 and were supervised by a full-time City Year Program Manager.

Table 1 below shows a breakdown of the student demographics for Trout Public Schools (TPS). In TPS 87.9% of students identify as students of color with African American/Black (31.4%), Hispanic/Latinx (22.9%) and Asian (21.6%) constituting the predominant ethnic populations. The TPS student population is comprised of 30.7% of English Language Learners and 74% of students qualify for free or reduced lunch.

Table 1
Research Site Student Demographics

City Year Site	District Partners	% Students of Color	% of English Language Learners	% of Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students
Site One	Blue Oak Union School District	98.1	41.3	82.5
	Foxtail High School District	94.5	16.8	55.1
Site Two	Trout Public Schools	87.9	30.7	74.0

Sources: School District Websites

Data Collection Methods

I used a timeline covering how to manage data collection and analysis, two interview protocols - AmeriCorps Member (Appendix A) and Training Director (Appendix C) - and a survey to gain deeper understanding of AmeriCorps Member perspective.

Surveys. AmeriCorps Members were introduced to the study by an e-mail from the Managing Director of the Program at each site. The email was written by me and explained that the site had chosen to work with a researcher from UCLA to better understand AmeriCorps

Members' reflections on the service experience. The email also encouraged participation in a survey (Appendix A) to capture insights into their experience with training at the site. The survey captured demographic data about the participants and their perspectives related to ongoing learning experiences. Additionally, eight questions in the survey used a Likert scale to assess the AmeriCorps Member perspectives against the six key assets embedded in the Asset Based Community Development framework: individuals, associations, institutions, physical assets, local economy, and connections. At the conclusion of the survey, AmeriCorps Members was asked to volunteer as interview participants.

Interviews. The survey distribution was followed by 11 semi-structured interviews (Appendix B) to capture each AmeriCorps Members' unique interpretation of their ongoing learning experiences with a focus on the communities they serve. This allowed me, as the researcher, to explore emerging themes and respond to opportunities for richer data through follow-up questions for added depth (Merriam, 2009). Managing my data collection with these protocols enhanced my study's reliability, aided in organization and pacing, as well as support me in replicating the study between sites (Yin, 2014). To support data collection, I recorded all interviews on a mobile device and uploaded the recordings to a password protected database.

After the AmeriCorps Members were interviewed, two Training Directors were interviewed using a specific interview protocol (Appendix C) to gather information surrounding the site's process for designing the ongoing learning experiences of the program. The interview collected information regarding the inclusion of community-centered professional development and expectations surrounding the AmeriCorps Members' application of learning. Each AmeriCorps Member interview participant received a \$20 gift card.

Data Analysis Methods

Surveys. The survey was administered via email using the Survey Monkey platform. Survey Monkey allowed me to design a 22-item survey that explored the demographics, service experience, opinions about ongoing learning experiences, and AmeriCorps Member feedback on whether or not their learning included the five essentials of Asset Based Community Development framework. Data were analyzed for measures of central tendency and variability to determine the existence of correlation within the inferential statistics (Alkin & Vo, 2017). The statistical program, SPSS, was used to help identify and communicate statistical findings within the data set. I focused on thoroughly examining the data set to ensure I gleaned all statistically significant data. In the process I used SPSS to run frequencies, descriptive statistics, correlations, crosstabs, means, and ANOVA.

Interviews. The next phase of my process was the analysis of qualitative data from the interviews. My goal was to describe AmeriCorps Member perceptions of the communities they serve based on the collected data. The data collected from the open-ended interviews were analyzed through a two-step coding process (Maxwell, 2012). First, units of observation were identified and used to analyze interviews (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Secondly, the categorizing of the unitized data followed to identify themes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), such as elements of the ongoing learning experiences that have influenced AmeriCorps Member assumptions and beliefs regarding the communities they serve.

To support my interview data analysis, first I transcribed all interviews and stored the Word documents on a password protected database. I read the transcripts while listening to the audio transcripts and checked for errors. Next I used qualitative analysis software, called Quirkos, that allows users to create data visualizations. I used Quirkos to identify trends across

interview participants. I read through the recording multiple times to code against my conceptual frameworks and catch any trends that emerged independent of my frameworks. After coding all of the interview data I wrote analytical memos. The analytical memos were tied to my research questions and helped me identify interview responses that addressed my study. The memos were saved on a password protected database and later used to triangulate against data from the quantitative survey responses.

Triangulation. Triangulation is a “validity procedure where researchers look for any convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 126). Interviews with Training Directors and AmeriCorps Members, and survey responses from AmeriCorps Members were compared and contrasted to strengthen themes identified in previous steps.

Ethical Issues

When City Year service sites expressed interest in participating in this study, I was immediately mindful of managing my role as a researcher. Going into the process I was cognizant of the fact that sites could have been hesitant to participate if they felt that I was critiquing their training program or inserting opinion about the ways they engaged the community. Therefore, I was intentional about maintaining a neutral tone regarding the inclusion of community-focused learning experiences whenever I spoke with an AmeriCorps Members or Training Director.

While I worked hard to maintain a neutral orientation, I also started conducting my research with inferences about the outcomes. I believed that AmeriCorps Members were certain to like some aspects of their ongoing learning experiences but would also be able to identify areas for improvement. Again, in all of my interactions with interview participants I kept a

neutral tone to avoid probing for leading statements or giving participants the impression that I was biased in my research.

Furthermore, I conducted this study as an employee of the City Year program in Los Angeles. As an insider it gave me deep knowledge of the organization. The structure of the program also created enough distance that AmeriCorps Members at the sites were unfamiliar with my work. Overall, given my knowledge of the organization I believe I was able to conduct richer interviews.

Finally, I wanted to ensure that I capture participants' most accurate responses, so I reiterated to all parties that the interviews were confidential. I also took care to emphasize to Training Directors that their skill in designing and facilitating ongoing learning experiences was not the focus of my study, rather it is focused on capturing AmeriCorps Members' reflections on their ongoing learning experiences and how those experiences have, or have not, impacted their assumptions and beliefs about the community. To support the goal of confidentiality all data were stored on a password protected database and interview participants were given pseudonyms.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

Themes identified during qualitative coding were compared to those identified by the quantitative data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). To ensure credibility with the qualitative data collected, verbal responses were analyzed through a systematic data coding process in Quirkos. Once all data were collected, I was able to compare the qualitative and quantitative findings to the original research questions. I will discuss these relationships, and the findings within these themes, in greater detail in Chapter Four.

Summary

This chapter outlined why a mixed methods design with descriptive and explanatory analyses was the most effective approach for exploring AmeriCorps Members' perception of assets and challenges in the communities they serve, the role of assets and challenges in their ongoing learning experiences, and their overall perceptions of the ongoing learning experiences. I believe this information will lead to better information and recommendations for future learning experiences in AmeriCorps programs. In the next section I discuss findings related to the research questions.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

In 2018, the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) reported that over 67,000 individuals participated in AmeriCorps Programs around the United States (CNCS, 2018). Historically, research on AmeriCorps programs have focused on a program's performance against predetermined outcomes or its ability to influence AmeriCorps alumni to embody more consistent long term civic engagement behaviors (Perry & Imperial, 1999; Perry & Katula, 2001; Perry & Thompson, 1997). Limited research has been done on the learning experiences of AmeriCorps Members.

Knowing that human capital solutions, like AmeriCorps, are only as good as the degree to which the humans involved are prepared (Hager, 2004), a better understanding of AmeriCorps Members' perceptions of the communities they serve will inform AmeriCorps sites, AmeriCorps State and National Programs, educational leaders, and policy-makers who are pursuing community-centered interventions. Therefore, this research focused on the assumptions and beliefs held by AmeriCorps Members about the communities they serve and how their ongoing learning experiences influence their views of the community.

Organization of Data Analysis

This chapter details the results of data analysis and reports findings in relation to the research questions for this study. A summary of the findings is found in Table 2, below.

Table 2
Synopsis of the Findings

AmeriCorps Member Perceptions of the Communities they Serve*

Finding 1: AmeriCorps Members regard Familial Capital as an asset in the communities they serve.

Finding 2: AmeriCorps Members regard Linguistic Capital as an asset that the educational system does not value, or as a deficit that impedes student academic progress.

Understanding Community Assets and Challenges Vis-à-vis Learning Experiences

Finding 3: AmeriCorps Members report informal learning experiences as most impactful on their perception of the communities they serve.

Finding 4: AmeriCorps Members regard the sequencing and quantity of ongoing learning experiences as a barrier to understanding community assets and challenges.

Finding 5: AmeriCorps Members perceive the reliance on independent immersion as a barrier to understanding community assets and challenges.

* Other forms of capital were mentioned by this sample. Analysis found less frequency.

Data were collected from 85 survey respondents, 11 interviews with AmeriCorps Members, and two interviews with training directors at K-12 education AmeriCorps programs in two urban communities. The findings in this chapter address the following research questions:

1. How do AmeriCorps Members serving in K-12 urban schools perceive the challenges and strengths of the communities they serve?
2. How do AmeriCorps Members perceive the learning experiences they received as part of the program?
 - a. How do those perceptions vary by participants' background?
3. What role, if any, does an understanding of community assets and challenges play in the ongoing learning experience of AmeriCorps Members?

AmeriCorps Member survey. To understand the perceptions that AmeriCorps Members in K-12 urban schools hold about the communities they serve I surveyed members regarding their experiences learning about the school communities they serve. The respondents were asked to indicate which ongoing learning experiences had the most impact on their current perception of the community they served. I compared their responses across K-12 socioeconomic status, gender, and race. I wanted to see if there was an observable correlation

between member demographics and how they rated the learning experiences that had the most impact on their perception of the communities.

AmeriCorps Member interviews. Forty-eight AmeriCorps Members that responded to the survey indicated a willingness to participate in a follow-up interview. I interviewed 11 AmeriCorps Members to understand the lived experiences that impacted their identity vis-à-vis the community they served. The 11 AmeriCorps Members were asked to identify moments in their life where they reflected on their culture, identity, and history to understand their values and biases. This is a fundamental element of Critical Professional Development (CPD) (Avramidis, 2005). Participants were also asked about experiences learning about, or living in, a community other than their own; another element of CPD. Finally, members were asked about the strengths and challenges in the communities they serve as it relates to the research on mutually-beneficial relationships between schools and communities and the Community Cultural Wealth Model.

This chapter is divided into three sections. First, there is a discussion about the survey respondents and interview participants, including an overview of the 11 AmeriCorps Members and the two training directors. Second, there is a discussion about the perceptions AmeriCorps Members communicated about the communities they serve. Findings were compared and contrasted across race, gender, and socioeconomic status in an effort to identify factors that influence the perceptions of AmeriCorps members. This section will answer Research Question 1 and 2. Third, there is a discussion about AmeriCorps Member understanding of community assets and challenges as part of their ongoing learning experiences. This section will answer Research Question 2 and 3. The chapter ends with a summary of the findings.

Overview of Survey Participants

A total of 85 AmeriCorps Members completed a one-time survey. Table 3 below outlines the survey administration process for the AmeriCorps Members that responded to the survey.

Table 3
Survey and Interview Administration Processes for AmeriCorps Members

Program Location	Sent Survey	Responded to Survey	Agreed to be Interviewed	Selected for Interview	Completed Interview
Site One	86	42	25	8	4
Site Two	102	43	23	7	7
Total	188	85	48	15	11

The overall response rate to the survey was 45%. Site administrators shared a belief the response rate was impacted by survey fatigue. During the one-on-one interviews several participants communicated that they take so many surveys they could not recall which one, specifically, was associated with my research study. The respondents completed the voluntary survey online using the Survey Monkey platform. Forty-five percent of survey respondents indicated a willingness to participate in a one-time in-person interview.

Description of Survey Respondents

The one-time survey consisted of 22 questions. Table 4 below outlines the demographics for the AmeriCorps Members who completed the survey.

The survey was completed by 85 AmeriCorps Members: Site One (42) and Site Two (43) (Table 4). Of the 85, 56 (66%) identified as female, 24 (29%) identified as male, 4 (5%) identified as genderqueer, and one respondent identified as “other”.

The respondents represented racial diversity as well. Of the 85, 48 (56%) identified as White, 17 (20%) identified as Asian, 11 (13%) identified as Hispanic/Latinx, 11 (13%) identified as African American/Black, and the remaining 7 identified as Middle Eastern/North African (2), Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (2), American Indian/Alaskan Native (1), or preferred not to answer (2).

The survey respondents were asked to indicate their highest level of academic attainment. Of the 85 respondents, 65 (76%) hold a bachelor’s degree, 8 (9%) hold a high school diploma, 8 (9%) have completed “some college”, 3 (4%) hold an Associate degree, and one person has completed a master’s degree. Overall, the majority of respondents (73%) did not identify as first-generation graduates.

Respondents were asked to think about their socioeconomic status identity during their K-12 experience. Of the 85, 49 (58%) identified as middle income, 25 (29%) identified as low income, and 11 (13%) identified as high income. This socioeconomic diversity was spread across different K-12 neighborhoods. Respondents indicated that 61 (72%) grew up in suburban neighborhoods, compared to 19 (22%) urban, 11 (13%) rural, and 3 (4%) outside of the United States.

Respondents were asked to indicate their years of experience in the AmeriCorps program. 70 (82%) said they were first year members and 15 (18%) were completing a second year.

Table 4
Survey Respondent Demographics

	Site One (N=42)		Site Two (N=43)		Total (N=85)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Gender						
Female	30	71.4	26	60.5	56	65.8
Genderqueer	3	7.1	1	2.3	4	4.6
Male	9	21.4	15	35.7	24	28.2
Other	0	0	1	2.3	1	1.1
Race						
African American / Black	6	14.3	5	11.6	11	13.0
American Indian / Alaskan Native	1	2.4	0	0	1	1.1
Asian	7	16.7	10	23.3	18	20.0
Hispanic / Latinx	9	21.4	2	4.7	11	13.0
Middle Eastern / North African	1	2.4	1	2.3	2	2.4
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	1	2.4	1	2.3	2	2.4
White	22	52.4	26	60.5	48	56.5
Preferred Not to Answer	0	0	2	4.7	2	2.4
Academic Attainment						
Bachelor's	30	71.4	35	81.4	65	76.5
HS Diploma	5	11.9	3	7.0	8	9.4
Some College	4	9.5	4	9.3	8	9.4
Associate	3	7.1	0	0	3	3.5
Master's	0	0	1	2.3	1	1.1
First Generation						
Yes	12	28.6	11	25.6	23	27.1
No	30	71.4	32	37.6	62	72.9
K-12 Socioeconomic Status						
Low Income	13	30.9	12	27.9	25	29.4
Middle Income	23	54.8	26	60.5	49	57.7
High Income	6	14.3	5	11.6	11	13.0
K-12 Neighborhood						
Rural	6	14.3	5	11.6	11	13.0
Suburban	31	73.8	30	69.8	61	71.7
Urban	10	23.8	9	20.9	19	22.4
Outside of the United States	3	7.1	0	0	3	3.5
Years of AmeriCorps Experience						
First Year	33	78.6	37	86.0	70	82
Second Year	9	21.4	6	14.0	15	17.6

As part of the survey, AmeriCorps Members were asked to identify the learning experiences that had the most significant impact on their perceptions of the communities they serve. The eighty-fives survey respondents shared their perspective on 13 items related to their learning experiences with their AmeriCorps Program. Table 5 below outlines the 13 items asked of each survey participant. The survey asked AmeriCorps Members to rate their level of agreement with each item using a 1 to 5 scale where: 1 = Disagree; 2 = Somewhat Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Somewhat Agree; and 5 = Agree. Table 5 shows the descriptive statistics for all 85 survey responses; including minimum (min) and maximum (max) ranges, the mean, and standard deviation (SD) for each item. Subsequent sections of this chapter will provide an analysis of survey responses.

