

FROM SERVICE-LEARNING TO POST GRADUATION SERVICE:

INSIGHTS FROM UNIVERSITY GRADUATES

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by
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University of Missouri-Kansas City, 2014

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this heuristic case study was to develop a rich, thick description of the ways that university graduates experience and perceive service-learning activities during college and after college. For this study, service-learning was defined as a teaching tool used to connect students to the community and engage them in purposeful learning (Jacoby, 1996). The unit of analysis was the student perspectives of their experiences with service-learning while in college and following graduation. Limited qualitative research is available which focuses on the lived experiences of service-learning from a university graduate's perspective. This research gap means that educators and educational institutions have an incomplete picture of the service-learning experience from the university graduates' perspective. Using the study participants' voices, this study sought to fill this gap in the literature by describing the ways that university graduates experience and perceive service-

learning activities during college and after college. This study sought to answer the following research questions: What types of service-learning activities do students engage in while in college?; What are the perceived benefits of participation in service-learning?; and What do students do to continue service-learning after graduation? Information from an e-mail survey, face-to-face interviews and documents were utilized for data collection and analysis. Ten face-to-face interviews were conducted with the case study participants and all were associated with the service-learning program at Washburn University, in the Midwestern region of the United States. The primary method of data analysis was the six basic phases in the heuristic process of phenomenological analysis: (a) initial engagement, (b) immersion, (c) incubation, (d) illumination, (e) explication and (f) creative synthesis (Moustakas, 1990). Results of the study found that university graduates' did benefit from their service learning experiences while in college in several ways: community awareness leads to community involvement; service-learning leads to personal growth and development; and service-learning participation leads to lasting behavior changes. This study could provide educators with an understanding of the meaning of the service-learning experience and how service-learning activities can be sustained following graduation.

Keywords: service-learning, higher education, heuristic case study and student perspectives of service-learning.

APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies have examined a dissertation titled “From Service-Learning to Post Graduation Service: Insights from University Graduates,” presented by Stacy Tucker-Loner, candidate for the Doctor of Education degree, and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Poverty, hunger and racism are social ills that continue to plague our nation. For example, Feeding America (2013) stated, in 2012, 46.5 million people live in poverty. To combat the issue of poverty, President Bill Clinton created Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) in 1996; this program provides temporary financial assistance to indigent American families, a program that is still in effect today. TANF has provided financial assistance to millions of Americans living in poverty (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2014). Feeding America (2013) stated, 49 million Americans are living in food insecure households (33.1 million adults and 15.9 million children), federal and state programs exist to address this social ill. The United States main defense against hunger in America is the Food Stamp Program; currently there are 17 million Food Stamp recipients (Poverty and Race Research Council, 2014). Beginning with the Civil Rights Act of 1957, the United States had a history of addressing and combating hate crimes. Currently, federal and state laws permit the prosecution of anyone who commits a crime based on a person's protected characteristics of race, religion, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability (United States Department of Justice, 2014). The Southern Poverty Law Center (2014), which monitors hate groups and other extremists throughout the United States, counted 939 active hate groups in the United States in 2013.

Another method used to fight our social ills is the use of service-learning programs in higher education institutions. Service-learning programs benefit human needs and community needs in combination with "intentional learning goals and with conscious

reflection and critical analysis” (Kendall, 1990, p. 20). When the community embraces service-learning programs both, the community and the undergraduate student benefits directly and indirectly from the experience. The community gains assistance, broader delivery of existing services and fresh approaches to solving community problems (Jacoby, 1994). Undergraduate students gain skills that can influence them now and later in their lives. When institutions foster opportunities for service-learning, colleges and universities benefit through improved and positive community relationships and more importantly, through opportunities to orient scholarly research that meets community needs. Colleges and universities are burdened with managing shrinking fiscal budgets and expanding course offerings to meet changing student needs. The most efficient and cost effective method to address pressing community needs is through service-learning programs offered at the collegiate level.

Statement of the Problem

Early exposure to service-learning programs in higher education can lead to civic-minded college graduates who take active roles in their communities and who have a greater passion for lifelong learning. However, colleges and universities face the challenge of responding to two audiences: students who want excellent education and the public who want higher education to address pressing societal problems (Ramaley, 1995). To respond to both audiences at the same time, higher education must offer educational programs that provide excellence while preparing students for the social responsibility needed to respond to the complex issues of society (Ramaley, 1995). One of the easiest ways to prepare students to respond to the community’s needs and to engage in purposeful learning is to introduce

service-learning into the curriculum or co-curricular options in the campus structure. According to Jacoby (1996), “Service-learning is a form of experiential education where students engage in activities to address human and community needs together with structured opportunities designed to promote student learning and development” (p. 5). Some colleges and universities have developed service-learning programs based on Jacoby’s definition in order to enhance student development.

Scholarly research has provided information on the implementation of service-learning programs and its benefit to community partners. However, searching various databases for scholarly research, less than fifty studies were found and most did not feature a qualitative analysis from the undergraduate’s perspective on service-learning. In general, these articles highlighted ways to implement service-learning programs and the necessary components such as university support, student commitment and a strong community partnership. Additionally, these articles featured quantitative information, rather than qualitative information, on student and institutional benefits. Searches specifically conducted in the JSTOR and ERIC databases for peer-reviewed publications on university graduate’s perspective of service-learning benefits since 2009, only revealed nine articles. In addition, searches conducted in the JSTOR and ERIC databases for peer-reviewed publications specifically looking at the lived experiences of service-learning participants since 2009, only revealed three articles. The limited amount of peer-reviewed qualitative research and available research which focuses on the influence of the lived experience of service-learning from a university graduate’s perspective means that a research gap exists in the literature. This research gap means that educators and educational institutions have an incomplete

picture of the service-learning experience from the university graduates' perspective. In order for service-learning to reach its full potential, educators and institutions need to have a complete understanding of what service-learning entails. When educators do not fully understand the value that the service-learning experience brings, they may not appreciate the potential for a transformative experience on the students' future endeavors.

This study addressed the research gaps that exist in the literature and added value and understanding to the field of service-learning. Understanding the specifics of the service-learning experience (motivation, duration, intensity of involvement, etc.) may lead to a better understanding of how these factors could affect student engagement in the future. This qualitative research study also uncovered the complexities of the service-learning experience and described the perceived role that service-learning plays on continued individual service involvement beyond graduation.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this heuristic case study was to describe the ways that university graduates experience and perceive service-learning activities during college and after college. For this study, service-learning was defined as a teaching tool used to connect students to the community and engage them in purposeful learning (Jacoby, 1996). The unit of analysis was student perspectives of their experiences with service-learning while in college and following graduation.

Phenomenology was selected as a research tradition primarily because phenomenology is the study of lived experiences. Phenomenology researchers conduct studies with several individuals to explore a particular concept or phenomenon (Creswell,

2007; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990). Researchers seek to discover the meaning of the experience from the participants (Creswell, 2007). Edmund Husserl (as cited in Moustakas, 1994), one of the early founders of phenomenology, believed that any phenomenon can be a beginning for investigation. The phenomenon researched in this case study is the influence of service-learning from the university graduate's perspective.

Due to my experience with service-learning, heuristic inquiry was selected as a method of inquiry because this tradition requires the researcher to have personal experience and intense interest in the phenomenon studied. Patton (2002) explained that heuristic inquiry incorporates personal experiences and the insights of the researcher, answering the question, "What is my experience with this phenomenon and the essential experience of others who also experience this phenomenon intensely?" (p. 132). As suggested by Patton (2002), the researcher deliberately inserts her own voice throughout this study, recalling her experience with service-learning within the text using first person to maintain the subjective nature of the study. Heuristic comes from the Greek word meaning, to discover or to find. Moustakas (1994) first applied the term heuristic to research in his search for a word to describe a process in which the researcher is, "present as a person throughout the process and, through internal search and self-dialogue, comes to understand the phenomenon with increasing depth" (p. 24). As the researcher, I engaged in dialogue with university graduates to find the underlying meanings and influence of the service-learning experience while in college and their current level of community involvement. Using heuristic inquiry, I was able to understand the meaning of the phenomenon being studied through the participants in this case study, the major technique used for this inquiry.

Case study, an approach that facilitates the exploration of a phenomenon within its context, incorporates a variety of data sources to ensure that the issue is not explored through one lens, but rather a variety of lenses which allows for multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood. Researchers collect data about participants using participant and direct observations, interviews, documents, surveys, examinations of records, and collections of writing samples (Stake, 1995). As a form of qualitative research, case study is used to look at individuals, a small group of participants, or a group as a whole; it is appropriate in this study, because I wanted to answer “how” and “why” type questions while taking into consideration how a phenomenon is influenced by the context within which it is situated. This methodology provided an opportunity to gain insight on a case and enabled me to gather data from a variety of sources, uniting the data to illuminate the case.

Research Questions

Research questions are used in qualitative studies to guide a particular study. According to Maxwell (2005), “The research questions are an important part of a research study, the research questions guide and link all parts of the study to each other” (p. 65). By listening and gathering the students’ perspectives on the influence of their service-learning experiences, this research study explored the following questions:

1. What types of service-learning activities do students engage in while in college?
2. What are the perceived benefits of participation in service-learning?
3. What do students do to continue service-learning after graduation?

Theoretical Framework

A theoretical or conceptual framework can be thought of as the map or travel plan of a qualitative study. When planning a trip to an unfamiliar city or country, people gather as much knowledge as possible about the best route to travel. A theoretical framework uses the same concept; it is meant to guide the research. Maxwell (2005) stated, “The theoretical or conceptual framework includes the ideas and beliefs the researcher holds about the phenomena being studied” (p. 33). Several types of teaching-learning theories contribute to the conceptual meaning and theoretical understanding of service-learning. The theoretical framework for this study was experiential learning theory and transformative learning theory.

