ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: Metaphors We Serve By: Critical and Constructive Play with the Discourses on Scholarship, Self, Service, National Service, and Service-Learning

Joby Blaine Taylor, Doctor of Philosophy, 2005

Dissertation directed by: Mary S. Rivkin, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Language, Literacy and Culture Program
and Chair, Department of Education

This dissertation presents an argument for the redescription of scholarship, generally, and national service and service-learning, specifically. Its seven chapters constitute a set of interrelated research essays beginning with reflexive constructions of theoretical and personal starting places before moving into critical and constructive investigations of discourses informing service-learning. Conceptual metaphor analysis is the unifying methodological concept throughout. Through close readings of key texts I identify and examine the implicit and explicit metaphors that frame historical and institutional conceptualizations leading up to and currently informing service-learning.

In chapter one I propose a humanistic scholarship informed by the descriptive metaphor scholarship is play. In chapter two I discuss the theoretical issues of scholarly reflexivity and trace my own shifting conceptual metaphors of service. In chapter three I historicize the term service by tracing its etymological story and describing the semantic
shifts that underpin its present polysemy. In chapter four I investigate the manufacture of service meanings by critically examining the conceptual metaphors framing the National Service Movement from 1900 to the present. In chapter five I investigate the contestation of service meanings by critically examining the conceptual metaphors used in the attempt to establish and authorize service-learning. In chapter six I explore the imagination of service meanings by identifying the growing number of explicit and purposeful metaphors being introduced into the academic service-learning literature.

The movement in these chapters from *historization* to *manufacture*, to *contestation*, to *imagination* is from scholarly deconstruction to reconstruction, from critical understandings of social discourses to creative participation in social formation. A call for the generation of new purposeful metaphors is the logical conclusion to my argument. As a service-learning practitioner, and thus a member of my own audience, I end with a first response to this call. My reflections on the metaphor *service is play* constitute a final chapter, an afterword that constitutes less a conclusion than another beginning.