Table 5
Survey Questions about Learning Experiences and Asset based Community Development

Learning Experiences	
Survey Question: Which of the following experiences had the most significant impact on your current perception of the community you serve?	
SUBQUESTIONS	CODE
Formal training provided by City Year	Formal Training
Experiences at your school site	Experiences at School
Engagement with your Program Manager	Program Manager
Conversations you have had while in service	Conversation in Service
Interactions with the community your serve	Community Interactions
Asset based Community Development	
Survey Question: As part of my ongoing learning experiences...	
I learned enough about the school community	School Community
I felt well prepared to engage the school community	Prepared to Engage
I learned about individual leaders in the school community	Individual Leaders
I learned about associations in the school community (e.g. self-organized groups that support issues which they are passionate about).	Associations
I learned about institutions in the school community	Institutions
I engaged with physical space in the school community	Physical Space
I learned about the local economy in the school community	Local Economy

I learned about the culture, stories, and history of the school community	Culture, History, Stories
---	---------------------------

Table 6
Descriptive Statistics from Survey Results (N = 85)

	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Learning Experiences				
Formal Training	1.00	5.00	2.81	1.13
Experiences at School	1.00	5.00	4.78	.64
Program Manager	1.00	5.00	3.72	1.08
Conversation in Service	2.00	5.00	4.47	.70
Community Interactions	2.00	5.00	4.61	.67
Asset based Community Development				
School Community	1.00	5.00	3.70	1.07
Prepared to Engage	1.00	5.00	3.38	1.03
Individual Leaders	1.00	5.00	3.54	1.10
Associations	1.00	5.00	3.48	1.05
Institutions	1.00	5.00	3.34	1.08
Physical Space	2.00	5.00	3.95	.79
Local Economy	1.00	5.00	3.48	1.01
Culture, History, Stories	1.00	5.00	3.82	1.00

1 = Disagree; 2 = Somewhat Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Somewhat Agree; and 5 = Agree

Overview of Interview Participants

AmeriCorps Member interviews. To understand the root causes of the assumptions and beliefs held by AmeriCorps Members, I explored the members' previous experiences with key elements of Critical Pedagogy and Critical Professional Development. A total of 11 AmeriCorps Members and two Training Directors participated in the one-time interview

protocols. Table 3, above, outlines the selection process for the AmeriCorps Members from agreed to be interviewed to selected for interview to completed interview.

The 11 interview participants were asked about their experiences prior to joining the AmeriCorps program; including their exposure to new communities and fluency with self-reflective practices. Interview participants were also given an opportunity to speak about the strengths and challenges they see in the community they serve. Finally, the AmeriCorps Member perspective on the presence of the six elements of the Community Cultural Wealth Model was gauged through a series of questions. A copy of the AmeriCorps Member Interview Protocol can be found in Appendix B.

All members were in the 10th and final month of their current service year. Eight of the participants were completing their first year of AmeriCorps service with the program, while the remaining three were in their second year of service with the City Year AmeriCorps program. The AmeriCorps Members that participated in interviews served at elementary, middle, or high school settings.

When looking specifically at degrees earned across the interview participants, nine out of 11 had bachelor's degrees and two out of 11 had some college experience.

In selecting the interview sample, I was looking for participants who represented the prevalent gender, ethnic, and racial groups indicated by survey respondents. The self-identified gender breakdown for the interview participants was six female, four male, and one genderqueer. Nearly 56% (6) of the interview participants identified as White. Other racial and ethnic identities included two Asian, one Middle Eastern, and two mixed race.

Additional survey response information was used to select a purposeful sampling. When specifically looking at the K-12 neighborhood community of the participants, eight lived in suburban neighborhoods and three lived in urban settings. Seven of interview respondents grew up in middle income neighborhoods during their K-12 experience. The remaining four were split: two high-income and two low-income.

Table 7 below outlines the demographics for the AmeriCorps Member interview participants. Pseudonyms are used for all participants who volunteered for the individual interviews in order to protect their anonymity.

Table 7
AmeriCorps Member Interview Participants

Name (Years of AmeriCorps Experience)	City Year Site	Gender	Race	K-12 SES Status	Academic Attainment	K-12 Neighborhood
Alex (1)	Site Two	Male	White	High	Bachelor's	Urban
Bethany (1)	Site One	Female	White	Middle	Bachelor's	Suburban
Brian (2)	Site One	Male	Asian	Middle	Bachelor's	Suburban
Dakota (1)	Site One	Gender-queer	Asian & White	High	Bachelor's	Suburban
Fiona (1)	Site Two	Female	White	Middle	Bachelor's	Suburban
Hernán (2)	Site One	Male	Asian	Middle	Some College	Suburban
Irene (1)	Site Two	Female	White	Middle	Bachelor's	Suburban

Jessica (1)	Site Two	Female	White	Middle	Bachelor's	Suburban
Taj (2)	Site Two	Male	Middle	Low	Some	Urban
			Eastern		College	
Tea (1)	Site Two	Female	Asian &	Low	Bachelor's	Suburban
			Native			
			Hawaiian			
Ursula (1)	Site Two	Female	White	Middle	Bachelor's	Urban

Training director interviews. I interviewed a total of two Training Directors, one per site, to gather information surrounding the process for designing ongoing learning experiences. These interviews were conducted at the conclusion of the survey administration and AmeriCorps Members interviews. The Training Director interview collected information regarding the inclusion of community-centered professional development and expectations surrounding the AmeriCorps Members' application of learning.

The Training Directors were asked about their experiences prior to working for the AmeriCorps program; including their familiarity with the neighborhoods served by their respective programs. Training Directors were also given an opportunity to discuss the role that community strengths and challenges played in their design of ongoing learning experiences for AmeriCorps Members. Finally, the Training Directors were asked to describe the role of reflection time for AmeriCorps Members in their learning experience design. A copy of the Training Director Interview Protocol can be found in Appendix C.

Site One. The Training Director from Site One identified as a woman born in a community with socioeconomic and academic achievement levels similar to those of Site One. At the time of their interview she had been in her role for two years and had worked for City Year Site One

for almost five years. Prior to working at City Year she spent nearly eight years working at a for-profit education organization with a focus on facilitating multisensory reading comprehension and math development workshops. In total her professional experience included more than 10 years of learning and development work with various adult audiences.

When asked about her approach to designing ongoing learning experiences for AmeriCorps Members the Training Director said that she owned the decision-making process regarding AmeriCorps Member learning experiences. Part of her process included making adjustments to the curriculum are made based on survey data from AmeriCorps Members. She also meets quarterly she meets with peers to look at qualitative and quantitative data to consider practices to start, stop, and continue.

When I asked specifically about learning experiences that covered the community, she shared that those engagements happened at the beginning of the year and leveraged outside partners. The overarching philosophy was that her role as the Training Director was to create the formal learning spaces and resource banks, but implementation is expected to happen on the ground because “context varies”. She explained that formal learning experiences during the course of the year were heavily focused on instructional curriculum with students while monthly AmeriCorps community gatherings offered opportunities to reflect on “why are we here?”.

To support her structure of learning spaces she organizes her training into three buckets:

- *Working in Partnership*: how AmeriCorps Members work in the community, with teachers, students, and one another;
- *The Learning Environment*: what type of space do they want to create for students; and

- *Quality Instruction*: how do they created the best possible instruction that is rooted in research and evidence.

All trainings under these topics are couched in trauma-informed practices because of the community need and Diversity, Belonging, Inclusivity, and Equity because it is a national focus for the AmeriCorps Program.

Site Two. The Training Director from Site Two identified as a woman born in a community with socioeconomic and academic achievement levels similar to those of Site Two. At the time of their interview she was celebrating a two year work anniversary with City Year; always in the role of Training Director. Prior to working at City Year, the Training Director spent eight years as a classroom teacher in urban and suburban communities. After teaching and before working for City Year she worked in corporate settings conducting training. In total her professional experience included more than 10 years of learning and development work with various adult audiences.

When asked about her approach to designing ongoing learning experiences for AmeriCorps Members the Training Director said that she owned the decision-making process regarding ACM learning experiences. In her role she adheres to the site’s commitment to “being an anti-racist youth development organization”. A large part of that work includes the design and execution of Racial Equity Summits at City Year Site Two. Subsequent sections of this chapter will discuss Racial Equity Summits in detail.

When I asked specifically about learning experiences about the community, she shared that those engagements happened both at the beginning of the year and repeatedly throughout Racial Equity Summits four times a year. The Training Director shared that AmeriCorps Members are also expected to attend weekly professional development at school sites alongside teachers.

The largest area of improvement that she referenced was a limited access to resources. She said,

We don't always have the resources in terms of the actual knowledge. If we had a person who were to spend some time going into the core communities networking and getting to know folks and attending the events... or if we were maybe creating spaces where we were inviting people in to teach a staff member to share with us about their community beyond the opportunities, but who are helping us to create these spaces, I think that could be really powerful. And that takes, again, a lot of resources that we just don't have right now.

The overall professional background and philosophical approach of the Training Directors interviewed in this study were very similar. They both had extensive experience creating spaces for adult learners and saw a focus on understanding the community as integral to the ongoing learning experiences of AmeriCorps Members. The major difference in their approaches lies in Site Two's inclusion of Racial Equity Summits which will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

AmeriCorps Member Perceptions of the Communities they Serve

In this section I report the strengths and challenges that AmeriCorps Members perceive in the communities they serve. The analysis was done by applying the six forms of capital outlined in Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth Model (Yosso, 2005) and the six essentials of the Asset Based Community Development framework (McKnight, 2017).

Finding #1 (RQ1 community assets and challenges): AmeriCorps Members regard Familial Capital as an asset in the communities they serve.

As part of the interview protocol, AmeriCorps Members were asked to identify strengths in the communities they served. Frequent references to informal learning experiences during the interviews were consistent with the survey data where AmeriCorps Members indicated "experiences at school", "conversations in service", and "community interactions" as the most impactful factors influencing their perception of the community (see Table 6).

When analyzing the interview transcripts using Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth Model I coded many of these responses as examples of Familial Capital. According to Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth Model, Familial Capital is defined as, "those whose cultural knowledge is nurtured among kin *familia* (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory and cultural intuition" (Yosso, p. 79).

In total eight of the 11 interview participants referenced familial capital as a perceived strength of the community. The AmeriCorps Member perspectives were analyzed against the six key assets embedded in the Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) framework: individuals, associations, institutions, physical assets, local economy and connections (McKnight, 2017). The comments made during the interviews highlighted two of the six assets covered by the ABCD strategy: associations and individuals.

Family Involvement (Associations)

Two of the interview participants specifically named family involvement in associations as a strength in the school community. Fiona said, "and I think the PTA in general is really supportive, and they're very involved". Taj elaborated on family involvement in associations when he said, "All the parents are really involved in, like the CLC [Community Learning Center], and want their students to be a part of that too."

The fact that only two out of 11 AmeriCorps Member interview participants referenced formal associations as strengths supports the literature on the linear relationship between low graduation rates of Black and Latinx students and a school's ability to create school climate and culture that creates a welcoming environment for students and families (Knight, Norton, Bentley, & Dixon, 2004).

Kinship on Campus (Individuals)

Several AmeriCorps Members identified the strength of family engagement on the school campus. For example, Jessica said,

It could be really tight, and a lot of them live around here. See a lot of parents walking in in the morning, we know a lot of parents faces, especially [since] we run an afterschool program that just ended. All the parents, we sign them out every day, have a chat, "How'd it go?" So, we're talking to families a lot, especially the ones we see a lot. I feel like there's a lot of family involvement.

Jessica is emphasizing the value of family members as present figures in the school community. Her ability to see their presence as an asset supports the literature that calls for school systems to build more welcoming spaces for families (Cooper & Chizhik, 2015; Warren & Hotchkins, 2015).

Hernán's point of view is in line with the thoughts shared by Jessica. Hernán detailed the family-like environment in the school community by saying,

A lot of these close-knit communities, once you spend some time in there you start feeling like family. There are certain members of the staff here that yeah, remind you, of your aunties and stuff like that, but yeah, there's that sense of warmth. Hard on the outside at times or seem scared on the outside. But once you start getting to know both the students, the family of kids, anyone living here, it's very warm, close-knit community. Yeah, just like I said, hard on the outside, takes a little bit of them knowing that you're here to help out, and you're being genuine about yourself and why you're here. Yeah. Otherwise, they'll open up to you. Again, it may seem rough at first, or like there's some parts that think it's rough, but once you spend time here and get to know a lot of the kids and a lot of the people here, you will start to understand a lot of their stories, and start relating to them and getting close to them.

Hernán's comments highlight the reflective journey of a community outsider; starting with an awareness of the perceived harshness, then informed by personal experiences that illuminate the embedded assets and strengths of the community. Hernán's ability to build relationships with the community members he saw as "aunties" led him to a deeper appreciation and valuing of the community. His understanding of the human capital that existed among the adults in the community helped him avoid the detrimental socialization of imperfect

communities (González, et al., 2006) surfaced in their research.

Brian expressed similar observations about the value of the familial connections in the community when he shared,

It's generally a very tight-knit community, in general. Most of the people here they know each other, like, "Oh, this is my cousin. These are relatives." Going to school, they'll all be like, "Oh yeah. He's my cousin." He's like and they've known each other for a while, for the most part and there's a lot of solidarity here.

Access to families on the school grounds, and the broader community, helped these AmeriCorps Members see the tight bonds of kinship in these communities. Bethany lauded the commitment to these familial bonds when she said,

... like their family aspect, they're super loyal. At least my kids, they know... Like once you have their trust, they are yours forever. And that type of like we are here, we are a community, we're working together. And that's even something that they mentioned at the beginning, during the day we walked around at the training. That I've really come to see, like, that's so true what he says, is that as a community, they're there fighting for each other. They have each other's back.