Experiential Learning Theory

Experiential learning theory defines learning as, “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (Kolb, 1984, p. 41). Experiential learning is also defined as the process of making meaning from direct experience (Itin, 1999). Experiential learning theory has steadily gained acceptance and popularity in education and serves as an invaluable resource for teaching and learning (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). David A. Kolb popularized the idea of experiential learning drawing heavily on the work of John Dewey and Jean Piaget (Jacoby, 1996). As Smith (2001) described, experiential learning is, “the sort of learning undertaken by students who are given a chance to acquire and apply knowledge, skills and feelings in an immediate and relevant setting” (p. 1). This type of experiential learning naturally aligns with service-learning programs in higher education. Experiential learning involves a direct experiential encounter with the learning event rather than simply a thought process associated with the learning (Borzak, 1981). In order for the

experience to be rewarding, the experiential encounter with a learning event requires active engagement of the student as opposed to passive engagement commonly associated with teacher directed instruction which generally results in minimal student interaction. Having students engage in service-learning activities within the college setting supports the active engagement process that is described as a part of experiential learning theory. According to Kendall (1986), service-learning has its theoretical roots in the experiential learning theory, which is an enduring conceptualization of learning in and through practice.

Transformational Learning Theory

Based in adult education, transformative learning theory emerged from the work of Jack Mezirow (1991, 1995, & 1997) which suggested ways adults make meaning of life through experiences. According to Clark (1993), transformational learning is a form of learning that brings significant change in the learner, particularly learning experiences which produce a significant impact, or paradigm shift, that affects the learner's future experiences. Transformational learning as an outcome refers to a deep and lasting change, equivalent to what some people term a development shift or a change in worldview. Carolyn Clark (1993) further describes this shift as, "Transformative learning shapes people; they are different afterwards, in ways both they and others can recognize" (p. 47). A more comprehensive definition of the outcome of transformative learning is described by Yorks and Kasl (2006); who defined transformational learning as, "a holistic change in how a person both affectively experiences and conceptually frames his or her experience of the world when pursuing learning that is personally developmental, socially controversial, or requires personal or social healing" (p. 46). Transformational learning involves a process of critical reflection,

dialogue and action on new meaning perspectives which can be linked to the service-learning outcomes.

My Personal Service-Learning Experience

Due to my experience with service-learning, heuristic inquiry was incorporated in this study. Heuristic inquiry is used when the researcher has personal experience and intense interest in the phenomenon studied. As the researcher, I have sixteen years of experience as a participant, educator and mentor of service-learning programs. As an undergraduate student, I actively participated in service-learning programs. My participation in service-learning programs ultimately led me to teach service-learning in my classroom. My teaching of service-learning programs also allowed me the opportunity to train other educators on the ways to implement this methodology in their classrooms. From my own experiences, I have what I believe are the motivating and initiating factors for students to become involved in service-learning programs/projects.

My first experience with service-learning began while I was enrolled in a Human Service course as an undergraduate student; I was placed in the community as a service-learning student to work in a group home for youth. The group home was filled to capacity with boys and girls, under the age of ten, who were removed from their parents due to abuse or neglect. My responsibility was to cook dinner for the entire house one night a week; I loved every minute of it and was good at it. Cooking was the goal, but the rewarding part was the mentoring relationships I nurtured with the youth. One night a week turned into two nights a week, and I started recruiting other classmates to join me at the group home. Because of my efforts and excitement for this assignment, my instructor recommended to the

department chair that I serve as an intern to revitalize the service-learning program on campus. The program was designed to connect undergraduate students to the community through community service. I accepted the internship offer, but was unsure of the task at hand; I thought to myself, are there more college students outside the Human Services Department like me who wanted to do community service for fun? I soon discovered the answer was, yes! In one semester, I had one hundred college students placed in a variety of community agencies and was making a difference on community needs. After two years as an intern with the program, I finally connected with my college campus and found my passion in life. Since graduating, the program has grown by leaps and bounds and is now part of the formal structure of the university. Service-learning activities have the power to engage students and can instill a passion and purpose in their lives. I personally have experienced the positive effects of service-learning and how service-learning instills a passion for community service. Service-learning programs establish life-long connections and commitments with the community in which the students live and work. Because of my service-learning experience as an undergraduate student, I am more civic-minded, more connected to my coursework and my community. Due to the heuristic nature of this inquiry, experiential learning theory and transformative learning theory are appropriate theoretical underpinnings.

Definition of Terms

The field of service-learning utilizes specific vocabulary and terms which is defined below to enhance the reader's understanding of this research study.

Service-learning: “A teaching and learning approach that integrates community service with academic study to enrich learning, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities” (National Commission on Service Learning, 2002, p. 3). A second definition of service-learning is described as a form of, “experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development” (Jacoby, 1996, p. 5). For example: In a traditional college setting, students attend classes, complete homework and spend time with friends. For variety, some students may join a student organization or club to pass the time. Each of these traditional college activities is intended to help students learn course content and stay engaged on campus. On most college campuses, grades become the primary motivator for students to learn, it is grades that spur the students to participate in classroom activities and discussions. A different model would be a college campus with classrooms where students enter ready, motivated, and eager to master the day’s content not because of a fear of poor grades, but because of a desire to help others through participation in a service-learning project. On this college campus, the students learn the course content in order to better complete their service-learning objectives, which are also the course learning objectives. Upon completing each service-learning activity, students engage in a guided reflection session(s) in order to fully process the experience, learn how others perceive the same experiences and link the service-learning activity back to educational goals.

Service-learning reflection: “Reflection is a component of service-learning used by service participants to document and gauge their personal growth, determine their

achievement of course objectives and provide feedback about their service-learning experience” (Watkins & Braum, 2005 p. 19).

Community service: An activity to help accomplish a goal in the community, but relies little on educational goals and incorporates little or no preparation or reflection (Wade, 1997). For example: Sorting food items for a community organization such as Harvesters is a valuable community service but once students are done sorting food items there is no guided reflection after the work is complete or link to educational goals.

Co-curricular service-learning: “Non-course-based programs that include a reflective component and learning goals” (Eyler & Giles, 1999, p. 5). For example: College campus organizations participate in service-learning activities but they are not tied to a particular college course. In order to perform service-learning activities, campus organizations will set educational goals or have a specific study topic they are focused on for the year. The service-learning activities selected would match the educational goals or study topic and would include structured guided reflection after the completion of each service-learning activity.

Phenomenon: “The central concept being experienced by the subjects in a study” (Creswell, 2007, p. 236).

Phenomenology: “The study of lived experiences and the way we understand those experiences to develop a worldview” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 112).

Heuristic inquiry: “Attempts to discover the nature and meaning of phenomenon through internal pathways of self-using the processes of self-reflection, exploration, and elucidation of the nature of phenomenon that is being studied (Moustakas, (1994, p. 17).

Qualitative research: “An inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem” (Creswell, 2007, p. 15).

Case study: “A form of qualitative research that is used to look at individuals, a small group of participants, or a group as a whole. Researchers collect data about participants using participant and direct observations, interviews, documents, surveys, examinations of records, and collections of writing samples” (Stake, 1995).

Experiential education: “A learning activity that engages the learner directly in the phenomenon being studied” (Kendall, 1986).

Transformative learning: “Is the process of effecting change in a frame of reference” (Mezirow, 1995).

Limitations of the Study

The main limitations of this study are researcher bias and accuracy of the participants’ remembrance of their service-learning experience. Researcher bias was a concern because of my 16 year history as a participant and instructor of service-learning programs and my facilitating service-learning projects. My experience with service-learning includes both classroom experience and the training of other educators to implement this teaching methodology into their classrooms or co-curricular activities. From personal experiences, I have insight as to what I believe are the motivating and initiating factors for educators and students involved in service-learning projects. Participants’ ability to recall their service-learning experiences was an additional limitation to this study. As the researcher, I assumed that the research participants will remember their experiences and will

respond truthfully to the interview questions. In order to reduce researcher bias, I strived to not interject comments during the interview process and was cognizant of tone and inflection as the participants are speaking. I incorporated several steps to reduce researcher bias which will be discussed in chapter three of this dissertation.

Delimitations of Study

The first delimitation is that this study was confined to data from students who attended Washburn University. The purpose of this heuristic case study was to describe the ways that university graduates experience and perceive service-learning activities during college and after college. The second delimitation was that the focus of this study was based on service-learning and not community service. In this study, service-learning differs from community service in that, community service is an activity to help accomplish a goal in the community, but relies little on educational goals and incorporates little or no preparation or reflection. In the data collection and analysis process, I filtered out references to community service activities when possible. The third delimitation is this study focuses on university graduates from Washburn University, not others who may be influenced by, or involved with, service-learning.