These reflections support research emphasizing the importance for adults at low-income schools to validate the culture of the school community (Cooper & Chizhik, 2015; Darling, 2005; Howard, 2001; Osei-Kofi, 2005; Tatum, 2007). Bethany's statement shows how she has developed a deep appreciation for the school community and understands these tight bonds as integral to the success of the community.

In addition to appreciation for the rich experiences they shared with families, at least one AmeriCorps Member acknowledged that while they now understand that familial capital exists in the communities they serve, they could have personally benefited from more explicit exposure during their service.

I feel like I would've been more familiar with the area, and the people who live here and

made more solid connections with the families that have been here. Like I've talked to a few families, and they have told me about their experience and where they grew up, where they came from, and they talk about their community and I was just like, what?

Tea's desire for additional exposure to the community as part of her training is congruent with the suggestions from the literature on valuing culture in diverse school communities.

Researchers postulate that if students are to be successful, all adults they engage with need to be committed to creating a context where student culture is valued (Anyon, 2009; Howard, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Zeichner and Flessner, 2009).

Finding #2 (RQ1 community assets and challenges): AmeriCorps Members regard Linguistic Capital as an asset that the educational system does not value, or as a deficit that impedes student academic progress.

As part of the interview protocol, AmeriCorps Members were asked to identify strengths in the communities they served. Many of the examples cited by interview participants fall under the category of Linguistic Capital. According to Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth Model, Linguistic Capital is defined as, "the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style" (Yosso, p. 78).

AmeriCorps Members Value Linguistic Diversity

Nine of the 11 interview participants referenced linguistic capital as a strength. However, the participants also pointed out barriers in the educational system that made it challenging for linguistic diversity to be seen as a form of capital in students' day-to-day experiences. Interview participant comments support and extend the literature that illuminates the ways in which students in the contemporary public school system are left to fend for themselves (Venezia & Kirst, 2005).

The Education System Lacks Resources to Support Linguistic Diversity

One AmeriCorps Member, Ursula, offered a concise reflection on the strength and challenge of linguistic diversity in her school community. Ursula shared,

I think it's awesome and I think it's an awesome skill to have to speak more than one language, I do also think that it might be I imagine hard for them to go from say a Spanish speaking home and then coming to school and being basically told that you're going to speak English pretty much for the whole day. I could see that being really challenging.

Another AmeriCorps Member, Taj, elaborated on the pressure that students feel as a byproduct of the current system. Taj said,

Okay, you can speak two languages. You are competent in both of these worlds, and that is something that you'd celebrate it. We don't give students enough chance to celebrate them. One of my students, he speaks Amharic, but he never had an Amharic class or a chance to show how proficient he is in Amharic, only English. And that can be like really frustrating. Is that school will never really appreciate that he's bilingual, which is ... And then also it's just the fact that, he's a lot of code switching there. Going home and speaking Amharic almost entirely and then going to school and then being forced to speak entirely in English unless he's with some of his friends who speak Amharic. And that can feel like a lot of pressure and stress on a 12-year old who's bouncing back and forth.

The notion that students were burdened by the current educational system was reflected in comments by Irene who said,

I think a lot, mostly from, since I work with [students] who speak Spanish or Tigrinya at home, they have more of a burden on them to interpret for their parents when they come in to school. A lot of times their parents don't come in to the [school], and that's not the case for everybody but I do work with two students who I know don't speak English at home and their parents.

The research on disproportionate outcomes for students at low-income schools offers up several strategies for addressing burdens like these. One of the suggestions is increased targeting staffing to support vulnerable student populations (Baker et al., 2016). Several AmeriCorps Members shared opinions that supported this notion. For example, Fiona said,

I think it has a huge impact. We have only a couple of staff...that's specifically trained to translate. So for parent-teacher conferences for example, we had a translator come in. But she was doing a bunch of different things too. So I think she was kind of stretched thin.

Fiona expanded on this challenge when she shared her observation regarding the proclivity for language support services to be eliminated when budget cuts are made. Fiona gave a recent example when she said, “The people who are, a lot of the times impacted by budget cuts, are the staff that are working with students who are learning English as another language.”

Therefore, despite the literature’s recommendation for increased investment in support services to enhance linguistic diversity in schools, the AmeriCorps Members interviewed frequently named experiences where the educational system was devaluing the linguistic capital of the school community and creating greater barriers for students.

Diverse Language Identities as a Deficit

A small group of AmeriCorps Members spoke about the linguistic diversity of the school community as a challenge that students needed to overcome. For example, Hernán said,

It really depends on that, or how much they exceed, and how much they're willing to put in to learn English. Because as much as it'd be nice, English is a requirement to succeed later on in their education, it is, I feel almost really necessary. If you really want to succeed in school sometimes. You never know what kind of teacher you're going to get later on. Yeah, the more English you have under your belt, it's something that's very important.

Hernán’s reflection centers English language proficiency as integral to student academic achievement. While members like Fiona, Taj, and Ursula saw an educational system falling short of its obligation to support students’ language diversity, other members like Brian felt that community members were the barrier to a student’s ability to become fluent in English. Brian summarized this point when speaking about a middle school student he worked with. He said,

For instance, I have a student who moved here about two and a half years ago. She's

great, she's trying really hard to learn English. She's still reading only at a third grade level, really, because again she's trying to overcome that barrier, but she's never had to learn English at home before she moved here. Parents at home, older brother at home and they don't want her to speak English at home. So, she really does not have much room to practice it, other than at school.

Brian acknowledges the effort the student is putting into her studies and trying to learn English. However, he also sees family as a barrier to her academic success. This sentiment was touched upon by Tea who spoke of an elementary school student she works with. She said, "I do realize that some of them have a lower reading level because they speak a different language at home, and they read that language at home and just reading a different language is hard."

The perceived negative impact of a home language other than English was reiterated by a third AmeriCorps Member, Bethany, who spoke about the challenges she sees within the high school community she served. She said,

And then the other big one is immigration. Because a lot of parents are undocumented, and there's also the language barrier. And so the parents can't help as much. Because they don't speak English. And so then it's difficult like for teachers to call home and be like, hey, this is going on, let's try to work together with your kid. Because the language barrier is very real.

The comments shared by Bethany, Brian, Hernán, and Tea illustrate a view of diverse language identities as a deficit. However, researchers like Gloria Ladson-Billings see the academic struggle of students as a byproduct of *educational debt* (Ladson-Billings, 2006a). The education debt refers to decades of school experiences that deprive marginalized communities the access to the resources they need to be successful. Through the comments shared by AmeriCorps Members we see that even after 10 months of service in a school community there exists a range of mindsets about the value of linguistic diversity in a school community. Lindsey et al. (2013) argue that these reflections are informed by an adult's cultural competence; which

can be positively informed by family and community outreach. In chapter five I will discuss the implications for practice, including opportunities to leverage research on Critical Professional Development.

Understanding Community Assets and Challenges Vis-à-vis Learning Experiences

The in-depth AmeriCorps Member interviews and 85 survey responses provided an understanding of the role ongoing learning experiences played in AmeriCorps Member understanding of community assets and challenges. The three findings below elaborate on the perceptions of their ongoing learning experiences.

Finding #3 (RQ2 ongoing learning experiences): AmeriCorps Members report informal learning experiences as most impactful on their perception of the communities they serve.

The first finding of this section is that AmeriCorps Members perceived their informal learning experiences as most impactful on their understanding of the communities they served. Regardless of their gender or K-12 socioeconomic status, the 85 survey respondents rated the experiences at their school site, interactions with the community they served, and conversations they had while in service as the most impactful learning experiences (Table 8).

The following sections provide details on survey and interview data that support this finding. In addition to providing data on the three highest-rated informal learning experiences, I also include a discussion on the lowest rated learning experience, “formal training”. Finally, comments from Training Director interviews are offered to support the perspective on formal training.

Experiences at school. The 85 survey respondents were asked to share which learning experiences had the most significant impact on their current perception of the community they served. Table 6 shows “experiences at school” was the highest rated with a mean score of 4.78.

The item also has the smallest standard deviation with a value of .64.

There was little to no difference among respondents based on background. The largest difference was observed when filtering responses by race. Table 8, below, shows the breakdown of survey respondents by race. The respondents are presented as “White” or “Non-White”.

Non-White refers to any survey respondent who selected a race other than White. This choice was made in recognition of the small number of respondents by individual race categories.

Table 8 shows that 100% of White respondents agreed, or somewhat agreed, that the experiences at their school sites had the most significant impact on their perception of the community they serve. In comparison, only 86.5% of Non-White survey respondents agreed or somewhat agreed. The remaining 13.5% of Non-White respondents chose Disagree (2.7%) and Neutral (10.8%). While noteworthy, no further claims can be supported by the limited quantitative sample size. In chapter five I will discuss ways future research should target larger populations of Non-White AmeriCorps Members to better understand if this observation persists with larger groups.

Table 8
Learning Experiences, by Race (N = 85)

	Disagree		Somewhat Disagree		Neutral		Somewhat Agree		Agree		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Formal Training												
White	6	12.5	8	16.7	18	37.5	14	29.2	2	4.2	48	100
Non-White	10	27.0	4	10.8	14	37.8	8	21.6	1	2.7	37	100
Experiences at School												
White	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	4.2	46	95.8	48	100
Non-White	1	2.7	0	0	4	10.8	5	13.5	27	73.0	37	100
Program Manager												
White	4	8.3	3	6.3	10	20.8	19	39.6	12	25.0	48	100
Non-White	0	0	2	5.4	15	40.5	9	24.3	11	29.7	37	100

Conversations in Service												
White	0	0	0	0	2	4.2	13	27.1	33	68.8	48	100
Non-White	0	0	1	2.7	5	13.5	15	40.5	16	43.2	37	100
Community Interactions												
White	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	25.0	36	75.0	48	100
Non-White	0	0	1	2.7	6	16.2	6	16.2	24	64.9	37	100

Regardless of race or ethnic background the AmeriCorps Members who participated in interviews shared reflections about the influence their experiences at school had on their perception of the community they served. When Tea elaborated on her process for learning about the resources available to students at her school, she said it was done by attending, “staff meetings and interactions with the staff here and the SEL team, Social Emotional Learning team. Them just being very transparent and open with us.” Tea’s comments signal gratitude felt towards adults on her school campus. Tea viewed these individuals as resources that backfilled her knowledge gaps about the school community or students.

Other AmeriCorps Members shared similar anecdotes about learning from their experiences at school. For example, Hernán spoke about his realization that dating practices in 2019 were quite different from his recollection of middle school. He said, “that’s something that I wasn’t really trained or knew much about. So yeah, when there’s all the relationship talks, there’s girls going out with other girls, boys going out with...I’m like, ‘Oh yeah, I’m in 2019.’”

For these AmeriCorps Members, experiences at their school sites grounded them in a deeper understanding of their service context and supported them in feeling better prepared for their roles. This can be contrasted with the ratings of “formal training” as the least impactful on AmeriCorps Member perception of the communities they served.

“Formal training” was the lowest rated item with a mean score of 2.81 and a standard

deviation of 1.13. There was little to no difference among respondents based on background.

When Ursula was asked to elaborate on how big of a role formal training played in informing her perspective of the community, she shared,

Not as much, honestly. Really, I feel like City Year really focused on the schools in general and maybe what those communities were like and not even going in that much depth to those communities, but we didn't get a whole ton of knowledge or understanding of the communities surrounding it. We did have one day at the beginning of the year where we did look at racial demographics and things like that which was helpful, but it was only like an hour and it wasn't much time to really understand and really there was so much information on the walls too that I didn't have a chance to look at everything, so.

This quote offers clarity on why AmeriCorps Members were more influenced by their experiences at school than their formal training. Ursula references challenges with the sequencing and limited duration of formal training from City Year. These are two characteristics of formal training that will be discussed at length later in this chapter.

Community interactions. The second-highest rated item was “community interactions” with a mean score of 4.61 and a standard deviation of .67. There was little to no difference among respondents based on background. The largest difference was observed when filtering responses by race. Table 8, above, shows that 100% of White respondents agreed, or somewhat agreed, that the experiences at their school sites had the most significant impact on their perception of the community they serve. In comparison, only 81.1% of Non-White survey respondents agreed or somewhat agreed. The remaining 18.9% of Non-White respondents chose Somewhat Disagree (2.7%) and Neutral (16.2%). While noteworthy, no further claims can be supported by the limited quantitative sample size. In chapter five I will discuss ways future research should target larger populations of Non-White AmeriCorps Members to better understand if this observation persists with larger groups.

Community interactions was a popular reflection topic during the AmeriCorps Member

interviews. For example, Ursula shared,

I live in a community with a lot of value to it and there's a ton of incredible local owned businesses down in White Center that are really awesome. And the parks are really awesome around here too and I feel like a lot of people go and play in the parks from what I see, which is really cool.

A unique piece of information revealed in Ursula's comment is that she chose to live in the community she served. This was not a trend among interview participants. When I asked Ursula about what formal role, if any, City Year played in developing her understanding of the community she lived and worked in she said,

That was very much more on our own, for sure. Cause we were in charge of where we were living basically. We had to find our own housing which is really hard to find in [Site Two], but we ended up getting a really good location for our schools, but it was definitely just moving in kind of not really knowing where we were living except for just the things we saw online and except for just basically our first impressions and then we were just in it. So it definitely I think it was another learning by doing. Just being in the community and getting to know your neighbors slowly but surely, and I think there's still room for that. I still don't know a whole ton about White Center, I'm definitely not an expert by any means and I wish I did know more, but with our hours you're not really...you don't have the energy to kind of be a part of the community after your long work days.

The initiative that Ursula took to understand the White Center community also provides some insight into why "formal training" was the lowest rated factor influencing AmeriCorps Members' perceptions of the communities they serve. Ursula sees value in the community, however, she only experiences the community value because she made the decision to live in White Center and explore all of the vibrant offerings that go unseen in a traditional day of in-school service.

Hernán also referenced the positive impact of exploring the school community. When I inquired about his interactions with the community he said,

It literally was sometime around Christmas where we were just about to head back, me and my co-workers last year, and they just had all these stands up and all that kind of

stuff for Christmas and things. I was like, "You know what? Let's just stop. And then let's just get out and walk around." Yeah, just got to check out the community and the food and see what was going on.

The decision made by Hernán and his fellow AmeriCorps Members to attend the Christmas festivities in Site One and Ursula's decision to live in the community near her school in Site Two had similar impacts on their perceptions of the communities they served. In each case the AmeriCorps Members took the independent decision to immerse themselves in the community and were open to learning about key elements of asset based development. This supports the research from the Asset Based Community Development framework which includes an emphasis on topics like the local economy or local institutions (McKnight, 2017). Later sections in the chapter will discuss the theme of independent immersion as a finding from interviews with AmeriCorps members.