Assumptions

There are several assumptions in this study; the main assumption, college students who are involved in service-learning activities while in college the more likely they are to be engaged in their community following graduation. Service-learning in higher education can trace its roots back to the founding of Harvard College in 1636. Since then, the goals of

American higher education have included the preparation of citizens for active involvement in community life (Smith, 1994). Service-learning was born from this tradition, by addressing complex social issues and an emphasis on working towards common community goals while in college, service-learning teaches individuals how to become an engine for productive change following graduation. Boyer (1987) stated, “service-learning produces college graduates that are inspired by a larger vision, using the knowledge they have acquired to form values and advance the common good” (p. 296). Service-learning also addresses citizenship education and preparation for participation in a democracy. Astin (1994) stated, “service-learning is the most effective means of accomplishing higher education’s mission, to produce educated citizens who understand and appreciate not only how democracy is supposed to work but also their own responsibility to become active and informed participants” (p. 24). Participation in a service-learning program affords students many opportunities to explore what it means to be a citizen, an active participant in their community, or at the very least, educating students who will become agents of social change (Lempert, 1995). Using the above examples as a whole, service-learning produces university graduates’ who are more likely to become actively engaged in their community following graduation because of service-learning’s commitment to solving problems for the common good.

The second assumption, study participants will be able to recall important details of their service-learning experience several years after graduation from college. In order to prepare for the participant interview process, the study participants’ were given a copy of the

interview questions in advance of the interview. This process allowed each interview participant, on their own, to recall important details of their service-learning experience.

The third assumption, study participants will answer the interview questions in a manner that are truthful and will generate data to address the research questions. Each interview participant contributed to this study on a voluntary basis, signed an Informed Consent Form and could withdraw from this study at any time with no ramifications. In order to receive truthful responses to the interview questions, the study participants will not be identified by name in this study to protect their confidentiality and anonymity.

As the researcher, I anticipated that the study participants will convey that service-learning while in college played a role in their current level of community participation. Using this study, it is my hope that I will be able to highlight the major effects service-learning had on undergraduate students and directly link undergraduate student experiences to community involvement beyond graduation. Discovering the essence of the service-learning experience from former college student's perspectives will promote educational endeavors that will directly benefit students, faculty and the community as a whole.

Significance of the Study

The purpose of this heuristic case study was to describe the ways that university graduates experience and perceive service-learning activities during college and after college. This study could provide educators with an understanding of the meaning of service-learning opportunities for college students and how service-learning activities can be sustained following graduation. The service-learning field can benefit from this study due to the in-depth analyses of service-learning's experiences. The findings of this study could give

insight on the influence of service-learning and its influence on its participants. It is expected that understanding the specifics of the service experience (motivation, duration, intensity of involvement, etc.) may lead to better understanding of how service-learning could affect students' engagement after graduation.

Chapter Summary

In this introductory chapter, I have set the foundation for this study. The problem is the lack of research from the student perspective which focuses on the influence of the service-learning experience on university graduates. The phenomenon investigated in this study is how university graduates were influenced by their service-learning experiences as an undergraduate. The anticipated findings of this study will contribute to the current body of qualitative research regarding the influence of service-learning on undergraduate students and their level of community involvement following graduation. Chapter 2 will include a review of literature including descriptions and research studies related to service-learning in higher education.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter presents a literature review using several bodies of literature and conceptual resources will give shape to this study. The literature review for qualitative research is especially necessary to position the study and ground it within the literature (Creswell, 2007). The following review of literature will include a brief historical look at: service-learning; the characteristics of service-learning; the value of service-learning programs; and previous research of service-learning programs in higher education.

Historical Information of Service-Learning

Service-learning in higher education can trace its roots back to the founding of Harvard College in 1636. People assumed a Harvard education would prepare students to serve as well as lead society. The first American college was founded over 300 years ago, on the belief that, “Higher education should view the development of student character and the transmission of the values supporting that character as an essential responsibility of faculty and administration” (Wingspread Group on Higher Education, 1993, p. 4). Linking service to learning started early and has continued to grow, especially throughout this century. John Dewey advocated that a school is a democratic institution and thus should be a place where service and participatory citizenship are the norm (Stanton, Giles, & Cruz, 1999).

In the 1960s, service-learning grew with the development of such organizations as the Peace Corps and Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA). More importantly, service-

learning grew from the civil rights movement of the 1960s. However, by the 1970s, the commitment to service-learning within colleges and universities began to fade, primarily because service-learning programs were not part of the central mission of the institution or community agencies. By the early to mid-1980s, the movement for service-learning was re-developed with the support of many national programs and projects such as Campus Compact: The Project for Public and Community Service. “Campus Compact, an organization of college and university presidents who have pledged to encourage and support academically based community service at their institutions, now has over five hundred members” (Jacoby, 1996, p. 14).

By the 1990s, service-learning had finally gained the support from higher education administration and became a significant part of the mission of higher education. Many colleges and universities across the country have developed service-learning programs based on Jacoby’s definition in order to enhance student development. Service-learning is just as important to community colleges as it is to four-year colleges and universities. “The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) helps promote higher education civic engagement to over a thousand associate degree-granting institutions nationwide” (Prentice & Robinson, 2007, p. 7). The AACC reported that “almost sixty percent of community colleges offer some form of service-learning courses” (Prentice & Robinson, 2007, p. 7). Service-learning programs accomplish an enormous amount of good for both the community and the colleges but nothing would get accomplished if it wasn’t for the students who participate in the service-learning program. Over time, the concept of service-learning

has experienced tremendous growth, more students are getting involved and more programs are being added to colleges and universities across the United States.

A search of the literature showed that in 1990, Jane Kendall, former executive director of the National Society for Experiential Education, wrote in *Combining Service With Learning: An Introduction* that she found over 147 service-learning terms, and there are probably even more today (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Robert Rhodes (1997) offered this definition: “Service-learning combines community service with a learning component and in the collegiate context, typically is supervised by a faculty member or a student affairs professional and often carries with it academic credit” (p. 5). Forman and Wilkenson (1997) supported Rhode’s definition with, “Service-learning is a pedagogy that fosters the development of skills and knowledge needed for participation in public life” (p. 278).

In sum, service-learning can be used as a pedagogical approach to field experience. There is a difference between typical instructional education and that which follows the philosophy of service-learning. As pedagogy, service-learning balances the service provided by students in community based organizations with the academic goals of the educational institution. The traditional role of higher educational institutions is learning and the fulfillment of academic requirements. With service-learning there is more of an emphasis on a reciprocal learning exchange that takes place beyond the walls and classrooms of the college campus. Service-learning revolves around activities that address community identified needs with integral involvement of the community partners.

As illustrated, service-learning is not a new concept. Thomas Likona (1991) believed that doing good things for others increased a person’s desire to serve: When people love the

good, they take pleasure in doing good. They have a morality of desire, not just a morality of duty. This capacity to find fulfillment in service is not limited to saints; it's part of the moral potential of ordinary people, even children. That potential is being developed through programs like peer tutoring and community service in schools all across the country (p. 60).

Characteristics of Service-Learning

Several types of teaching-learning theories and methods contribute to the conceptual meaning and theoretical understanding of service-learning. Community based learning shares many characteristics of service-learning but generally does not include a service component. According to Kendall (1986), service-learning has its theoretical roots in the experiential learning theory, which is an enduring conceptualization of learning in and through practice. Experiential education is defined as learning activities that engage the learning directly in the phenomenon being studied (Kendall, 1986).

Robert Sigmon (1998) believed in three principles of service-learning:

1. Those being served control the service(s) provided.
2. Those being served become better able to serve.
3. Those who serve are also learners and have significant control over what they expect to learn.

According to Giles and Eyler (1994), John Dewey provides the theoretical basis for service-learning. Although Dewey did not explicitly describe the concept of service-learning, his claim that experience is central to learning is foundational to service-learning. Dewey's contribution relates to both the learning and the service components of service-learning. Dewey's philosophy was that education provided the foundation for later theories

of experiential learning. The question, “How is it that experiences are educative?” is fundamental to Dewey’s philosophy as seen in *How We Think* (1933a) and *Experience and Education* (1938). Dewey (1933a) answers this question by outlining a list of four criteria necessary for activities to be taken as educative. They must (a) generate interest, (b) be worthwhile intrinsically, (c) present problems that create curiosity and demand for information, and (d) involve a span of time that is capable of encouraging development (pp. 217-218). Each of these elements are present in well-designed service-learning programs and projects.

Service-learning is a teaching and learning approach that combines community service with academic instruction. Service-learning is used to enhance student learning while teaching civic responsibility and addressing community needs (National Commission on Service Learning, 2002, p. 3). In addition to the learning component of service-learning, Dewey’s social philosophy can be used to focus on the service component. Dewey joins citizenship, community and democracy into a single element. This civic emphasis is used to create a philosophical framework of the service components in service-learning. According to Dewey (1963), Citizenship is, “all relationships of all sorts that are involved in membership in a community” (p. 93).

In 1916, Dewey wrote, education for democracy can lead to justice through a type of social transformation that,

signifies a society in which every person shall be occupied to something that makes the lives of others better, worth living and which accordingly makes the ties which bind persons together more perceptible—which breaks down barriers of distance between them. (p. 326)

Dewey (1916) extended the significance of this statement by adding, “Only through education can equality of opportunity be anything more than a phrase” (p. 138). Service-learning exemplifies Dewey’s philosophy, in that education can be a vehicle of social transformation through service to others and to the community.

In service-learning, reflection is a central characteristic to the learning objectives. Reflection provides the opportunity for each student to discover his or her role in civic and social responsibility. On-going reflection opportunities allow time for students to think critically about their service to the community (Education Commission of the States, 2002). Reflection is manifested in the classroom in various ways. Teachers can direct students to write in journals, create art projects, write letters to the editor of the newspaper, write poetry, give oral reports to the group, present to a school assembly, and/or prepare booklets on the experience. These are just a few of the variety of ways students can connect their service to learning through reflection (Search Institute, 2000). However, researchers use multiple terms to define reflection. In 2001, Rogers examined several major theoretical approaches to reflection including those of Dewey, Loughran, Mezirow; Seibert, and Daudelin, Longer, Boud, Keogh, and Schon. Rogers reports that these theoretical approaches contain the following commonalities. Reflection is a cognitive and affective process or activity that requires active engagement on the part of the individual and is triggered by an unusual experience. This process involves one’s responses, beliefs, and conclusions in light of the situation at hand. Integration of new understanding into one’s experience may result (Rogers, 2001).