Conversations in service. The third-highest rated item was "conversations in service" with a mean score of 4.47 and a standard deviation of .70. There was little to no difference among respondents based on background. During interviews with AmeriCorps Members I sought clarity on the types of conversations in service that were impactful to their perception on the community. Irene simply stated, "conversations with students" were the most impactful. Brian indicated that the conversations that most impacted him were...

...in talking a lot with teachers. Talking a lot with staff. Also, people who have been around City Year for a while on the staff often mention these things offhand of late, too, and that's how this knowledge gets passed down.

The institutional knowledge that Brian acquired in his service was in part imparted by City Year staff. Other AmeriCorps Members made reference to the conversations in service with staff members, specifically program managers. Program managers are full-time City Year employees placed at school sites for the purpose of supervising and administering the school-site

implementation of the program. Overall, “Engagement with your Program Manager” was the fourth-highest rated item with a mean score of 3.72 and a standard deviation of 1.08. There was little to no difference among respondents based on background. Taj spoke about the influence of his program manager when he said,

The program manager, she was there last year, and she was really, really involved specifically with the community, the community in the CLC [Community Learning Center]. She left a couple months in [to the service year], but in the very beginning she was like, “Okay, this is, because our office is in the CLC too.” She was like, “This is where we’re going to spend most of our time. This is the most important part of the school to get to know, learn about where your students are before school and after school. That’s a really big deal. And if you can find out where they’re going after school, you can find out if they’re going to the CLC or if you can get them to go to CLC.” Stuff like that. She really put a focus on, go to McDonald’s that’s across the street, because that’s where all the students hang out before and after school, and do other stuff.

In addition to providing factual knowledge about the school campus, Taj’s program manager offered him strategies for immersing himself in the school community in an effort to connect with students. Conversations with Training Directors also alluded to the role they expect program managers to play in the ongoing learning experiences of AmeriCorps Members. One of the Training Directors said,

...these are conversations we’re having with our staff also pretty frequently, they are things that we hope for them to be talking about with their teams informally all the time and things that we hope that the learning is constant around. Obviously, I don’t do all of the L&D [learning and development] on my own because that’s impossible. So, I rely on the rest of our Impact Team [Program Managers] to support all of that as well, and they all have other jobs that they are doing full-time. There’s just a resource capacity issue there.

This study explored impact of formal and informal learning experiences on AmeriCorps Member perception of the communities they serve. The quantitative data from the 85 survey responses and the comments from interview participants show that informal experiences have a greater impact on their perception. According to interviews with Training Directors it would

appear that the AmeriCorps Member preference for informal learning spaces is by design. One of the Training Directors shared,

We are really trying to... And we started last year really trying to shift the mindset from "All of my training and learning is going to happen on Learning and Development Days" to helping core members to understand their whole service as learning experience and that the people they're surrounded by every day, especially the teachers and other staff members in their buildings have some resources for learning. So those are kind of more informal opportunities. We've really been trying to reflect on corps member learning in general, the way that corps members see their service, the way that they approach learning and development. We certainly have folks who come into those days with an attitude of "This isn't serving me well. This isn't helping me. I'm not getting anything from this day." It was time to think about how we can help corps members to remember that that's not their only opportunity to learn, one. And two, that when they are there, there's always something they can take back to service and that they can be learning.

At first pass the comments shared by AmeriCorps Members about the balance of formal and informal learning might appear to be a programmatic oversight on behalf of the Training Director. However, in the previous quote the director is clearly articulating the intentionality behind wanting AmeriCorps Members to see their schools and communities as laboratories of learning. This approach is consistent with research that emphasizes the importance of pre-service educators having experiences in the local community of their students. (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2006a; Ladson-Billings, 2006b; Ladson-Billings, 2009). There is a lack of alignment between what the research and Training Director comments because the research says programs need to create structured opportunities for educators to engage with the concept of culture. Absent this component of the ongoing learning experience the AmeriCorps Members might feel like there is an overreliance on their independent immersion. Subsequent sections in this chapter will explore the limitations of an overreliance on informal learning experiences, as communicated by study participants.

Finding #4 (RQ3 assets and challenges vis-à-vis ongoing learning experiences): AmeriCorps Members perceive the reliance on independent immersion as a barrier to understanding community assets and challenges.

As part of the interview protocol, AmeriCorps Members were asked about the role that their learning experiences played in supporting their understanding of community assets and challenges. Finding #3 provided a description of why AmeriCorps Members perceived informal learning experiences as more impactful than the formal learning experience. In this section I will examine additional insight about informal learning experiences. Specifically, I will provide a discussion of the culture shock and service mindset fatigue that AmeriCorps Members associate with their independent immersion experiences.

When AmeriCorps Members were asked to provide qualitative insights into their view of learning experiences, many of the examples cited indicated a struggle with the amount of independent immersion the AmeriCorps program required. For the purposes of this study, independent immersion refers to the learning experiences that took place outside of formal training from City Year. These included experiences at their school sites; engagement with their program manager; conversation they had while in service; and interactions with the community they serve.

Eight of the 11 interview participants referenced the challenges they experienced with a lack of structured support. Instead of structured support members felt they were asked to independently immerse themselves into their school community. Some members spoke to the burnout they felt as a result of the constant demand for independent immersion. Tea said,

It's just like you're thrown into these schools without knowing the community, not knowing what previous corps members have done before you even step into the school. It's just like they're throwing you in a pool pretty much, and you're supposed to learn how to swim.

Comments like these and others shared by interview participants support and extend the literature about AmeriCorps Member feeling underprepared for the conditions of their service (“School Turnaround AmeriCorps National Evaluation: Final Evaluation Report,” n.d.). The School Turnaround study found a need for cultural competency training for individuals working in diverse school settings and additional training regarding the demographics and conditions of the schools. Furthermore, additional research has shown that public school students in low-income communities benefit from interactions with adults on campus who can validate and lift up their cultural capital in their learning experience (Darling, 2005; Howard, 2001; Noguera, 2003; Osei-Kofi, 2005; Tatum, 2007). The Training Directors interviewed for this study also acknowledged that AmeriCorps Members might feel as though they were thrown into service with limited context. One of the directors said, “that's the other thing is when you're getting the training. So, they don't have a lot of context yet. Yeah, they went to a community walk, but they haven't seen or worked with the students yet.”

The Training Director seems to be acknowledging that members cannot possibly have learned enough about their community context before they have to start their service. This sentiment was supported by the quantitative data because 70% (60/85) of survey respondents indicated that they had learned enough about the school community as part of their ongoing learning experiences. Therefore, 10 months into a service year nearly one-third of survey respondents did not feel as though they knew enough about their school community.

For some additional context on why that might be we turn to the qualitative data. When interview participants were probed about the role that their learning experiences played in supporting their understanding of community assets and challenges they highlighted the ways an

emphasis on independent immersion did not address culture shock they felt, nor did it provide sufficient opportunities to reflect on the mindsets they held in their service.

Culture shock. Four of the interview participants provided concrete examples of the cultural shock they felt as they were asked to independently immerse themselves into the school community. Fiona from Site Two shared,

I don't think any of the people in my team, other than one, have grown up in the community we're serving in. So, I think obviously, realizing that our outside perspectives are never going to tell the whole story and always searching for and learning more. And I think City Year could do more to support that.

Fiona's acknowledgement underscores the detriment of her AmeriCorps team's lack of lived experiences. According to the research this lack of perspective would undermine a group's ability to understand the local context (Darling, 2005; Howard, 2001; Noguera, 2003; Osei-Kofi, 2005; Tatum, 2007). When a large percentage of adults on campus have limited knowledge of the community, their ability to lift up cultural capital is compromised. This is relevant for the sample of this study because 61% (52/85) of survey respondents indicated that the neighborhood where they grew up was not the same or similar to the community they were serving.

The impact of data points like these was also addressed by Bethany from Site One. She shared,

I think I honestly probably had like, quite a bit of culture shock at the beginning, just because I was coming from a lot of communities that were primarily White, and very suburban. So then coming here, was definitely different. And just took me a while to get used to. Even not even necessarily in Site One, but just like, in general. The second day of service with the kids, I was like, what in the world have I gotten myself into? Because it was like death glares and like getting cussed out and all these things, right? The first and I was like, kids never act like this around me. Because I have done work with youth before, and like, generally, people really gravitated towards me, and I was like, this is going to be a piece of cake. And then I was like, oh my God, this is going to be so hard.

The struggles identified by Bethany and Fiona are rooted in a lack of meaningful interactions with their respective service communities prior to the start of their AmeriCorps terms. These reflections support the extensive research by Gloria Ladson-Billings which poses that meaningful engagement with students in their local community will support pre-service teachers in seeing their students as individuals who are influenced by the cultural context in their communities while simultaneously challenging the prospective teachers to reflect on their own culture, as it relates to that of their students.

The value of Ladson-Billings' proposals was extended by AmeriCorps Member, Tea. Tea divulged the fears and inadequacies she felt because of her limited knowledge of the community. Tea said,

There's a bunch of Somali kids. There's a bunch of Latinx kids, and I'm going to be honest, I totally had no idea, haven't interacted with this, someone of Somali descent before and I didn't know how to go through that interaction, and a lot of my kids are Somali, a lot of them are Muslim, a lot of them they practiced Ramadan and then it was just like, "What is going on?". So not being familiar with the community, and not given a lot of resources to be familiar with the community, which I could have taken upon myself, but it would've been nice if it was just ingrained in City Year.

Tea's comments highlight the apprehension she felt about being left to her own devices to understand the cultural diversity of her service context. She explicitly states a desire for more structured support with learning about these elements of her school community. Ursula shared similar sentiments when she said,

So, I didn't want to overstep any boundaries or anything like that so I definitely very like...I was careful at the beginning of the year and it took me a while to get to know families. And if I had known more about in general the community beforehand, I think that would have helped me build relationships earlier on with families.

Given the frequency with which AmeriCorps Members reflected on the need for more ongoing learning experiences that directly dealt with their lack of familiarity with their students'

cultural identities it is important to explore interventions that might address these needs. One such intervention that was frequently alluded to by AmeriCorps Members in City Year Site Two was the practice of Racial Equity Summits.

Racial Equity Summits. Each AmeriCorps program has the discretion to determine their own training plan for AmeriCorps Members. The two sites in this study took unique approaches to building cultural competency in their members. However, all interview participants from City Year Site Two spoke about the impact of the learning experiences focused on racial equity.

At City Year Site Two members engage with ongoing learning experiences, called Racial Equity Summits, that focus on the role race plays in Site Two's social systems. When the Training Director from City Year Site Two was asked to elaborate on the Racial Equity Summits she said,

I think the race and equity work, which we start really early with our corps members, we also hope to help them come in with a mindset of being willing to learn about their communities, and from their communities, and not just be there to teach, but to learn.

During Racial Equity Summits members opt into heterogeneous racial identity groups and give the opportunity to reflect on the way their racial identity plays out in their service. The program is comprised of speakers from the service communities. Guests are asked to highlight the positives taking place in the community. According to the Training Director,

I think from our experience we know that when we talk about the people in our communities, that is always going to end up highlighting a strength because our people are strong and the communities we serve are strong. It always comes out, the resilience, the beauty, and the power, and the great things that are happening as well.

If the focus of the Racial Equity Summits is geared towards the strengths of the community there seems to be a missed connection related to the lives of students at the schools where AmeriCorps Members serve. Several members, including Fiona from City Year Site Two

spoke about the impact and limitations of Racial Equity Summits. Fiona said,

I remember really wanting to talk about my role as another White woman in education, and how that's impacting my students. And I don't think in those summits we really talked much specifically about interacting with students, and how those power dynamics show up, and how to best try to counteract that. But I would've liked to have more specific, concrete discussions about how my identity impacts my students.

Fiona's desire for more opportunities to dialogue about her identity in relation to her school community reflects the Guiding Principles of Cultural Competence outlined by Lindsey, Roberts, and Campbell Jones (2013). Specifically, the principles encourage educators to see culture as a natural and normal part of the community they serve while simultaneously seeking to recognize and value the differences within the cultural communities they serve (Lindsey et al., 2013). Other AmeriCorps Members from City Year Site Two acknowledged the value they received from these structured learning experiences. Ursula shared,

...they really put a huge emphasis on race and equity which I really appreciated because I thought I was pretty aware of a lot of things but they definitely challenged me to think about things really more in depth this year and have a lot more time to think about that. Like there's a lot of journaling during trainings and there was a lot of discussions we would have during our White Affinity groups that just were interesting to me. So yeah, it definitely just made me think a lot more about what my role is as a White woman, especially in a very diverse school. And how that can be problematic in some ways and how to go about that.

Ursula's appreciation of the self-reflection built into the Racial Equity Summits underscores the focus on personal reflection as a tool for preparing members for their service. Personal reflection experiences prior to City Year differed by AmeriCorps Members. Irene shared that she did a lot of identity work in college and came into her service with prior knowledge. However, she still desired more connection to the Site Two community. Irene said, "I would say, when it comes to learning about the community outside of the school, it was kind of similar to being in college where I had to go out and learn about it."

Additional AmeriCorps Member comments highlighted an appreciation for the summits balanced with a longing for more learning experiences that dealt with the intersectionality of racial identity, cultural competence, and community context was noted by additional AmeriCorps Members. Taj said,

I think the people who are doing the race and equity work here or approaching it from a really progressive viewpoint, and really understanding self-reflective point of view. It's not as focused on Site Two. It's more general and I don't think I have an understanding of Site Two's history very well.

Taj elaborated on the ways in which this intersection of racial identity, cultural competence, and community context could have been accomplished. He said,

I would have liked to spend more time with the community leaders that are in the Aki area that aren't affiliated with the school. I don't know, I would've liked to have trainings led by ... Like the race and equity trainings that are led by those people. Because then I think they would talk about probably the race and equity things, or the space and identity, but since they're in the community, it would probably have a lot more to do with like, "Okay, so here's the demographics of your students, here is some of the known issues that are coming through and they're facing."

Taj's advocacy for spending more time with the community leaders supports the research from the Asset Based Community Development framework (McKnight, 2017). The center advocates for an emphasis on connecting with local leaders in the community as a strategy for deeply understanding a community's history and context. Taj's overall desire to engage with more individuals from the community also supports Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth Model that promotes the acknowledgement of various forms of capital in a community. By engaging local leaders and listening to their first-person stories the members would be engaging with the pre-existing capital in the community.

AmeriCorps Members were aligned in their perspective, but Training Directors saw it differently. According to the Training Director, the precise goals of the Racial Equity Summits was to expose AmeriCorps Members to community members. If access to local leaders was not

sufficiently addressing the needs of these AmeriCorps Members, then perhaps it has more to do with the mindset required of a service member.

Service mindset. The desire to hear from community members and the belief that there is something to learn about the communities speaks to a mindset that assumes there are preexisting assets in a community. Several AmeriCorps Members spoke about the role that mindset played in their ability to understand the assets and challenges about the community. Brian spoke about the importance of...