The pedagogy of service-learning has been documented since the mid-1970s and more faculty members are integrating curricular-based service into higher education (O'Brien 1993; Smith 1996). It is established that the service, to be a learning experience, must be followed with written reflection. Hatcher and Bringle (1997) have set guidelines to clarify the nature of effective reflection activities as a regular assignment for students. They include the following: linking experience to learning objectives, guiding the experiences, occurring regularly, allowing feedback and assessment, and including the clarification of values (Hatcher & Bringle 1997). To establish the integrity of service-learning within higher education, reflection must foster academic learning (Enos & Troppe 1996). Learning objectives could be career exploration, civic responsibility, leadership development, or personal growth (Hatcher & Bringle 1997).

A philosophical basis for reflection also emerges for Dewey (1916), who believed that experience is as important as theory because it is only in experience that any theory is vital and verifiable. According to Dewey, learning from experience is to make the backward and forward connection between what we do to things and what we enjoy or suffer from those things as a consequence of what we do (p. 164). Simply put, reflection provides a bridge between experience and theory. In addition, Dewey (1933b) stated, "Reflection is active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supported form of knowledge in light of the grounds that support it" (p. 9). Specifically, service-learning provides active learning where the interplay between the abstract, theoretical and the personal, palatable

experience is deepened and strengthened. According to Dewey (1933b), this interplay is accomplished by turning a subject over in the mind and giving it serious considerations (p. 10).

Additional definitions of reflection include Eyler and Giles (1999), who note that reflection can be described as, “the hyphen in service-learning; it is the link that ties student experience in the community to academic learning and symbolizes the central role of reflection in the process of learning through community experience” (p. 171). Various definitions of service-learning have emerged since the 1960s. Because service-learning comes in a variety of forms, defining service-learning is a challenging task. It is important to initially distinguish between community service and service-learning. Of the two educational activities, community service is the lesser involved and does not purposefully connect to academic goals (Burns, 1998). Similar to community service, part of service-learning includes service to the community, but service-learning deepens this experience by connecting that service directly to the academic curriculum. Service-learning is distinguished from community service in that service-learning is an integral part of the curriculum, providing preparation, service, and reflection opportunities for students (Wade, 1997).

Numerous examples of learning activities use reflection (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999). Journals are commonly used as a reflection activity in service-learning. For example, the instructor or the facilitator may use an open format for journal entries where the students (a) identify a community need (b) discuss why it is important, and (c) describe what action steps are needed to positively impact the community. Other times the instructor or facilitator may

use a set of questions to guide student learning by facilitating connections between the phenomenon and the student's experience.

Reflection activities can also be helpful prior to sending students to the service-learning project. For example, in order to prepare students for the first day of their service-learning experience, some instructors have students complete a pre-reflection activity. Through journaling, students are asked to describe in detail how they image their first day at their service-learning site. After writing in their journal, the students are asked to share some of their remarks in a large group setting. This activity helps students release and move past some of the anxiety they may be feeling about their service-learning experience.

Community service is usually a one-time activity performed to help accomplish a goal in the community, but incorporates little or no preparation or reflection (Wade, 1997). The difference between community service and service-learning is that community service often does not include a time for reflection or a time to process the experience. Community service is commonly defined as the performing of a service by individuals for the benefit of others. These others can be individuals, groups, organizations, or communities as a whole. Community service is usually performed without a focus on learning (Burns, 1998). Students perform community service in school or community settings and that service may or may not be voluntary. Even though the community service hours may be required for a class, the community service does not necessarily have a purposeful connection to academic learning objectives. Community service may not include a purposeful reflection or critical analyses of the experience (Scales & Roehlkepartain, 2004). Service-learning is both an educational philosophy and a teaching pedagogy (Shumer, 1997). For example, when college students

collect gently used business clothing and donate them to the local clothing closet for distribution, they are performing an act of community service. In comparison, students participating in service-learning may also collect used business clothing, but their activity is directly connected to the curriculum. For example, students might integrate specific learning objectives such as employment skills, training opportunities and workforce development by not only collecting the clothing, but also by writing a resource guide on how to write a resume or include a list of short-term training programs in the community to contact. The clothing closet workers then distribute copies of these resource guides along with the business clothing to individuals in need. These same students then extend their learning by hosting a job fair at the clothing closet and conduct a workshop on the appropriate attire that is needed when attending a job interview. Throughout the service-learning process, students reflect on their experiences and write journal entries about what they have learned about workforce development and what they contributed personally to the project. During class reflection discussions, the students then share what they learned about the importance of leadership, helping others, and working together toward a common goal.

Billig and Klute (2002) noted service-learning researcher and author, defines the type of service-learning, by including the importance of academic connections, partnerships, and reflection in her comprehensive definition of service-learning: Service-learning is a teaching and learning approach that links academic learning to service that meets authentic community needs. Students who engage in high quality service-learning activities typically have some choice in the service they provide, work cooperatively with each other and with members of the community, receive at least some cognitive guidance from adults and/or

peers as they reflect on and make sense of their experiences, and acquire a new knowledge or skills that recognizably link to academic content areas. (p. 246).

The National Service-Learning Cooperative (Scales & Roehlkepartain, 2004) stresses the importance of involving students in challenging tasks that require them to apply their knowledge and skills during the experience. When students participate in service-learning as a part of academic study, they learn civic responsibility while strengthening their communities (Billig & Kraft, 1998). When analyzing the academic connection in the definition of service-learning, Eyler and Giles (1999) found that many programs do not strike a meaningful balance between service and learning. Eyler and Giles conducted two national research projects between 1993 and 1998, surveying almost 4,000 college students from across the United States. Eyler and Giles also found that either the service dwarfs the learning or the learning dominates the service activity (1999).

Another concept to remember when defining service-learning is the importance of community partnerships that meet real community needs (Billig & Kraft, 1998; Burns, 1998; Education Commission of the States, 2002; National Commission on Service-Learning, 2002; National Service-Learning Cooperative, 1998; Scales & Roehlkepartain, 2004). In the Eyler and Giles study (1999), 66% of students believed their service met a community need fairly often or very often. In addition, community voice was a significant predictor of students' personal development in the areas of tolerance, cultural appreciation, and believing the community members being served shared similar characteristics with the students who were performing the service. Researchers with the National Service-Learning Cooperative (1998) concur that the partnership component clearly distinguishes service-learning from

other educational methods and that “at its very core is the emphasis on efforts to meet genuine community needs, to make a difference in ways both students and the community see as important and worthwhile” (p. 4).

In addition, Burns (1998) identified four components in assessing service-learning programs: 1) assessing needs of the community, and identifying the learner outcome; 2) service-learning activities implemented with continuous assessment; 3) reflection should be structured into the process; and 4) opportunities to demonstrate learning, and recognition of achievements should be built into the experience. Burns (1998) cautioned that problems occur if there is “inadequate consideration of any one or more of the aforementioned characteristics of effective service-learning programs” (p. 41).

Value of Service-Learning

Researchers describe student outcomes as either cognitive (e.g., theoretical knowledge, critical thinking, problem-solving, or decision-making) or affective (e.g., attitude change regarding community issues, populations served, service, or personal values) (Gelmon, Holland, Driscoll, Spring, & Kerrigan, 2001), “Most of the service-learning research to date has collected psychological data about student outcomes” (Gelmon et al., 2001, p. 20). Several studies measured changes in student attitudes toward others (Reeb, Katsuyama, Sammon, & Yoder, 1998; Ramaley, 1997). Other studies specifically targeted attitude change toward service itself (Astin & Sax, 1998; Cruz & Giles, 2000). Eyler (2000) suggests that most of the research done over the past years provided information on the influence of service-learning on students’ personal and social development, yet there is little evidence of the cognitive influence this pedagogy had on student learning. Portland State

University is now trying to close this gap in the literature with a, “set of research concepts and measurement strategies” (Gelmon et al., 2001, p. 21).

Ramaley (1997) stated, expected outcomes of service-learning included good citizenship, leadership development, employability of graduates, enhancement of learning, as well as solutions to complex societal problems, effective approaches to economic and community development and a means to accomplish a campus mission of service to society. Isaacson, Dorries, and Brown (2001) stated, “Service-learning makes textbook and lecture material more real, more concrete; service projects combine your experiences with learning course content in a purposeful way” (p. 21). Isaacson et al. (2001) also added, “Service-learning offers the chance to enter new situations and stretch our capabilities” (p. 8). Eyler and Giles (1999), researchers and authors of *Where’s the Learning in Service-Learning*, noted, “Experience enhances understanding; understanding leads to more effective action. Both learning and service gain value and are transformed when combined in the specific types of activities we call service-learning” (p. 8). Cruz and Giles (2000) conducted surveys with service-learning college students and found, “studies reported satisfaction with student participants, a sense that service-learning provides useful service in communities and the perception that service-learning enhanced community-university relations” (p. 29).

Janet Eyler (2000) noted, “Service-learning, which, at its best, allows students to confront issues and problems in complex natural contexts, appears to be ideally suited to help students develop a deeper understanding of subject matter, a practical knowledge of how community decision-making processes work, and strategies for transferring knowledge and problem solving skills to new situations” (p. 12). Rosenberg (2000) summed up the value in

the following statements, “Service-learning combines community work with classroom instruction, emphasizing reflection as well as action. It empowers students by making them responsible in a real-world context while giving them the support, encouragement, information, and skills to be effective” (p. 8).