Going around, seeing, talking to people. And just really being open to keeping your ears open and your mouth shut. Because hearing what people say about it [the community], hearing what people who live here are saying about it. All these things are very important for you to take it in.

I asked Brian to explain some of the experiences that led him to believe these approaches were important or necessary for City Year service work. He gave a thoughtful response about his experience with fellow AmeriCorps Members. He said,

Well, they try very hard but, again, a lot of them do their best to immerse themselves. But, because ultimately there is this level of privilege. What are most of the people who come to City Year? Tend to be White. Half are middle class, college grads. Not necessarily at all aligned with people who actually live this level of social issues. They try to, they mean well, but there's this fundamental disconnect between the idea of trying to come from this and you're trying to impose your ideals that you need to do these things in order to succeed type deal. And it's hard to break that. Even though they are wonderful people and they're trying their best and it's very hard for them to come out, there is that built-in privilege.

In this comment Brian speaks to his observations of facts that are supported by the data. He references the high rate of White, middle class, college educated City Year AmeriCorps Members; all data points that proved to be the majority of the survey sample for this study. Furthermore, Brian's comments are indicative of a trending perspective shared by several interview participants about the mindset they felt was best for service. Ursula shared some reflections in the form of advice for future AmeriCorps Members. She said,

I do think that going into the year I think it is really important for City Year members or just service members in general to have an awareness that they are not saviors of any sort of anything like that. They're not the sole...they're just an additional support and they're not meant...I don't know, be high and mighty on a pedestal or something. Exposure to what they're doing and hopefully that can build awareness to what your role is in those communities and how you can make that beneficial more than harmful.

The savior mindset referenced by Ursula does not incorporate the self-awareness and curiosity that other members noted as crucial for an AmeriCorps Member's success in the program. The Site Two Training Director also spoke about the importance of creating self-reflection spaces to support AmeriCorps Members in their development of productive mindsets.

The Training Director said,

based on the feedback during the Summer, we also implemented at the midyear with midyear corps members, we piloted a cultural awareness training. So that they can think about, after they've gone through the community walk, and learn from how do they need to kind of check their assumptions, and their bias that go through equity traps. Then how do they then approach learning in a way that's culturally responsive. Yeah, one of the things that we wonder is how do we continue to build their community awareness, but also where, how do we facilitate impact really bringing that to their spaces. They do a helping, fixing, serving training, where they think about how are you viewing the community that you're coming into, and what could be problematic about the way that you're viewing it, and what's the way that we see our work with the community. That's really in partnership and service to them.

Despite the intentionality around creating spaces to reflect on mindset the Training Directors also acknowledged an issue related to their locus of control. The Site Two Training Director said,

We can't control the mindsets that people hold...that's something that we can try to work toward changing, but we don't get to control. A big part of it is "You're not from this community. What does that mean?" And then also how do you learn about this community? Who's in this community? Who makes decisions, and who holds power? I think that's something that we're also trying to lean into in our anti-racist work is thinking about who holds power and how do we shift that back to the community? I don't think we have an answer for that, but I do think that's something we want to... the mindset we want our members to be holding and thinking about.

When I asked AmeriCorps Members about their experiences with self-reflection there were several comments that indicated a mindset of deep self-reflection. One topic that came up from nine of the 11 interview participants was about the intersectionality between the service they were providing and the challenge of gentrification in the communities they served.

Gentrification. Dakota from City Year Site One spoke about the formal training they received from City Year at the beginning of the program year and how they got the opportunity to “hear about how people are being displaced. It's kind of sad, but just hear more about the community. I really appreciated that.”

In Site Two the Training Director spoke about the intersection of AmeriCorps Member service and the rampant displacement across the community. She said,

We hope corps members also learn about who has been there, who has been displaced, which is an increasing issue in [Site Two]. Displacement and what this also might mean for our corps members who are coming in and taking, for example, housing that might have been historically available for people who couldn't afford to live elsewhere in the city, and now they can't afford to live anywhere in the city. Things like that.

The Training Directors acknowledgement of this paradox was separately parroted by a Site Two AmeriCorps Member, Fiona, who shared

I work with the neighborhood I'm living in now, and I think I realized that like I packed into this tiny townhouse with a bunch of AmeriCorps members. But we're taking that apartment from like, I mean, it's affordable housing that we're taking from a family. So I think it's been kind of an interesting thing to realize that I can appreciate a community, but I also am part of gentrification right now. So that's something I've personally grappling with quite a bit

These reflections show that even with opportunities for self-reflection there are complexities in the work that cannot be solved with simply asking AmeriCorps Members to think on it. As I covered in Finding #3 AmeriCorps Members see the value of engaging the community. However, the impact of culture shock and struggle to maintain a consistent service

mindset left AmeriCorps Members wanting more support.

Finding #5 (RQ3 assets and challenges vis-à-vis ongoing learning experiences): Sequencing and quantity of ongoing learning experiences is a barrier to understanding community assets and challenges.

When I asked interview participants to elaborate on the ways their ongoing learning experiences could have been improved, I regularly heard comments that addressed the sequence and duration, or quantity, of the learning experiences. These findings are presented here as an additional barrier to AmeriCorps Members' ability to understand the community assets and challenges.

As part of the interview protocol, AmeriCorps Members were asked to what extent the formal training provided by City Year impacted their perceptions about the communities they served. This question was posed because the research literature on volunteer engagement highlights the importance of training. Hager (2004) identified training as one of the four best practices in volunteer administration.

Eight of the 11 members shared critical viewpoints regarding the sequencing (time of year) and quantity of ongoing learning experiences offered by the program. The most common perspective shared was that all learning experiences about the communities were sequenced at the beginning of 10-month service experience, negatively impacting the members' ability to recall or make meaning of the information. For example, Jessica shared,

They gave us data. We did get some data at the beginning of this many languages, this many first year, first generation college students that are graduating, this many people graduated in general, these are the countries that our kids have immigrated from or their families have. So, we do get a lot of numbers at the beginning. That was much of that at the beginning. I can't recall any of those.

Jessica recognizes that the program made an attempt to educate her on the community she

served but admits she is no longer able to recall that information in a meaningful way. Other interview participants shared Jessica's perspective on the timing of the training and offered suggestions for remedies. Bethany said,

I think just more of what they did at the beginning. Like walking us around, talking to us about, the issues in the community, and also the good things in the community. History of the area, because they did dabbling in it a little bit, but I just would have liked more of it.

The intentionality of community asset mapping was corroborated by the Site One Training Director who said,

I know just even in terms of learning about the communities where they serve, we ask our program managers and team leaders to take their team on kind of a community asset mapping walk of sorts, where they go and learn about the local business, community centers, and others.

While Training Directors and AmeriCorps Members were in alignment about when the learning experiences took place, the AmeriCorps Members were vocal about the lack of effectiveness from the strictly frontloaded interactions. Irene succinctly shared, "I think the general consensus was that we had trainings after when we needed it."

The comments shared by Bethany, Jessica, and Irene support the literature on the importance of positive adult-youth relationships in schools (Ladson-Billings, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2006b; Ladson-Billings, 2009). This scholarship offers up the following strategies for improving adult-youth relationships:

1. Opportunities for pre-service teachers to engage students in the surrounding school community;
2. Structured opportunities for students to engage with the issue of culture;
3. Increased opportunities for pre-service educators to study abroad with an emphasis on exposure to new cultural influences on education.

Comments from interview participants about what worked and areas for improvement indicate an alignment with Ladson-Billing's first two suggestions. For example, when pressed for examples of what alternative approaches might have improved the experience Fiona shared,

I think woven throughout would have been great. Like even [today], I would love to have more [support], I mean I can, I think it's definitely important that some of it's independent, but I also think having support through learning a community's really important.

Bethany shared a similar sentiment when she shared,

Yeah, I would have loved to have at least a couple days of [cultural identity]. Especially because I was so unfamiliar with, just the culture and the community. Because it's so different from how I came in. And I didn't want to come in thinking, like, oh, like, I'm like, this White person's coming in to save you. And I was like, really conscious of like, trying to not do that. And so I think the more I could have learned about the community, coming in would have been even better.

Bethany's level of self-awareness about her cultural identity in relation to the community she is serving was a theme referenced by many AmeriCorps Members. Several shared comments that supported deeper community engagement as a tool for contextualizing their culture in relation to the students and families of the community. Ursula offered a thorough reflection on the topic of learning about the community when she shared,

I think for AmeriCorps in general I think it would be better to have more training just more awareness going into your communities or what the community is like. And that's specifically the school, or like the organization you're working for when I worked for NCCC [National Civilian Community Corps]. But having better idea of the demographics of the community and maybe what makes that community what it is, whether that be going to an event with your team at the beginning of the year that kind of shows what... a little bit into what the community values. I think that's important so making sure that there's room for those things and really getting to know your community going into it. I think that's really important.

A 2016 report on the AmeriCorps School Turnaround Grant evaluating the best practices for program implementation found that AmeriCorps Members reported feeling underprepared for the conditions of their service (“School Turnaround AmeriCorps National Evaluation: Final Evaluation Report,” n.d.). The study found a need for cultural competency training for individuals working in diverse school settings and additional training regarding the demographics and conditions of the schools.

Similarly, the AmeriCorps Members who participated in this study also reported a need for cultural competency training. The mixed-methods structure of this study, particularly the rich interviews, offered new details on the training frequency and quantity of ongoing learning experiences that AmeriCorps Members would like to see. Members were consistent in their advocacy for cultural competency-themed learning experiences that were:

1. Woven throughout the programmatic year;
2. Engaged community members; and
3. Happened as regularly as monthly.

Conclusion

The first set of findings from my study addressed AmeriCorps Members' perceptions of the communities they served. AmeriCorps Members frequently reported experiences where they observed the positive role family and kin played as active members of in students' lives. Additionally, AmeriCorps Members saw the linguistic diversity of their students as an asset, but were disappointed in school systems that they felt were not acknowledging, or honoring, the linguistic diversity. Finally, some saw linguistic diversity as a barrier to students' academic achievement.

The second set of findings from my study discussed AmeriCorps Members' opinion of their ongoing learning experiences as spaces for learning about community assets and challenges. AmeriCorps Members had a clear preference for the informal learning spaces they engaged in their services. However, members felt that the program design of the ongoing learning experiences required too much independent immersion which led to a ripple effect of negative consequences. Finally, AmeriCorps Members regarded the structural design of their ongoing learning experiences as misaligned to their needs.

In Chapter Five, I will discuss these findings and connect them to the literature presented in Chapter Two. Chapter Five also includes a discussion of the study's limitations and implications of the findings, as well as recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

AmeriCorps Members serve as a human capacity intervention in urban education systems around the United States (Cassidy, Hicks, Hall, Farran, & Gray, 1998). AmeriCorps Members come into their service from a variety of personal and professional backgrounds, but rarely serve in communities where they have lived. According to the literature, if students are to be successful, all adults they engage with need to be committed to creating a context where student culture is valued (Anyon, 2009, Howard, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2006, Zeichner and Flessner, 2009). The research also underscores human capital solutions, like AmeriCorps, as only as good as the degree to which the humans involved are prepared (Hager, 2004). Therefore, this research study sought to understand the perceptions AmeriCorps Members had about the communities they served and how the ongoing learning experiences they experienced influenced their views of the community. The research questions that guided this investigation were:

1. How do AmeriCorps Members serving in K-12 urban schools perceive the challenges and strengths of the communities they serve?
2. How do AmeriCorps Members perceive the learning experiences they received as part of the program?
 - a. How do those perceptions vary by participants' background?
3. What role, if any, does an understanding of community assets and challenges play in the ongoing learning experience of AmeriCorps Members?

This study supported and expanded research on the value of an Asset Based Community Development framework and the need for thorough analyses of the various pre-existing forms of capital as outlined in the Community Cultural Wealth Model. In reviewing the quantitative data and probing for clarity during in-depth interviews, this study supports the literature findings

regarding the need for process-oriented spaces for cultural development and formal spaces for reflecting on one's own identity. The findings address the perceptions that AmeriCorps Members hold about the communities they serve. First, AmeriCorps Members frequently reported experiences where they observed the positive role family and kin played as active members of in students' lives. Additionally, AmeriCorps Members saw the linguistic diversity of their students as an asset but were disappointed in school systems that they felt were not acknowledging, or honoring, the linguistic diversity. Finally, some saw linguistic diversity as a barrier to students' academic achievement.

In addition to exploring AmeriCorps Member perceptions about the community they served I analyzed survey results to understand AmeriCorps Members' opinions of their ongoing learning experiences as spaces for learning about community assets and challenges. AmeriCorps Members had a clear preference for the informal learning. However, members felt that the program design of the ongoing learning experiences required too much independent immersion which led to a ripple effect of negative consequences. Finally, AmeriCorps Members regarded the structural design of their ongoing learning experiences as misaligned to their needs.

In this chapter I will first discuss my findings and connect them to the literature presented in Chapter Two. Secondly, I will discuss the limitations of my study. Finally, I will present recommendations for practice and implications for future research.

Summary of Findings

Building Bonds to Understand Community

AmeriCorps Members who participated in this study expressed an awareness of the various ways that family connections supported a positive school community. City Year AmeriCorps Members spend up to 50 hours a week on their school campuses. Therefore,

unsurprisingly 94% of members said that experiences at their school were most impactful on their perception of the community. Whether the person they engaged with was a parent, sibling, extended family member, or school staff member, AmeriCorps Member interview participants indicated that their understanding of the history, customs and traditions of the school community was supported by individuals who demonstrated care about this bonded community.

Experiences with families took place in daily interactions and large scale events. Since AmeriCorps Members operate after school programs, they have daily interactions with parents or care takers at the elementary and middle school levels. During those engagements AmeriCorps Members came to understand what the community valued – safe learning spaces for their children to explore and develop.

At large scale events, like the Festival of Lights, AmeriCorps Members got to learn about families' cultural backgrounds. Parents and care takers shared food, stories, and artistic performances in an effort to build a more respectful and bonded community. Through these experiences AmeriCorps Members became more aware of their student's culture and developed an appreciation for their cultural identity.

AmeriCorps Members also acknowledged that there were adults on the school campus who served as family figures in the lives of students. AmeriCorps Members reported that their engagement with these individuals helped educate them about the community and understand the history, customs and traditions of the school community. In fact, 92% of AmeriCorps Members surveyed for this study agreed that “interactions with the community you serve” was an important factor in how they learned about the community. These engagements taught AmeriCorps Members about the history of the school community. AmeriCorps Members understood that their service existed on a continuum of lived experiences for the school

community that historically contributed to progress and setback in ever-evolving complex situations.