Additionally, other researchers report that students gain personal, interpersonal, social, and academic benefits from participation in service-learning (Eyler & Giles, 2002; Melchior & Bailis, 2002; Scales, Blyth, Berkas, & Kielsmeier, 2000). In the area of personal development, students report increases in self-confidence, self-esteem, leadership skills, personal decision-making skills, career benefits, and spiritual growth. Socially, students who participate in service-learning report a positive impact on their own social responsibility, civic attitudes, and volunteerism (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Students see themselves as valuable resources for their organizations and their communities (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Search Institute, 2000). When participating in service-learning, students are given opportunities to practice and nurture social skills by interacting with different types of people. Interpersonally, teachers and administrators note an improvement in students’ abilities to work with others. The students themselves report that it is rewarding to help others (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Students showed support and concern for the well-being of others and tended to maintain that concern over time more than students who did not participate in service-learning (Scales et al., 2000). Students who participated in service also developed a greater tolerance and appreciation for other cultures than students who did not participate (Scales et al., 2000). Moreover, service-learning provides the spark needed to create responsible civic-minded individuals/students.

In looking more closely at specific academic benefits to students, Wurr (2002) conducted a study on writing quality, in which judges scored written essays of 33 college students enrolled in an introductory first-year composition course. The treatment group participated in a service-learning program; the control group did not participate in a service-learning program. Judges assessed the essays both holistically and analytically, scoring for rhetorical appeal, reasoning, coherence, and mechanics. The service-learning students scored significantly higher (8%) in holistic scoring and significantly higher (13%) in analytic scoring, as compared to students enrolled in traditional writing classes. Students in a service-learning program also demonstrated through their writing their greater understanding and appreciation of the complexities of public issues and of the writing and research strategies necessary to communicate such complexities (Wurr, 2002).

In another study of academic benefits of service-learning, Strage (2004) examined the academic records of 477 college students enrolled in a child development course. Strage (2004) compared the grades earned by students who were required to perform 75 hours of service working with children and to reflect on those experiences with those students who had no required service-learning project(s) or reflection. Student performance differences favored the students who participated in service-learning, but did not reach conventional levels of statistical significance. The service-learning students strongly out-performed the non-service-learning students when answering essay questions. These results seem to concur with the Wurr (2002) study; service-learning experiences enhance students' expression and understanding of complex issues.

However, not all researchers agree with the positive aspects of service. Boyte (1991) takes issue with the use of service-learning to motivate students to be engaged in the political process. Instead of teaching politics, Boyte believes service-learning meets a young person's need for a connection to the community, but the politics is missing from the experience. Similarly, Alt (1997) suggests there is little connection between service-learning and academic skills mainly because most service-learning programs are not designed with specific academic skills in mind. Alt (1997) asserts, "Documentation of results to date is generally sparse and unreliable...especially for academic outcomes" (p. 13).

Similarly, Sheffield (2005) criticizes service-learning as becoming *over-defined* in that almost any student experience that connects students with the community is being labeled as service-learning. Sheffield believes that service-learning is becoming a more over-arching term. Sheffield further believes that "by being everything for everyone, service-learning is quickly becoming nothing" (p. 47). Sheffield believes that what has been written about service-learning is void of basic philosophical concepts. Sheffield argues that until authors, researchers, and practitioners explore the philosophical concepts of the major components of service-learning—service, reflection, and experiential learning—service-learning will not survive as a viable teaching method.

While not all studies and researchers agree about the positive aspects of service-learning, the majority of researchers do agree that the benefits of service-learning experiences provide students' expanded knowledge, better attitudes/behaviors related to college life and their community. Further, many studies and researchers do agree that students who participated in service-learning activities experienced a positive impact on

personal and social development, school-community relations, and academic achievement (Kielsmeier, Scales, Roehlkepartain, & Neal, 2004; Scales & Roehlkepartain, 2004). To summarize, representatives from the Search Institute (2000), an independent, nonprofit organization whose mission it is to work toward the advancement of the well-being of children and youth, state, “Service-learning becomes an important catalyst for shaping positive identity as young people discover their gifts and a place in the world through their acts of service and justice” (p. 20).

Research on Service-Learning Programs

Several studies have been conducted which explored the benefits of service-learning and its effectiveness in higher education. During the fall semester of 1990, the Southern University System became the first public institution in the state of Louisiana to require students to complete 60 hours of service-learning work as a graduation requirement. The university sought to include 16,000 students in service-learning programs to develop “greater sensitivity for the needs of humanity.” The Southern University System believed that volunteerism, in “the minority community was an indispensable activity in creating a society in which the quality of life is improved” (Carpenter & Jacobs, 1994, p. 97). By 1992, the main campus in Baton Rouge had established the Center for Service Learning. A study conducted in Baton Rouge found “students who entered the program with great reluctance, returned for more volunteer work well beyond the graduation requirements” (Carpenter & Jacobs, 1994, p. 97). This study also found that the “academic performance of students improved as a result of their community service assignments” (Carpenter & Jacobs, 1994, p. 97). Service-learning participation led students to believe that being active community

members, even in small ways, was important to their community. A longitudinal study by Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda and Yee (2002), explored the comparative effects of service-learning and community service on the cognitive and affective development of college undergraduates. Using both qualitative and quantitative measures, Astin et al.'s (2002) study used a survey design to determine if and how student learning is enhanced by service-learning experiences. The study conducted by Astin et al. (2002) included over 22,000 undergraduate students enrolled in colleges throughout the United States. Analysis of the findings revealed that service-learning and community service have a significant impact on students' academic outcomes, values, self-efficacy, leadership, career plans, and plans to participate in further service-related activities after college. In a study conducted by the American Association of Community College (AACC), their findings suggested:

when students experience this method of learning, many will choose service-learning opportunities in the future. While students may choose to continue participating in service-learning because the pedagogy helps them learn the academic material, for the students in AACC's study, the more service-learning experiences they had, the more they also learned about being civically active. (Prentice & Robinson, 2007 p. 7)

This study also identified the impact that service-learning has on academic content. The findings revealed "student comments revealed that service-learning increased retention of academic content because it provides students with experiences that had real-life consequences" (Prentice & Robinson, 2007 p. 8).

When students learn in a community-based setting, they have the opportunity for true, meaningful application of their knowledge and skills, and they are able to integrate all they have learned and apply it in a community-based situation (Burns, 1998; Scales & Roehlkepartain, 2004). Students are able to extend their learning beyond the classroom,

provide leadership, and participate in projects that meet genuine community needs (Scales & Roehlkepartain, 2004). Ikeda's study of students and faculty found that service-learning, "heightens student awareness both of the world around them and of their own personal values and beliefs by helping them to confront and challenge their preconceived ideas and opinions about people, society, and various world issues" (Sax, Astin, Korn, & Gilmartin, 1999, p. 81). In interviews and reflection papers by students after their service-learning experiences, Ikeda found that students were more likely to be motivated to learn the course material because they "needed it" for their interactions in the community (Sax et al., 1999, p. 83). In a study conducted by Eyler, Giles and Braxton (1997), they studied the question of the impact of service-learning on citizenship skills and personal/academic outcomes. Using data gathered from more than 1500 students at 20 colleges and universities, they found clear differences in attitudes, skills, values, and understanding of social issues of college students who participate in service-learning, in contrast to those who do not. In addition, Eyler et al. (1997) "found those who participated in service experiences felt more connected to community, seeing the systemic or political nature of the social problems and felt a need to give priority to greater social justice. Providing opportunities for students to link community service with their classroom experience adds value to their college experience and enhances qualities of understanding and commitment that lead to effective citizenship" (p. 14). In an Eyler and Giles 1999 study, 66% of college students believed their service met a community need fairly often or very often. Eyler and Giles (1999) believed, community voice was a significant predictor of students' personal development in the areas of tolerance, cultural appreciation, and believing the community members being served shared similar characteristics with the

students who were performing the service. But what benefits can faculty expect by integrating service-learning into their academic course?

Service-learning programs positively engage the college student body in ways that directly benefit the community as a whole. However, no service-learning program would be complete if the faculty that instructs the service-learning students were omitted from the equation. Among the attractions of service-learning for faculty or staff is the opportunity for, “engaging in a deeper intellectual discourse and for exploring the ethical implications of that discourse” (Jacoby, 1996, p. 293). Hammond found, 91% of the teachers who incorporated service-learning in their courses believed that the service met a community need. While less than one-half of the respondents said that they had been recognized for their efforts, over 83% indicated they were “significantly” or “moderately influenced” to offer service-learning. In other words, faculty stated that the students were their rewards (Miller, 1994, p. 24). Wade states, “Teachers’ descriptions of their service-learning activities with students reveal that service-learning is at once both rewarding and problematic” (Waterman, 1997, p. 83). In Wade’s interviews with teachers, they see students’ self-esteem, motivation to learn, and academic learning increase. In 1985, the Campus Compact National Center for Community Colleges was established. In 1994, with funding from the Campus Compact, the RAND Corporation assessed Campus Compact and its programs and provided recommendations designed to guide future service-learning program planning. The report identified, “what service-learning is and how it can benefit students, faculty, the institution, and the community” (Pickeral, 1996, p. 3). The RAND report and other national service-learning initiatives led Campus Compact to develop *The Faculty Role: From the Margin to the*

Mainstream project. This project used the experiences of 300 service-learning faculty members from over 50 colleges. The project was conducted on the premise that service-learning faculty have the ability to influence their peers to consider and employ this pedagogy. The project findings validate that peer-faculty encouragement and training is an effective strategy to advance service-learning on community college campuses. The following project findings contributed to the success of the project: (1) faculty respond positively to small group, on-campus interactions; (2) faculty are more receptive to encouragement and assistance from other faculty; (3) campus visits encourage the integration of service-learning activities into college courses; and (4) faculty who know that there are other service-learning colleagues on their campus are more apt to integrate service-learning into their own courses (Pickeral, 1996, p. 40). The project is also consistent with the educational reform movement advanced by Palmer (1996). Palmer suggested that educational movements follow four stages. In the first stage, an individual makes a personal commitment to his or her values. In the second stage, individuals begin to form, “affinity for mutual encouragement,” moving from the individual role to a group cohesion. In the third stage, the individuals within the group discover, “problems are not private but have been determined by public conditions and therefore require public remedies.” In the fourth stage, the individuals and the group develop ways of rewarding people for sustaining the movement itself (Palmer, 1996, p. 4). In education, the faculty must recognize that there are personal as well as academic reasons to integrate service-learning into their courses. Service-learning creates affinity among the faculty members offering the service in their course, providing encouragement and support for faculty who feel isolated or on the edge. A survey conducted

by Scales & Roehlkepartain, (2004) asked educators about their reasons for utilizing service-learning. This survey also asked them the areas that they believe service-learning is making a difference for their students and their school community. This survey found that the vast majority of educators see the benefits of service-learning in many different areas such as student success and school effectiveness (Scales & Roehlkepartain, 2004). Faculty found rewards both inside and outside their institution, energizing individuals, campuses, and communities.

Community partnerships are an essential component of effective service-learning programs (Billig & Kraft, 1998; Burns, 1998; National Commission on Service-Learning, 2002; National Service-Learning Cooperative, 1998; Scales & Roehlkepartain, 2004). Burns (1998) believed that effective service-learning programs are based on, “the support of community partnerships that are committed to program participation by and with diverse populations, which engage people in responsible and challenging actions for the common good” (p. 41). Service-learning programs that are built on common good build partnerships and establish relationships whereby all participants are giving and receiving according to their needs and resources. The relationships that are built on common good produce partnerships that emphasize human needs and collective responsibility (Billig & Kraft 1998). This give and take relationship allows all those involved, students, educators and community participants, to have an equal share and voice in the delivery of the service. Effective service-learning programs are built on and with the support of community partners who become part of the service-learning program. Researchers with the National Service-Learning Cooperative (1998), found that the partnership component clearly distinguishes

service-learning from other educational methods in that, “at its very core is the emphasis on efforts to meet genuine community needs, to make a difference in ways both students and the community see as important and worthwhile” (p. 4). Effective service-learning programs value diversity in those who participate, in the projects selected, and in the populations served. Students working with diverse populations also show a reduction in stereotypes and increases in tolerance, cultural appreciation, spiritual growth, and self-knowledge (Eyler & Giles, 1999). When individuals discuss and value diversity and when diverse individuals and groups participate and work together to complete a project, interaction and respect for all involved can result (National Service-Learning Cooperative, 1998). Eyler and Giles (1999), also emphasize the importance of establishing relationships with the community to locate productive service sites for students. According to Eyler and Giles (1999):

Placement quality was most consistently associated with impact on personal and interpersonal outcomes. It was a positive predictor of virtually all measures of tolerance and stereotyping—such personal development as knowing the self better, spiritual growth, and reward in helping others; and interpersonal outcomes such as leadership and communication skills, and the ability to work with others. (p. 170)

The quality of the service site placement is important in providing an environment where students can take initiative, assume responsibility, and work together with community members.

Chapter Summary

The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 described the pertinent concepts that were investigated in this study: history, characteristics of service-learning, value of service-learning programs and research of service-learning programs. Although there is an abundance of quantitative research on service-learning, there are fewer studies using

qualitative methodology. Based on this literature review, important gaps were identified relating to the absence of published research which addresses the phenomenon of lived service-learning experiences from the university graduate's perspective while in college and following graduation. Chapter 3 explains the methodology used in this study. In addition, Chapter 3 also details the rationale for qualitative research, the researcher role, design of the study, data collection, data analysis soundness of the study and ethical issues.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this heuristic case study is to describe the experiences of service-learning for ten participants from Washburn University. I sought to describe the meaning of the service-learning experience from the university graduate's perspective, specifically focusing on the benefits gained and motivations to initiate service-learning, thus making heuristic case study the logical research method to employ. The major technique used for this inquiry was case study through the lens of heuristic inquiry as a form of phenomenology. Each of the participants consisted of an embedded case within the larger case of the service-learning program at Washburn University. Case study research is a form of qualitative research that is used to look at individuals, a small group of participants, or a group as a whole (Stake, 1995). This case study is embedded because sub-units were analyzed within a larger case. Heuristic inquiry was also used; it allowed me to draw on my in-depth service-learning experiences. Heuristic inquiry attempts to discover the nature and meaning of phenomenon through internal pathways of self-using the processes of self-reflection, exploration, and elucidation of the nature of phenomenon that is being studied (Moustakas, 1994). Additionally, I used journaling to capture my experiences with service-learning throughout the study; the journal was used as form of data along with individual open-ended surveys and face-to-face interviews for each embedded case. Documents pertaining to the service-learning program and a larger sample of the open-ended survey, comprising data from twenty-eight service-learning alumni, helped to describe the content and context of the

larger case. In this chapter, I describe the rationale for qualitative research including the traditions of case study and heuristic inquiry; the role of researcher; design of the study including the setting; participant sampling; data collection; data analysis, soundness of the study and ethical issues.

Rationale for Qualitative Research

A qualitative research design was selected for this study because it consists of using words instead of numbers to make meaning of participants' experiences. Using qualitative methodology, I was able to capture the participants' meanings of service-learning by using their stories of the phenomenon. Qualitative research, however, has some underlying philosophical and methodological issues. For example, words are framed by the concepts of the writer, and this implies a transference of values or implied impressions. Miles and Huberman (1994) warn that there is a considerable complexity in qualitative data and the researcher must be alert and careful in analyzing it. However, qualitative data has strengths, because the focus is the reality of lived experiences, those experiences can be richly described. Qualitative data is more than snapshots in time; instead the data is collected over time as people live the experience (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Therefore, understanding the ways that university graduates experience and perceive service-learning during college and how service-learning influences activities after college leads to the use of qualitative methodologies.

Qualitative research in the form of a case study design with embedded units was selected as the specific method of research because most qualitative research reflects a phenomenological perspective, which serves to study the meaning of events and interactions

by, “ordinary people in particular situations” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 25). In this research, the case study design provides an in-depth description of the meaning of the service-learning experience from the university graduate’s perspective, specifically focusing on the benefits gained and motivations to initiate service-learning. A case study design was useful to understand the complexities surrounding the influence of service-learning, it also allowed for the identification of people, places and events that influence service-learning participants. Case study design was also an effective method when studying lived experiences, it accurately lends itself to understanding how individuals interpret and give meaning to those experiences.

Case Study

Case study refers to the collection and presentation of detailed information about a particular participant or small group, frequently including the accounts of the subjects themselves. A form of qualitative descriptive research, the case study looks intensely at an individual or small participant pool, drawing conclusions only about that participant or group. Case studies are not a new form of research; the fields of sociology and anthropology are credited with the primary shaping of the concept as we know it today (Creswell, 2007). Case studies typically examine the interplay of all variables in order to provide as complete an understanding of an event or situation as possible. This type of comprehensive understanding is arrived at through a process known as thick description, which involves an in-depth description of the entity being evaluated, the circumstances under which it is used, the characteristics of the people involved in it and the nature of the community in which it is located.

This study focused on the experiences of ten individuals who were participants of a service-learning program while attending Washburn University. I sought to describe their service-learning experiences while in college, how service-learning influences their activities after college and their current level of community involvement. In order to explore these issues, I conducted a holistic case study with embedded units. The ability to look at sub-units that are situated within a larger case is powerful when you consider that data can be analyzed within the sub-units separately (within case analysis), between the different sub-units (between case analysis) or across all of the sub-units (cross-case analysis). When the researcher engages in such rich analysis it only serves to better illuminate the case (Yin, 2003).

Heuristic Inquiry Approach

Due to my personal experience with service-learning, I used heuristic inquiry as a form of phenomenological research. Edmund Hüsserl (as cited in Moustakas, 1994), one of the early founders of phenomenology, believed that any phenomenon can be a beginning for investigation. Hüsserl focused on discovering the meaning and the essence of knowledge. By recording the experiences of others, in essence, borrowing them, researchers gain experience and knowledge (van Manen, 1990). I analyzed the phenomenon of service-learning, or more specifically, the voice of university graduates who have experienced service-learning.

Heuristic inquiry is used when the researcher has personal experience and intense interest in the phenomenon studied. The purpose of this heuristic case study was to describe the ways that university graduates experience and perceive service-learning activities during

college and after college. Heuristic methodology was developed by Clark Moustakas, who extensively wrote about it in his book, *Loneliness*, published in 1961. The word heuristics originated for the Greek work *heuriskein*, meaning “to discover or to find” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 9). Heuristic inquiry attempts to discover the nature and meaning of phenomenon through internal pathways of self-using the processes of self-reflection, exploration, and elucidation of the nature of phenomenon that is being studied (Moustakas, 1994, p. 17). Moustakas (1994) first applied the term heuristic to research in his search for a word to describe a process in which the researcher is, “present as a person throughout the process and through internal search and self-dialogue, comes to understand the phenomenon with increasing depth” (p. 24).