This finding offers evidence of the need for building bonds between AmeriCorps Members and family or kin in the communities they serve. According to the Corporation for National and Community Service, over 53% of program participants in each fiscal year from FY15 through FY17 identified as White (“National Service.gov,” n.d.). In the context of service to urban education systems, these percentages do not mirror the demographics of the student populations. In the three largest urban public-school districts in the United States--New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago--the percentage of students who identify as White are 15%, 10%, and 11% respectively. This data means that historically, a low percentage of AmeriCorps Members serve a community they are from. This lack of perspective means there are few AmeriCorps Members who can walk into day one of service with a deep understanding of the community’s culture, stories, and history.

Greater engagement with parents, siblings, extended families, adults on school campuses will provide AmeriCorps Members access to leaders in the community. McKnight and Block (2011) advocate for the engagement of these rich resources that exist in the community as strengths to leverage in building authentic community development.

Honoring Linguistic Identities

Linguistic diversity among students and families was very present for AmeriCorps Members serving in Site One and Site Two. AmeriCorps Members in this study served schools with rates of English Language Learners between 16% and 41%. Based on AmeriCorps Members interviews the linguistic diversity of students was either treated as a strength that would propel them to success or a barrier that impeded their ability to assimilate.

When viewed as a strength the linguistic diversity of students was communicated as a skill that students should be proud of or a factor that would lead them to greater professional success in an ever-diversifying society. However, AmeriCorps Members gave multiple examples of the ways in which students and families were not encouraged by the school system to engage their linguistic diversity. Some students lacked any adults on campus who spoke their language because budget decisions were made that saw cuts to staff that supported students with language diversity. Other students spoke languages that were not commonly spoken in their community and would never be offered an opportunity to engage as a biliterate learner in their native language.

Some AmeriCorps Members saw the linguistic diversity of students as a barrier to their academic success. In some instances, families were positioned as the resisters who prevented their children speaking English at home. These comments did not frame linguistic diversity as an asset to be cultivated in the home, but rather an impediment to be exercised out of practice.

This finding offers evidence of the need for learning experiences for AmeriCorps Members that support their ability to engage with Critical Education perspectives. Critical Education's focus on challenging normative social structures is rooted in classic anti-hegemony theory. Antonio Gramsci, a Marxist political theorist in Italy during the early twentieth century, articulated "hegemony" as the way in which institutions directly, or indirectly, influence the way individuals perceive society (Teitelbaum, 2009). AmeriCorps Members must be engaged to see the diversity of language, thought, and lived experiences as a rich resource for communities, not a liability impeding full assimilation into dominant cultures. Borrowing from Ladson-Billings (2009) recommendations for pre-service teachers, AmeriCorps Members should be encouraged

to view their service experiences as a “study abroad” where they focus on honoring the nice cultural context of the location within which they are immersed.

Balancing the Art and Science of Community Engagement

Training Directors interviewed for this study indicated that their approach to designing ongoing learning experiences for AmeriCorps Members was rooted in an approach that placed value on authentic learning done in the context of the service experience. Therefore, AmeriCorps Members were intentionally given light touches on community-related topics during the very early portion of their service. The expectation was that learning would continue to happen through informal engagement with their school community.

AmeriCorps Members in this study indicated that they recall their informal learning experiences as the greater influences on their understanding of the community. These learning experiences manifested as experiences at school, community interactions, and conversations in service. Ninety-four percent of survey respondents agreed that experiences at school had the most significant impact on their perception of the community. Ninety-two percent of survey respondents agreed that community interactions had the most significant impact on their perception of the community. Ninety-one percent of survey respondents agreed that conversations they had in service had the most significant impact on their perception of the community. In contrast, only 29% of survey respondents agreed that formal learning experiences had the most significant impact on their perception of the community.

This finding offers evidence of the need for AmeriCorps programs to reconsider their approach to formal learning experiences with AmeriCorps Members. Perspectives shared during AmeriCorps Member interviews indicated a dissatisfaction with the formal learning experiences that offered statistics on community demographics as a means to understanding the community.

Feedback like this can only be addressed by offering well-designed reflective spaces for AmeriCorps Members to process their experiences in service.

Incidental Immersion

When reviewing the data on formal versus informal learning experiences we cannot make the mistake of assuming that formal learning experiences should be done away with. In fact, AmeriCorps Members interviewed for this study indicated that a major barrier to their ability to learn about the community was an overreliance on informal learning experiences. AmeriCorps Members felt incidentally immersed into service with little to no guidance or context. This fact is supported by the survey data that shows only 71% of AmeriCorps Members agreed that they learned enough about the school community. After 10 months of a service experience, if AmeriCorps Members do not feel like they know about the community then there is likely a learning experience design challenge.

This finding offers evidence of the need for AmeriCorps programs to rely less heavily on informal learning experiences for AmeriCorps Members. Bang, Faber, Gurneau, Marin, and Soto (2016) argue for the need to place community at the center of any intervention. Absent community involvement, along with historical context, there is a risk of implementing programmatic solutions that contradict the ethos of the community served (Bang et al., 2016).

Overreliance on informal learning had the consequence of appearing *laissez faire* in the eyes of program participants. Instead AmeriCorps programs should institute cadences of learning that balance the formal engagement of the community – including community asset mapping and engagements with leaders in the community – with a gradual release of responsibility where AmeriCorps Members learn how to educate themselves about the communities they serve.

Guided Reflection

AmeriCorps Members interviewed for this study provided feedback about their ongoing learning experiences which illuminated an unmet need for experience processing. Garmston and Wellman (2016) describe adult learning as a metacognitive process that requires processing experiences for the generation of new thoughts and perspectives. In the case of City Year Site Two, members were engaged in a series of five Racial Equity Summits. During Racial Equity Summits members opt into heterogeneous racial identity groups and give the opportunity to reflect on the way their racial identity plays out in their service. The program was comprised of speakers from the service communities who were asked to highlight the positives taking place in the community.

Many City Year Site Two AmeriCorps Members listed the Racial Equity Summits as a positive component of their formal ongoing learning experiences. However, the format of five engagements over a 10 month service experience does not allow for a cadence of reflection that matches the adult learner's needs. The Corporation for National and Community Service caps the amount of time that AmeriCorps Members can spend in formal learning experiences at 20% of their service term. This fact creates a challenge that AmeriCorps program cannot simply solve by offering more "training".

This finding offers evidence of the need for AmeriCorps programs to focus on communication and reflection skill-development with their AmeriCorps Members so they are capable of processing their service experiences in informal spaces. This would create less reliance on formal learning experiences and allow AmeriCorps Members a voice in designing what their learning experiences look like (Landa, 2011).

Limitations

Although every study has limitations, they do not take away from this study's findings about the ongoing learning experiences of AmeriCorps Members. Even though my study offered insight into the views that 85 AmeriCorps Members hold about their ongoing learning experiences, this study would have been strengthened by a greater diversity of survey respondents. Similarly, even though my study is rich in description and allowed AmeriCorps Members to share their stories, this study would have been strengthened by more voices.

Sample

If I had interviewed more AmeriCorps Members and heard more stories, I might have found more variability in the perspectives about ongoing learning experiences and the communities that AmeriCorps Members serve. In thinking differently about ongoing learning experiences, I could have made greater efforts to secure interviews with participants that identified with major demographic backgrounds that were not represented in my sample. This would have expanded my data set to determine if the ongoing learning experiences about the community were perceived differently by various groups of AmeriCorps Members. For example, there was no Latinx voice in the interview sample.

The ability to generalize often cited as a limitation of qualitative methods. Although my findings represent an analysis of quantitative and quantitative methods, are supported by literature, and are found repeatedly in the data, my study is limited to my sample. However, I find my study to be a strong report of AmeriCorps Member voices and experiences that have yet to influence the extant literature on AmeriCorps programs. This study captured their voices and found similarities across service sites, years in service, and demographics. In addition, my study was about one AmeriCorps program which is another factor that affects generalizability.

However, the findings in this report on the largest education portfolio AmeriCorps program in the nation offers a starting place for future research.

Method

In reconsidering the method of my study, a multi-site participatory action research project would have provided an opportunity to triangulate data over time. In selecting staff members at sites to support the participatory action research there would have been greater researcher bandwidth to conduct interviews and distribute small formative surveys over time to monitor a change in perception versus the snapshot in time that is represented by this study. Research participants could have read, Building Communities for the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets by McKnight and Kretzman to understand research-based strategies for asset based community development.

This also would have created the opportunity to include the perspective of Program Managers; staff members who were frequently referenced during interviews with AmeriCorps Members and Training Directors. This would have given the study a greater accounting of shifts in perception that happen over time while allowing researchers access to important populations in the sample that were not engaged in my study.

An alternative method for consideration is a strictly quantitative study of AmeriCorps Member perceptions of ongoing learning experiences. The survey created in this study provides a started point that did not previously exist in the research. A series of quantitative surveys conducted at four points in the AmeriCorps Members year would offer insight into how perceptions changed over time. With 3,000 AmeriCorps Members in City Year alone this robust sample size would allow for greater credibility and generalizability of the data.

Recommendations for Practice

Structured Spaces for Identity Reflection

The AmeriCorps Members interviewed in this study identified the need for more structured spaces for reflection about the community vis-à-vis their service. Consistent with Green (2015), Lindsey, Robins, and Terrell’s (2009) recommendations for identifying and reflecting on your own culture first, AmeriCorps programs should intentionally incorporate learning spaces that start with identity reflection and move into structured ongoing process for cultural development.

Table 9, below, represents a sample scope and sequence of ongoing learning experiences for a 10 month training program. In recognition of the findings from this study, the sample scope and sequence incorporates guided reflection and structured engagements with the community throughout the service year.

Table 9
Sample Scope and Sequence of Ongoing Learning Experiences about Community

Month(s)	Focus	Themes	Session Title(s)	Asset Based Community Development Framework Connection
August	Who Are We?	Identity Reflection	Understanding our Intersectionality Learning about Community Leaders	Individual Resident Capacities
September & October	Service Focus (e.g. Environmental Stewardship)	Exploring the Community	Community Asset Mapping Serving to Supplement, Not Supplant	Physical Assets & Institutions
November & December	Asset based Interdependence	Relationship Driven Development	A History of Local Development Community Organizing,	Connections Local Economy

		Economic Development, and Neighborhood Planning		
January February & March	Who Are We?	Identity Reflection	Reflecting on Your Identity Evolution	Connections
April & May	Closing Out	Gradual Release of Relationships	Public Service Now and Beyond	Local Associations & Connections

AmeriCorps Resources for Asset Based Community Engagement

In 2017 California Volunteers, the AmeriCorps State Commission in California, produced the AmeriCorps Advantage Career Resource Guide. The tool was designed to support members on their career discovery journey as they move through their year of service. The tool offers exercises, assessment and exploration. In addition to the guide, California Volunteers published a facilitator’s handbook to help programs leverage the resources. Given the findings from this study AmeriCorps state commissions, as well as the Corporation for National and Community Service, should consider creating similar resources for Asset Based Community Engagement.

During the training director interviews I asked what type of engagement they had with state or national service commissions regarding resources for developing ongoing learning experiences for AmeriCorps Members. I was told, “I haven't had any interaction whatsoever with that body of people.”

In the same way the AmeriCorps Advantage handbook created a collaborative touchpoint between AmeriCorps programs and the state commission, the Asset Based Community Engagement handbook could help with the understanding best practices across programs as it

relates to the ongoing learning experiences about community for AmeriCorps Members. This research study and the subsequent recommendations can serve as a supplemental tool for the design of the Asset Based Community Engagement handbook.

Implications for Future Research

Engaging a Variety of AmeriCorps Programs

One area for further research is engagement of a variety of AmeriCorps programs. The sample in this study is limited to an education portfolio program in two urban communities. Therefore, the conceptual frameworks that support this research are rooted in research on education and urban communities. Given the diversity of AmeriCorps programs in the areas of economic opportunity, veterans and military families, disaster services, healthy futures, and environmental stewardship more research is merited.

The Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) framework (McKnight, 2017) is rooted in principles of community organizing. I suspect the six elements of ABCD would evolve for the context of environmental stewardship. In those contexts, AmeriCorps Members are sometimes serving in the wilderness for weeks with no engagement with other humans. There are exciting opportunities to research a better understanding of how those AmeriCorps Members view community and work to develop an asset based approach to their service.

Experience of AmeriCorps Members from Diverse Lived Experiences

My study did not have a sample size that could quantify the experience of AmeriCorps Members from diverse lived experiences. For example, it would be important to understand how non-gender conforming AmeriCorps Members experience community and familial capital in public education spaces that have inconsistently provided inclusive, welcoming environments for all. This reflection was inspired by a conversation I had with one of my interview participants.

Towards the end of our semi-structured interview they started sharing about the ways race tensions played out their school campus. They said, “one time, they're [fellow AmeriCorps Members] in the break room, and teachers were eating lunch and talking about how they think that Asian parents just care more about school, so their students do better and stuff like that than Latino students.” This AmeriCorps Member went on to speak about how difficult it was to see the community as asset based when the adults on campus held mindsets that marginalized the very students and families the institution was meant to serve.

Experiences like these illuminate the importance of conducting research that gets to a layer of honest reflection about the impact of interactions between adults on campus. There is a need to better understand how a diversity of lived experiences are being overtly or subversively disenfranchised, thus undermining any progress on asset based community development.

Conclusion

During the process of interviewing AmeriCorps Members serving in urban K-12 schools, my experiences as an AmeriCorps Member, a teacher in urban public schools, and administrator of an AmeriCorps program were constant reminders of the need for proactively supporting AmeriCorps Members to understand the strengths that exist in the communities they serve. As a recent college graduate I moved across to complete two years of service in an AmeriCorps education program. My motivations were altruistic and misguided. I come from a large family of 75 first cousins and seven of us have completed college. My lived experience in “the ten percent” made me a zealot champion of education as a great equalizer in society. With that mindset I came to California ready to change lives.

What I learned along the way is that my best efforts to create opportunities for students and families in marginalized communities were hampered by my proclivity for viewing the

communities as in need of my service. It took time for me to step back and see the assets that , despite the narrative of popular culture, existed in the community of South Central Los Angeles. Fifteen years later these learnings subconsciously fueled the purpose for my research.

If AmeriCorps Members engage in service with mindsets that pathologize communities then AmeriCorps will inadvertently perpetuate cycles of systemic oppression. Urban communities that have been victimized by decades of racialized policies are also home to courageous civic leaders, vibrant cultures, and groundbreaking institutions and associations. To work in service of a community starts with first disassociating yourself from monolithic narratives that foster either or thinking. Instead, service requires mindsets fueled by curiosity and self-awareness.

This research afforded me a wonderful opportunity to hear the stories of AmeriCorps Members in two Western states. My findings indicate that an abundance of good will and positive intention is no substitute for systematic engagement community leaders to learn about the history, traditions, and strengths of a community. As one of my interview participants, Alex said, “it was the structured time for thinking about his privilege” that stimulated his evolution as a person.

Moving forward there is a great opportunity to leverage best practices from the field of adult learning and the world of teacher preparation to support AmeriCorps Members with their asset based engagements of the communities they serve. It is my hope that this research serves as a starting point for continued exploration of the topic for the betterment of future AmeriCorps Members, AmeriCorps program staff members, and most importantly the wonderfully rich communities that AmeriCorps Members have the privilege to serve.

APPENDIX A

AmeriCorps Members Survey

As a researcher, I am trying to find out more about the way AmeriCorps makes training decisions. This research might influence national thinking about how future AmeriCorps Members are trained. At the end of the survey I will ask if you would like to volunteer for a one-on-one in-person interview. Interview participants will receive a \$20 Amazon gift card. Regardless of your willingness to participate in an interview, I will provide my email address. Please send me an email if you want to follow-up on anything I did not ask.

1. City Year Site: _____
2. How would you describe your gender identity?
 - a. Agender
 - b. Female
 - c. Genderqueer
 - d. Male
 - e. Transgender
 - f. Other

If you selected other, please explain: _____

3. With which racial and ethnic group(s) do you identify? (select all that apply)
 - a. American Indian or Alaskan Native
 - b. African American or Black
 - c. Asian
 - d. Hispanic, Latinx, or Spanish origin
 - e. Middle Eastern or North African
 - f. Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
 - g. White
 - h. Another race or ethnicity not listed above
 - i. Prefer not to answer

Please print your specific ethnicities in the space listed below. Examples of ethnicities include: German, Korean, Midwestern (American), Mexican American, Navajo Nation, Samoan, Puerto Rican, Southerner (American), Chinese, etc. You may report more than one group.

Ethnicity(ies): _____

4. What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? (If you're currently enrolled in school, please indicate the highest degree you have *received*.)
 - a. High school degree or equivalent (e.g. GED)
 - i. If yes, were you a first-generation high school degree or equivalent graduate? (yes/no)
 - b. Some college, no degree
 - c. Associate degree (e.g. AA, AS)
 - i. If yes, were you a first-generation associate's degree graduate? (yes/no)
 - d. Bachelor's degree (e.g. BA, BS)
 - i. If yes, were you a first-generation bachelor's degree graduate? (yes/no)
 - e. Master's degree (e.g. MA, MS, MEd)

- i. If yes, were you a first-generation master's degree graduate? (yes/no)
5. Which socioeconomic status best describes how you personally identified in your K-12 experience?
 - a. Low income
 - b. Middle income
 - c. High income
 - i. Is the socioeconomic status you referenced above the same as the community where you currently serve? (yes/no)
6. Which neighborhood characterization best describes where you lived during your K-12 experience? (select all that apply)
 - a. Urban
 - b. Suburban
 - c. Rural
 - d. Outside of the United States
 - i. Is the neighborhood(s) you referenced above the same or similar to the community where you currently serve? (yes/no)
7. Which school characterization best describes the school(s) you attended during your K-12 experience? (select all that apply)
 - a. Charter
 - b. Home school
 - c. Private (secular)
 - d. Private (religious)
 - e. Public
 - f. Single sex
 - g. Co-educational
 - i. What was the predominant racial group?
 1. American Indian or Alaskan Native
 2. African American or Black
 3. Asian
 4. Hispanic, Latinx, or Spanish origin
 5. Middle Eastern or North African
 6. Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
 7. White
 8. Prefer not to answer
 - a. Is the school(s) you referenced above the same or similar to the school where you currently serve? (yes/no)
8. What is current role you hold at City Year?
 - a. First Year AmeriCorps Member
 - b. Second Year AmeriCorps Member
 - c. Team Leader
 - d. Project Leader
 - e. Other
9. If you are a **Second Year AmeriCorps Member or Team Leader** please complete the following.
 - a. Where did you complete your first City Year? (drop-down list; 29 sites)

For the following questions please think about the ongoing learning experiences you have had at City Year. Please rate your level of agreement with the statements using a 1 to 5 scale where: 1 = Disagree; 2 = Somewhat Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Somewhat Agree; and 5 = Agree.

Ongoing learning experiences include: formal training; experiences at your school site; engagement with your Program Manager; conversations you have had while in service; and interactions with the community you serve.

The following experiences had the most significant impact on your current perception of the community you serve...(RQ2)

10. Formal training provided by City Year
11. Experiences at your school site
12. Engagement with your Program Manager
13. Conversations you have had while in service
14. Interactions with the community you serve

As part of my ongoing learning experiences... (RQ2)

15. I learned enough about the school community.
16. I felt well prepared to engage the school community.
17. I learned about individual leaders in the school community.
18. I learned about associations in the school community. (e.g. self-organized groups that support issues which they are passionate about).
19. I learned about institutions in the school community.
20. I engaged with physical space in the school community.
21. I learned about the local economy in the school community.
22. I learned about the culture, stories, and history of the school community.

NOTE: items 15 through 22 were influenced by the Asset Based Community Development Institute's research on community engagement.

APPENDIX B

Interview Protocol for AmeriCorps Members

The goal of this interview is to gather data on the assumptions and beliefs AmeriCorps Members who work in urban education systems have about: a) their learning experiences in the program and b) the communities they serve. Questions revolve around the content and impact of ongoing learning experiences.

Introduction

Good morning/afternoon/evening. Thank you for your willingness to participate in a study that will provide your site, as well as other AmeriCorps education portfolio programs, with important information about your learning experiences. As you know, I am a UCLA doctoral candidate and I have been collecting data that will provide your site with important information that will enable AmeriCorps Members to be better supported. You signed a consent form to participate in this interview before the study commenced. If you would like to review the consent form, I have it available.

This interview will last approximately 60 minutes. Everything you discuss with me during this interview is strictly confidential so please feel free to speak openly. In order for me to accurately capture our conversation, I would like to digitally record it so I can later transcribe the interview verbatim. The recording will not be shared with anyone else. If there are points during the interview where you would like the recorder off, please let me know and I will press the off button on the machine. Do you have any questions before we get started? If not, let's begin.

Timeline

I would like to start with a warm up activity to learn more about your lived experiences related to community engagement. In this exercise I will show you a timeline that represents a Kindergarten through 16 educational pathway. I will ask you a series of questions related to community engagement and ask you to indicate where along your personal educational timeline, if at all, you experienced these things.

Questions:

- A. When were you first given the opportunity to identify and reflect on your own culture, identity, and history to understand your values and biases? (Critical Professional Development)
- B. When did you first engage in political action that gave you exposure to the role you can play in generating new possibilities for a community? (Critical Pedagogy)
- C. When did you first learn about the culture, stories, or history of a community other than your own? Did that look like reading, research, visiting, or living in that community? (The Six Community Assets by ABCD Institute)
 - a. When did you first have a meaningful engagement with a community other than your own? (if not represented in their response to "C").
 - b. When did you first live in a community other than your own? (if not represented in their response to "C")
- D. In general, what did these experiences teach you? (The Six Community Assets by ABCD Institute)

- E. Thank you. I appreciate you for sharing your story. Is there anything else you would like to say about your lived experiences related to community engagement?

Community Mapping

Now, I would like to pivot to discuss the school community you currently serve as an AmeriCorps Member. I have printed out a map of the school community. I would like you to reference this map as I ask you a series of reflection questions about the community. There are no right or wrong answers.

NOTE: interview participants will be provided with printouts from Google Maps. The school's location will service as the epicenter and display between 1 and 1.5 miles of radius around the school location.

Questions:

- A. Is this the community you serve?
- B. Using the green highlighter, please mark the **places of strength** in the community you serve.
- C. Using the yellow highlighter, please mark the **places you know most about** or are most familiar with.
- D. Using the orange highlighter, please mark the **places of greatest challenge** in the community you serve.

Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol adapted from the Building Mutually-Beneficial Relationships Between Schools and Communities: The Role of a Connector and Tara Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth Model.

Finally, I would like to ask you a series of questions related to the community you serve. I am most interested in the depth of your perspective. Once again, there are no right or wrong answers.

Take a moment to jot down two or three things that were most unexpected related to your assumptions heading into the community you serve. Now, jot down two or three things that were most confirmatory for your assumptions heading into the community you serve.

1. Overall, how did your assumptions and beliefs about the community you serve change over the course of your service experience? (RQ2)
2. How would you describe the community you serve to a new City Year team member? (RQ1)
3. To what extent did the formal training at City Year influence your perception about the community you serve? (RQ1, RQ3)
4. To what extent did the experiences at your school influence your perception about the community you serve? (RQ1)
5. To what extent did your City Year Program Manager influence your perception about the community you serve? (RQ1)

6. To what extent did interactions with the community influence your perception about the community you serve? (RQ1)

For the following questions, think of the students you engage at your school site.

7. How would you describe their dreams for the future compared to their present circumstances? (Aspirational Capital, RQ1)
 - a. To what extent did your City Year training cover this topic? (RQ3)
8. Do any of these students speak a language other than English at home? If yes, what impact, if any, does this have on their K-12 education experiences? (Linguistic Capital, RQ1)
 - a. To what extent did your City Year training cover this topic? (RQ3)
9. What have you learned about the community history and cultural norms of these students? (Familial Capital, RQ1)
 - a. To what extent did your City Year training cover this topic? (RQ3)
10. Who do students rely on for support in navigating social institutions (e.g. schools, libraries, parks, law enforcement, post secondary, health and human services, non-profits, private businesses)? (Social Capital, RQ1)
 - a. To what extent did your City Year training cover this topic? (RQ3)
11. How well do students independently, navigate social institutions (e.g. schools, libraries, parks, law enforcement, post secondary, health and human services, non-profits, private businesses)? (Navigational Capital, RQ1)
 - a. To what extent did your City Year training cover this topic? (RQ3)
12. Are there any students who have displayed oppositional or resistant behavior? If yes, what does this behavior say about students? (Resistance Capital, RQ1)
 - a. To what extent did your City Year training cover this topic? (RQ3)
13. Community assets can be defined as the capacities of its residents and workers, not what is absent or what is problematic, or what the community needs. What are some of the assets you see in the community you serve? (RQ1)

Possible follow-up questions:

- A. Since serving in the community can you name and talk about 3 things you like the most about the community?
 - B. What are some of the resources in the community that benefit families and youth?
 - C. When you think of important community leaders who immediately comes to mind?
14. Community deficits can be defined as what is absent, problematic, or needed in a community. What are some of the deficits you see in the community you serve? (RQ1)

Possible follow-up questions:

 - A. In your opinion what are the biggest challenges the community currently faces?

APPENDIX C

Interview Protocol for Training Directors

The goal of this interview is to gather data that will give me a better understanding of your site and how AmeriCorps Members learn about the communities they serve. Questions revolve around AmeriCorps Member learning experiences. Learning experiences include: formal training; experiences AmeriCorps Members have at their school site; engagement with their Program Manager; conversations they have while in service; and interactions with the community they serve.

Introduction

Good morning/afternoon/evening. Thank you for your willingness to participate in a study that will provide your site as well as other AmeriCorps education portfolio programs with important information about your experience. As you know, I am a UCLA doctoral candidate and I have been collecting data that will provide your site with important information that will enable better support of AmeriCorps members. I want to emphasize that your work in designing and facilitating professional development is not the focus of my study, rather it is focused on capturing the AmeriCorps Member's reflection on their ongoing learning experiences. You signed a consent form to participate in this interview before the study commenced. If you would like to review the consent form, I have it available.

This interview will last approximately 45 minutes. Everything you discuss with me during this interview is strictly confidential so please feel free to speak openly. In order for me to accurately capture our conversation, I would like to digitally record it so I can later transcribe the interview verbatim. The recording will not be shared with anyone else. If there are points during the interview where you would like the recorder off, please let me know and I will press the off button on the machine. Do you have any questions before we get started? If not, let's begin.

First Name: _____

Last Name: _____

1. Current Role _____
2. How many months of experience do you have in your role?
3. Prior to your role what was your experience with AmeriCorps Member learning?
4. Are you familiar with the decision-making process behind your site's training program design for 1,700 hour AmeriCorps Members? (RQ2)
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. If no, why not? _____
 - d. If yes, please tell me about the considerations that go into designing the training. (Potential follow-up: What was your overall process for designing training?)
5. Did you grow up in the communities upir site serves?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
6. How did you learn about the communities your site serves?
7. What did you learn about these communities?

8. How did that learning influence the design of the training AmeriCorps members receive?
9. Describe the extent to which community strengths and challenges are embedded into the learning experiences provided to members at your site. (Potential follow-up: What is the frequency and duration of training? What were the learning objectives of training as they related to community?)
10. Describe the extent to which perceptions of self are embedded into the learning experiences provided to members at your site. (Potential follow-up: What is the frequency and duration of training? What were the learning objectives of the training?)
11. Describe the extent to which perceptions/reflections of self vis-a-vis the community are embedded into the learning experiences provided to members at your site. (Potential follow-up: What is the frequency and duration of training? What were the learning objectives of the training?)
12. How do you assess whether the goals of the training have been met or not?
13. Describe the expectations of AmeriCorps Members as it relates to learning about the communities they serve.
14. What are the key documents at your institution that outline the training AmeriCorps Members receive?

APPENDIX D

AmeriCorps Member Survey Email

Good Morning [REDACTED]

I hope you all enjoyed your long weekend and got what you needed as we head into our final weeks of service.

City Year [REDACTED] is partnering with a researcher from the University of California, Los Angeles' Graduate School of Education and Information Sciences to better understand AmeriCorps Member learning experiences and the ways [REDACTED] makes training decisions. This research might influence national thinking about how future AmeriCorps Members are trained.

Participation in this survey is voluntary and there are no repercussions for choosing not to participate. If you agree to participate, we will ask you to complete this short 5 minute survey (can be done via phone). [CLICK HERE](#) (hyperlink) to access the survey.

Survey respondents will be given the opportunity to participate in optional follow-up one-on-one interviews, which will take place before graduation. If you have any questions about this research please contact the researcher. Their information is provided below.

Jonathan J. López
UCLA Graduate School of Education and Information Sciences

[REDACTED]

APPENDIX E

AmeriCorps Member Interview Recruitment Email

(sent from principal investigator to AmeriCorps Members who opt-in to interviews)

Good morning, [AMERICORPS MEMBER NAME],

My name is Jonathan J. López and I am a graduate student at UCLA's Graduate School of Education and Information Sciences. Thank you for completing the survey about learning experiences sent out to AmeriCorps Members at City Year [PROGRAM SITE NAME]. In that survey you indicated a willingness to participate in a follow-up one-on-one interview to share deeper perspective on your experience as an AmeriCorps Member with City Year. Thank you! Your perspective will contribute valuable information that might influence national thinking about how future AmeriCorps Members are trained.

The purpose of this e-mail is to schedule our in-person interview. I will be at City Year [PROGRAM SITE NAME] on [DATE]. I would like to meet with you at [TIME] at [LOCATION]. Please reply to this e-mail to confirm your availability. As a reminder, all interviews are confidential and participants will receive a \$20 gift card.