Heuristic inquiry is a unique research method that places human experiences above numbers and is deeply rooted in tacit knowledge that leads to a deeply subjective and creative connection between the researcher and phenomenon (Sela-Smith, 2002). Through a compassionate approach, the researcher moves towards an open discussion with study participants and facilitates an emotionally connected scientific inquiry (Anderson, 2000). Heuristic inquiry also incorporates a synthesis of many voices. Clough and Nutbrown (2002) define voice as a particular political position. I listened to the voices and words of the study participants to understand what lies behind what was being said. Heuristic inquiry does not exclude the researcher from the study; rather, it incorporates the researcher's experiences with the experiences of the study participants. The researcher is required to have a direct experience of the phenomenon in question. In order to discover its essence and meaning, “heuristics inquiry is concerned with meanings, not measurements; with essence, not

appearance; with quality, not quantity; with experience, not behavior” (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p. 42). However, heuristic inquiry is not a process without order. Instead, it requires the researcher to engage in a disciplined pursuit of fundamental meanings connected to significant human experiences. In analyzing the influence of service-learning from the university graduate’s perspective, I found out how participants “perceive it, describe it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it, and talk about it with others” (Patton, 2002, p. 104). Patton (2002) explains that heuristic inquiry incorporates personal experience and the insights of the researcher, answering the question, “What is my experience with this phenomenon and the essential experience of others who also experience this phenomenon intensely?” (p. 132). The heuristic process of phenomenological inquiry is a highly personal process. Moustakas (1994) describes six basic phases in the heuristic process of phenomenological analysis: initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication and creative synthesis. These six phases will be discussed in detail in the data analysis section of this chapter.

The Researcher Role

For qualitative researchers, discovering truth involves adequately and responsibly representing the perspectives of the participants. As I searched for the essence of service-learning from the university graduate’s perspective, a possibility existed that my own passion about service-learning could cloud this study. As I discussed in Chapter 1, the main limitations to this study was researcher bias and reflexivity. Researcher bias was a concern because of my own sixteen-year history as a participant and instructor of service-learning programs. My experience with service-learning includes my own teaching and training other

instructors to implement this teaching methodology in their classrooms or co-curricular activities. From personal experiences, I have insight as to what I believe are the motivating and initiating factors for instructors and students involved in service-learning projects. Two important threats to the soundness of qualitative conclusions are effects of the researcher on the case and the effects of the case on the researcher, which is referred to as researcher bias. In order to reduce researcher bias, I worked to understand how my values and expectations of service-learning may influence my data collection, analysis and findings. Creswell (2007) stated, “The researcher comments on past experiences, biases, prejudices and orientations that have shaped the interpretation and approach to the study” (p. 202). During the interview process, I took several safeguards to help guard against researcher bias as I conducted this study. First, because of my understanding of service-learning, I did not interject comments to influence participant responses. Second, I did not ignore potential benefits because they were different from my own. Lastly, I was cognizant of the participants tone and inflection as they were speaking.

Design of the Study

Setting and Participants

Washburn University has more than 7,300 students and 1,000 faculty and staff. Washburn has more than 200 academic programs leading to certification, associate, bachelor, masters, doctor of nursing and a school of law. The student/faculty ratio is 15:1 and 40% of undergraduate courses have fewer than 20 students in each class. Courses are taught by experienced faculty, 83% of Washburn’s full-time faculty members hold doctorates or the highest degree awarded in their discipline. Undergraduate courses are not taught by a

graduate teaching assistant, which means undergraduate students work directly with professors in courses, research and other projects (Washburn University, 2014).

Over the past 12 years, the service-learning program at Washburn University has grown by leaps and bounds and is a formal part of the university structure. The primary goal of this program is to insure that undergraduate students are graduating with a sense of social responsibility and are connected to their community. In addition, the program promotes a life-long commitment to learning and service among students, faculty and staff by serving as a resource and connecting members of the university community with meaningful service experiences (Washburn University, 2014).

The population studied was university graduates who participated at least two years in a service-learning program at Washburn University. Participants of this study were selected from a database of 70-80 alumni provided by the service-learning program called Learning in the Community (LinC) at Washburn University. The individuals selected met the following criteria: 1) participation in a co-curricular service-learning program for at least two years as an undergraduate student; 2) graduated with a bachelor's degree; and 3) have been out of college for at least two years. To gain access to the participants for this study, I first approached the director of the LinC Office, Dr. Rick Ellis, who reviewed the purpose this of study and volunteered to be a member of my dissertation committee. With Dr. Ellis' guidance, I obtained a letter of support for this study and gained access to the participant e-mail database. I submitted the details of my study to the University of Missouri-Kansas City Social Science Institutional Review Board (IRB) along with a research proposal, interview questions, consent forms and interview protocols. At this point, I had already passed the

web-based training program in human research subject protection required by UMKC and offered by the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative. After review, the IRB decided my research was exempt from full review because it presented no known risks for the study participants. Because my participants once attended Washburn University and the participant's e-mail contact information was housed within the LinC office, I submitted my approved IRB letter to Dr. Ellis to show that my research was exempt and to gain access to the participant e-mail database.

Sampling Techniques

Criterion sampling strategies were used to select the participants for this study. Criterion sampling requires that all participants meet some criterion (Creswell 2007). According to Creswell (2007), "Criterion sampling works well when all individuals studied represent people who have experienced the phenomenon" (p. 128). The criterion for this study required that the participants be university graduates, have participated in a service-learning experience at Washburn University between 2001-2010, have achieved a bachelor's degree and have been out of college for at least two years.

Data Collection

I used participant survey responses, interview responses and documents as the data collection method for this study. These three methods allowed me to explore the ways that university graduates experience and perceive service-learning during college and how service-learning influences activities after college.

Survey

The use of a survey allowed me to sample a population of service-learning university graduates, to learn about their attitudes, beliefs and experiences as an undergraduate student. According to Marshall and Rossman (1999), “A survey is the preferred method if the researcher wishes to obtain a small amount of information from a large number of participants” (p. 96). To collect participant survey responses, I received from Washburn University a list of sixty-three names and email addresses of Washburn University service-learning graduates who the university identified as potential study participants. Based on the e-mail list provided by Washburn University, sixty-three e-mails were sent by me to Washburn University service-learning graduates asking them to voluntarily participate in the web-based survey portion of this study. Included in the e-mail was a direct link to access the web-based survey and to voluntarily participate in the study. The e-mail (see Appendix A) asked each participant to answer the following questions through a web-based survey:

1. What organization did you complete your service-learning experience with?
2. How long was your participation in your service-learning experience as an undergraduate student?
3. Provide a brief description of your service-learning experience while in college including activities you participated in, perceived benefits and people you encountered.

SurveyGizmo was the web-based software company that was used to collect responses to the above survey questions. SurveyGizmo allows researchers to create online surveys and collects survey responses. All of the survey data collected was held in secure data center and

all account data was password-protected. Both the web-based survey questions and the use of SurveyGizmo were approved by my principle advisor prior to the e-mail being distributed to the sixty-three alumni participants. Based on the sixty-three e-mails sent, twenty-eight individuals voluntarily completed the web-based survey.

Interviews

In-depth interviewing is a data collection method used by qualitative researchers. Qualitative in-depth interviews are much more like conversations than formal events with predetermined response categories. The researcher explores a few general topics to help uncover the participant's meaning perspective, but otherwise respects how the participants frames and structures the responses (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Interviews allow the researcher to understand the meanings people hold for their everyday activities and are a useful way to get large amounts of data quickly. To collect participant interview responses, ten study participants were selected by me for formal face-to-face interviews from the twenty-eight individuals who responded to the web-based survey. The selection of the ten study participants was based on the following criteria: 1) comments containing specific details about their service experience; 2) comments mentioning specific people, places, or events; and 3) comments containing the former students' feelings about their service-learning experience. I chose ten study participants for this study primarily because, in a phenomenological study, Creswell (2007) recommends, "interviews with up to 10 people" (p. 65) or until the data collection phase has reached the point of saturation. Conducting ten face-to-face interviews allowed me to provide a, "thick description," (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 10) of the participants' experiences which is needed for qualitative data analysis.

Before the interviews began, I explained to each participant that this is a voluntary study, the purpose of the study, how the data was going to be used, stored and confirmed their agreement to be audio-taped during the interview (see Appendix D). The interview questions (see Appendix E) were typed and were e-mailed to each participant prior to the interviews. Each face-to-face interview lasted between 40-60 minutes. Two face-to-face interviews were conducted; eight interviews took place via Skype. Information was gathered through a semi-structured interview in which open-ended interview questions were used. The interviews were conducted to allow for a free flow of data but, were focused to ensure that the interviewee's time was used effectively and all needed data is collected. More importantly, I conducted the interviews in a manner that allowed the participant's to share their stories in a natural dialogue. The participants' of this study were free to discuss or not discuss any information about their experiences with me. Probes were used as a follow-up to clarify a participant's response. This portion of the data collection process continued until the point of saturation occurred within the study, this did not occur until all ten participants were interviewed.