If you have any questions about this research please contact me using the information provided below.

Thank you,
Jonathan

Jonathan J. López
UCLA Graduate School of Education and Information Sciences



REFERENCES

- Alkin, M. C., & Vo, A. T. (2017). *Evaluation essentials: From A to Z*. Guilford Publications.
- AmeriCorps_Demographic_508.pdf. (n.d.).
- Anyon, J. 17 Feb 2009 ,Critical Pedagogy Is Not Enough from: The Routledge International Handbook of Critical Education Routledge. Accessed on: 24 Feb 2018
- Anyon, Y., Jenson, J. M., Altschul, I., Farrar, J., McQueen, J., Greer, E., ... Simmons, J. (2014). The persistent effect of race and the promise of alternatives to suspension in school discipline outcomes. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *44*, 379–386. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chilyouth.2014.06.025>
- Avramidis, E. (2005, August). Developing inclusive schools: changing teacher's attitudes and practices through critical professional development. In *Inclusive and Supportive Education Congress, International Special Education Conference, Inclusion: Celebrating Diversity*.
- Baker, B. D., Farrie, D., & Sciarra, D. G. (2016). Mind the Gap: 20 Years of Progress and Retrenchment in School Funding and Achievement Gaps: 20 Years of Progress in School Funding. *ETS Research Report Series*, *2016*(1), 1–37. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ets2.12098>
- Balfanz, R., & Byrnes, V. (2006). Closing the Mathematics Achievement Gap in High-Poverty Middle Schools: Enablers and Constraints. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR)*, *11*(2), 143–159. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327671espr1102_2
- Banks, J. A. (1988). *Multiethnic education: Theory and practice*.
- Banks, J. A. (1997). *Educating citizens in a multicultural society* (Vol. 2, p. 30). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Banks, J. A. (2004). Handbook of research on multicultural education.
- Banks, J. A., & Banks, C. A. M. (Eds.). (2009). *Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Bang, M., Faber, L., Gunneau, J., Marin, A., & Soto, C. (2016). Community-Based Design Research: Learning Across Generations and Strategic Transformations of Institutional Relations Toward Axiological Innovations. *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, *23*(1), 28–41. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10749039.2015.1087572>
- Bloom, E. (2015). When neighborhoods gentrify, why aren't their public schools improving. *The Atlantic*.

- Bryk, A. S., Lee, V. E., & Holland, P. B. (1993). *Catholic schools and the common good*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Burchinal, M. R., Roberts, J. E., Nabors, L. A., & Bryant, D. M. (1996). Quality of center child care and infant cognitive and language development. *Child development, 67*(2), 606-620.
- Carpenter, S. (2017). "Modeling" youth work: logic models, neoliberalism, and community praxis. *International Studies in Sociology of Education, 26*(2), 105–120.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09620214.2016.1191963>
- Cassidy, D. J., Hicks, S. A., Hall, A. H., Farran, D. C., & Gray, J. (1998). The North Carolina Child Care Corps: The role of national service in child care. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 13*(4), 589–602.
- Catsambis, S., & Beveridge, A. A. (2001). Does neighborhood matter? Family, neighborhood, and school influences on eighth grade mathematics achievement. *Sociological Focus, 34*, 435-457.
- Christle, C. A., Jolivet, K., & Nelson, C. M. (2005). Breaking the school to prison pipeline: Identifying school risk and protective factors for youth delinquency. *Exceptionality, 13*(2), 69–88.
- Coleman, J. S., & Hoffer, T. (1987). *Public and private high schools: The impact of communities*. New York: Basic Books
- Cooper, R., & Chizhik, E. W. (2015). Talking About Race in Schools Post-Brown: A Public Relations Challenge. *Journal of School Public Relations, 36*(4), 404–420.
- Corporation for National and Community Service. (n.d.). Be the Greater Good. Retrieved from https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/general_format.html
- Creswell, J.W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* 4th ed. Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Hammerness, K., Grossman, P., Rust, F., & Shulman, L. (2005). The design of teacher education programs. *Preparing teachers for a changing world: What teachers should learn and be able to do*, 390-441.
- DePaoli, J. L., Fox, J. H., Ingram, E. S., Maushard, M., Bridgeland, J. M., & Balfanz, R. (2015). Building a Grad Nation: Progress and Challenge in Ending the High School Dropout Epidemic. Annual Update 2015. *Civic Enterprises*.
- Epstein, J. L. & Sheldon, S. B. (2002). Present and accounted for: Improving student attendance through family and community involvement. *Journal of Educational Research, 95*, 308-318.

- Ewing, E. L. (2018). *Ghosts in the Schoolyard: Racism and School Closings on Chicago's South Side*. University of Chicago Press.
- Fiscal Year 2018 Budget. (n.d.). Retrieved September 2, 2018, from <https://www.nationalservice.gov/about/budget/fiscal-year-2018>
- Focus Areas. (n.d.). Retrieved September 2, 2018, from <https://www.nationalservice.gov/focus-areas>
- Friedman, E., et al. (2016). *New Methods for Assessing AmeriCorps Alumni Outcomes: Final Survey Technical Report*. (Prepared for the Corporation for National and Community Service, Office of Research and Evaluation). Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates Inc.
- Frumkin, P., Jastrzab, J., Vaaler, M., Greeney, A., Grimm, R. T. J., Cramer, K., & Dietz, N. (2009). Inside National Service: AmeriCorps' Impact on Participants. *Journal of Policy Analysis & Management*, 28(3), 394–416. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pam.20438>
- Frumkin, P., & Jastrzab, J. (2010). *Serving country and community: Who benefits from national service?*. Harvard University Press.
- Garmston, R. J., & Wellman, B. M. (2016). *The adaptive school: A sourcebook for developing collaborative groups*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- González, N., Moll, L. C., & Amanti, C. (Eds.). (2006). *Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in households, communities, and classrooms*. Routledge.
- Goodenow, C. (1993). The psychological sense of school membership among adolescents: Scale development and educational correlates. *Psychology in the Schools*, 30(1), 79-90.
- Green, T. L. (2015). Leading for urban school reform and community development. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 51(5), 679–711. <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0013161X15577694>
- Greene, J. P., & Forster, G. (2003). Public High School Graduation and College Readiness Rates in the United States. Education Working Paper No. 3. *Center for Civic Innovation*.
- Gregory, A., Skiba, R. J., & Noguera, P. A. (2010). The achievement gap and the discipline gap: Two sides of the same coin?. *Educational Researcher*, 39(1), 59-68.
- Hager, M. A. (2004). Volunteer management practices and retention of volunteers.
- Hallinan, M. T., Kubitschek, W. N., & Liu, G. (2009). Student interracial interactions and perceptions of school as a community. *Social Psychology of Education*, 12(1), 5–19. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-008-9074-y>

- Helburn, S. W. (1995). Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes in Child Care Centers. Technical Report, Public Report, and Executive Summary.
- Howard, T. C. (2001). Telling their side of the story: African-American students' perceptions of culturally relevant teaching. *The Urban Review*, 33(2), 131–149.
- Howard, T. C. (2010). *Why Race and Culture Matter in Schools: Closing the Achievement Gap in America's Classrooms*. Teachers College Press.
- Keels, M., Burdick-Will, J., & Keene, S. (2013). The effects of gentrification on neighborhood public schools. *City & Community*, 12(3), 238-259.
- King, J. E., Akua, C., & Russell, L. (2013). Liberating urban education for human freedom. In *Handbook of urban education* (pp. 62-87). Routledge.
- Kirkland, D. E. (2008). "The Rose That Grew from Concrete": Postmodern Blackness and New English Education. *English Journal*, 69-75.
- Kirkland, D. E. (2013). *A search past silence: The literacy of young Black men*. Teachers College Press.
- Knight, M. G., Norton, N. E., Bentley, C. C., & Dixon, I. R. (2004). The power of Black and Latina/o counterstories: Urban families and college-going processes. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 35(1), 99–120.
- Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. (1995). *Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education*(Vol. 97).
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2004). New directions in multicultural education. *Handbook of Research on Multicultural Education*, 2, 50–65.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2006a). From the achievement gap to the education debt: Understanding achievement in US schools. *Educational Researcher*, 35(7), 3–12.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2006b). It's not the culture of poverty, it's the poverty of culture: The problem with teacher education. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 37(2), 104–109.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2009). *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Landa, C. (2011). Cultural proficiency in education: A review of the literature focused on teachers, school leaders, and schools.
- Lindsey, R. B., Robins, K. N., & Terrell, R. D. (2009). *Cultural Proficiency: A Manual for School Leaders*. Corwin Press.

- Lindsey, R. B., Roberts, L. M., & Campbell Jones, F. (2013). *The Culturally Proficient School*. Corwin Press.
- Losen, D. J., Hodson, C. L., Keith, I. I., Michael, A., Morrison, K., & Belway, S. (2015). Are we closing the school discipline gap? *K-12 Racial Disparities in School Discipline*. Retrieved from <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/2t36g571.pdf>
- Loutzenheiser, L.W., Moore, S. D. M. 17 Feb 2009 ,Safe Schools, Sexualities, and Critical Education from: *The Routledge International Handbook of Critical Education* Routledge.
- McAllister, G., & Irvine, J. J. (2000). Cross cultural competency and multicultural teacher education. *Review of Educational Research*, 70(1), 3–24.
- McKnight, J., & Kretzmann, J. (1993). Building communities from the inside out. *A path toward finding and mobilizing a community's assets*.
- McKnight, J., & Block, P. (2011). *The abundant community: Awakening the power of families and neighborhoods*.
- McIntosh, K., Girvan, E. J., Horner, R., & Smolkowski, K. (2014). Education not incarceration: A conceptual model for reducing racial and ethnic disproportionality in school discipline. Retrieved from https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2598212
- McKnight, J. (2017). Asset-based community development: the essentials. *Chicago: Asset-Based Community Development Institute*.
- Merriam, S. B. (2016). *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*. Hoboken: Wiley.
- Musick, M. A. ., Wilson, J., & Bynum, W. B. . (2000). Race and Formal Volunteering: The Differential Effects of Class and Religion. *Social Forces*, 78(4), 1539–1570.
- NationalService.gov > Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act of 2009. (2011, March 25). Retrieved September 2, 2018, from <https://web.archive.org/web/20110325040051/http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/serveamerica/index.asp>
- Nesbit, R., & Brudney, J. L. . (2010). At Your Service? Volunteering and National Service in 2020. *Public Administration Review*, 70, S107–S113. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2010.02252.x>
- Noguera, P. A. (2003). The trouble with Black boys: The role and influence of environmental and cultural factors on the academic performance of African American males. *Urban education*, 38(4), 431-459.
- Noguera, P. A. (2003). *City schools and the American dream: Reclaiming the promise of public*

- education* (Vol. 17). Teachers College Press.
- Noguera, P. A., & Wing, J. Y. (2006). Unfinished business: Closing the racial achievement gap in our schools. *Education Review//Reseñas Educativas*.
- Noguera, P. A., & Wells, L. (2011). The politics of school reform: A broader and bolder approach for Newark. *Berkeley Review of Education*, 2(1).
- Osei-Kofi, N. (2005). Pathologizing the poor: A framework for understanding Ruby Payne's work. *Equity and Excellence in Education*, 38(4), 367.
- Palmer, R. T., Davis, R. J., Moore III, J. L., & Hilton, A. A. (2010). A Nation at Risk: Increasing College Participation and Persistence Among African American Males to Stimulate US Global Competitiveness. *Journal of African American Males in Education*, 1(2).
- Roderick, M., Nagaoka J., & Coca, V.. (2009). College Readiness for All: The Challenge for Urban High Schools. *The Future of Children*, 19(1), 185–210.
<https://doi.org/10.1353/foc.0.0024>
- Rogers, J., & Freelon, R. (2012). Unequal experiences and outcomes for Black and Latino males in California's public education system. *Research Brief*, 5, 1–10.
- Schmitz, P. (2011). *Everyone leads: Building leadership from the community up*. John Wiley & Sons.
- School Turnaround AmeriCorps National Evaluation: Final Evaluation Report. (n.d.).
- Sheldon, S. B. (2004). Testing the effects of school, family, and community partnership programs on student outcomes. Paper presented at the 2004 Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association, San Francisco, CA.
- Shouse, R. C. (1996). Academic press and sense of community: Conflict, congruence, and implications for student achievement. *Social psychology of education*, 1(1), 47-68.
- Simon, C. A., & Wang, C. (2002). The Impact of Americorps Service on Volunteer Participants: Results from a 2-Year Study in Four Western States. *Administration & Society*, 34(5), 522–540. <https://doi.org/10.1177/009539902237274>
- Slaughter-Defoe, D. T., & Carlson, K. G. (1996). Young African American and Latino Children in High-Poverty Urban Schools: How They Perceive School Climate. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 65(1), 60. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2967368>
- Tatum, B. D. (2007). *Can we talk about race?: And other conversations in an era of school resegregation*. Beacon Press.

- Teitelbaum, K. 17 Feb 2009 ,Restoring Collective Memory from: The Routledge International Handbook of Critical Education Routledge. Accessed on: 24 Feb 2018
- Trumbull, E., & Pacheco, M. (2005). Leading with Diversity: Cultural Competencies for Teacher Preparation and Professional Development. *Education Alliance at Brown University*.
- Venezia, A., & Kirst, M. W. (2005). Inequitable Opportunities: How Current Education Systems and Policies Undermine the Chances for Student Persistence and Success in College. *Educational Policy*, 19(2), 283–307. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904804274054>
- Vollmer, J. (2010). Schools cannot do it alone. *Fairfield, IA: Enlightenment Press. Vygotsky, LS (1978). Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes.*
- Wallace Jr, J. M., Goodkind, S., Wallace, C. M., & Bachman, J. G. (2008). Racial, ethnic, and gender differences in school discipline among US high school students: 1991-2005. *The Negro Educational Review*, 59(1–2), 47.
- Warren, C. A. (2014). Towards a pedagogy for the application of empathy in culturally diverse classrooms. *The Urban Review*, 46(3), 395-419.
- Warren, C. A., & Hotchkins, B. K. (2015). Teacher education and the enduring significance of “false empathy”. *The Urban Review*, 47(2), 266-292.
- Warren, C. A. (2017). *Urban Preparation: Young Black Men Moving from Chicago's South Side to Success in Higher Education*. Harvard Education Press. 8 Story Street First Floor, Cambridge, MA 02138.
- Whitebook, M. (1989). Who cares? Child care teachers and the quality of care in America. *Young Children*, 45(1), 41-45.
- Wong, K. K. (2008). Political Context of Education Finance in the United States. *Educational Studies in Japan: International Yearbook*, 3, 41–52.
- Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 69–91. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1361332052000341006>
- Yosso, T. J. (2013). *Critical race counterstories along the Chicana/Chicano educational pipeline*. Routledge.