Using the above criteria for the selection of interview participants allowed me to obtain rich data regarding the participants' service-learning experience and the influence service-learning has on these students following graduation. However, qualitative researchers recognize that some people are 'richer' in describing personal experiences than others (Marshall & Rossman 1999). Qualitative researchers use rich-thick description when writing research studies. Unlike quantitative research where the researcher seeks to generalize the findings, qualitative researchers provide rich-thick descriptions for use in

research studies to describe people, places and experiences. In qualitative research studies, the underlining principle used when selecting study participants is the selection of information-rich individuals, individuals which one can learn a great deal about matters of importance and therefore worthy of in-depth study (Patton, 2002). I used Patton's principle when selecting the participants for this study. I sought to capture how those being interviewed viewed their service-learning experiences, to learn their judgments, their complexities and their individual perceptions.

During the interview process I was a good listener. As stated by Creswell (2007), researchers should be a "good listener rather than a frequent speaker during the interview" (p. 134). I used suggestions from Interview Protocol by Creswell (2007) in this study which included asking each participant to read the introductory script and sign the Informed Consent Cover Letter (see Appendix B) and Informed Consent Form (Appendix C), thereby giving permission to be audio taped. I used an audio tape recorder to record each interview. Using the audio tape recordings of each interview, I transcribed each interview for accuracy, coding and theme development. The use of audio recordings and transcriptions ensured that the major themes and ideas are documented. Audio recordings enabled me to review the key themes and ideas that emerged from the interviews. I also used field notes to describe specific details such as hand gestures, long pauses and interruptions which were reviewed by me immediately following each interview.

Documents

Documents constitute a rich source of information about an organization and its programs. Documents provided the researcher with information about things that cannot be

observed; documents may reveal the institutions' values, beliefs, goals and decisions that might be otherwise unknown to the researcher (Patton, 2002). Researchers use documents to supplement participant observation and interviewing with the gathering and analyzing of documents produced in the course of everyday events. Institutions produce a constant stream of publicly available information, such as reports, flyers, handbooks, catalogs and websites. As part of the data collection process for this study, Washburn University's Service-Learning Program documents were used which included: program mission statement, program objectives, and student learning outcomes. I personally obtained all the information used in this study; the information obtained is also publicly available. Washburn University Service-Learning Program's mission promotes an opportunity for students, faculty and staff to engage in meaningful service experiences that enhance the educational experience while improving the community (Washburn University, 2014). The objective of the service-learning program at Washburn University is to develop, organize, support, integrate, assess and educate community partners, students and faculty to develop a cross cultural understanding for just community participation in a diverse local community and world (Washburn University, 2014). The student learning outcomes for those who participate in the Washburn Service-Learning program demonstrate an understanding of community issues, demonstrate an appreciation for diversity and articulate the needs of the community encountered through the service experience. In addition, students have the opportunity to enhance personal/professional leadership skills, develop career contacts and engage in activities that result in the development of productive and responsible citizens (Washburn

University, 2014). The above reference documents from Washburn University aided me in developing an understanding of the subject matter and the study participants.

An additional document used by me in this study was my personal journal. In heuristic inquiry, because the researcher is also a participant, any activities which allow the participants to describe their experience of the phenomenon can be considered acceptable data collection. Journaling about the phenomenon and reflecting on one's own experience of the phenomenon can become useful data (Moustakas, 1994). In many heuristic studies, the researcher collects and records data regarding the experience under inquiry through journaling (Moustakas, 1994). The journal provides a means not only for collection and recording data but also a vehicle for self-reflection. Data collection, in a heuristic inquiry, often is integrated with data analysis, because personal reflection is an integral part of every phase of the process.

Summary of Data Collection

To summarize the data collection portion of this study, I collected data in three ways. First, a web-based survey was generated and sent to all service-learning program participants who met the criteria which were explained in the sample section earlier in the chapter. Second, I conducted face-to-face interviews with ten participants who I selected from the results of the survey responses. Third, I reviewed the documents generated by Washburn University's service-learning program and my personal journal of the experience under inquiry.

Data Analysis

The six phases of heuristic inquiry was incorporated as an overarching lens throughout the data analysis process with coding of the surveys and interviews taking place at the illumination phase. Moustakas (1994), describes the basic phases in the heuristic process of data analysis as: initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication and creative synthesis.

Initial Engagement

Initial engagement is the beginning phase of heuristic inquiry. “The task of the initial engagement is to discover an intense interest, a passionate concern that calls out to the researcher, one that holds important social meanings and personal, compelling implications” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 27). In this phase, the researcher immerses into self-dialogue and extensive self-exploration in order to discover the tacit knowledge and ultimately arrive to the research question. In order to conduct this type of study, one must have a direct experience of the phenomenon in question to be able to identify with experiences of others. For me personally, my service-learning experiences were rewarding and the experiences transformed me as an individual. My first service-learning experience began in college while working in a group home for youth. During this time, I encountered individuals who were greatly different than me. My experience working in this group home shaped me, this service-learning encounter put me on the path of service to others, it was at this moment that I knew I wanted to follow this path and work in the field of human services. At the conclusion of my first service-learning activity, I reflected on the experience and questioned

if other service-learning participants had the same experiences as I did; I also speculated if they would continue service-learning activities in the future.

Immersion

Immersion is the second phase of heuristic inquiry. In the immersion phase, the researcher becomes one with the topic and question. According to Moustakas (1994), the researcher must live the question. In order to be fully connected with the question, the researcher engages in “spontaneous self-dialogue and self-searching, pursuing intuitive clues and hunches, and drawing from the mystery and sources of energy and knowledge within the tacit dimension” (p. 28). While in college I gained valuable service-learning experiences and taught others how to give back to their community through service-learning. I worked hard for the community, students, faculty and university to elevate the importance of service-learning. However, for me my hard work was somewhat lacking in depth, something was missing; I needed to understand why service-learning is important to others. Through self-dialogue, I found that I wanted to understand: *What types of service-learning activities do students engage in while in college? What are the perceived benefits of participation in service-learning? What do students do to continue service-learning after graduation?* To answer these questions I had to listen to those who individuals who also experienced service-learning while in college. During this time, I gathered some great information through reflection and talking to other service-learning participants. However, nearing my college graduation date, my service-learning obligations, college courses, internship and part-time job left me nearly burned-out. I realized something had to give; I decided I needed to take a break from service-learning.

Incubation Phases

In the incubation phase the researcher moves away from intense immersion with the question and becomes detached from it. “The period of incubation allows the inner workings of the tacit dimension and intuition to continue to clarify and extend understanding on levels outside the immediate awareness” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 29). Following graduation from college I needed a full-time job; my first job after college was in the private sector. My first job after graduation took me away from the field of service-learning. I adjusted to a new routine and steadily forgot about my service-learning experiences. I had no connection to service-learning for several years, but that all changed in one day. I received a telephone call from a college mentor who contacted me about an employment opportunity in the field of service-learning. In preparing for my job interview, I began reviewing my service-learning reflection papers and reliving my service-learning experiences while in college. I began to understand the importance of the service-learning experience and the role that these experiences play in shaping an individual. However, I still questioned whether other people who participated in service-learning activities felt the same way as I do about service-learning.

Illumination Phase

Illumination is the fourth phase of heuristic inquiry. As the researcher becomes more receptive to the tacit dimension of knowledge and intuition, the illumination phase unfolds freely (Moustakas, 1994). In this phase, I illuminated themes from the documents, surveys and interviews. This phase requires a certain level of reflection but still allows for mysterious workings of the tacit knowledge and from this process new awareness is fostered. The

modification of existing understanding, and new discoveries of experiences that were not directly present in the researcher's consciousness are illuminated (Moustakas, 1994). During this time, I reflected on my own experiences with the phenomenon of service-learning. My previous service-learning experience paid off for me, I ended up receiving a job offer at a community college, I was back in the field of service-learning again but this time it was much different, instead of being a student, I was a service-learning educator. I began working with my own students on service-learning projects and activities. During this time, I also reviewed their reflection papers from their service-learning experiences. While reviewing my students' reflection papers, I began noticing commonalities between my service-learning experiences while in college and their service-learning experiences. I noticed that service-learning locations and community partners had changed but the value and importance of the service-learning experience as a teaching/learning method did not change.

Data from the participants revealed similar experiences. Common themes apprehended in the documents, surveys and interviews included the following: Community Awareness/Involvement, Personal Growth and Development and Reflective Change (see Table 2, Explication Phase). The voices of the participants are illuminated using quotes aligned with the themes and are described in chapter four. The process for analyzing the data included open coding for descriptive codes, categorizing descriptive codes to make interpretations, and clustering interpretations for forming themes. Descriptive codes are used to categorize or organize information collected. Codes were initially identified during the review of literature. Concepts such as service-learning, involvement, understanding,

diversity, reflection, and impact are recurrent in the literature. Once codes were identified, I looked for patterns in the data that led to formulating meaning of the data.

Table 1 below represents a list of the descriptive codes used in this study, each code is independent and no relationship exists amongst across rows and columns.

Table 1

List of Descriptive Codes

Descriptive Codes:

Service-learning	Learned	Involvement	Service
Opportunity	Volunteering	Community	Community Partner
Social Problem	Society	Outreach	Activism
Impact	Advocate	Passion	Compassion
Understanding	Confidence	Empathy	Self-esteem
Leadership	Fundraising	Communication Skills	Time Management
Networking	Training	Professionalism	Relationship
Difference	Diversity	Experience	Culture
Tolerate	Reflection	Change	

Thirty-five descriptive codes were used during the open-coding process (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Each code was then defined and interpretive codes were developed. Once the interpretive codes were identified, themes were developed in order to formulate meaning of the data. To assist with the coding process, ATLAS.ti was selected as a qualitative data analysis software program. This program reduced the chances of human error and researcher bias. ATLAS.ti was used for data organization, assigning codes and quote selection.

ATLAS.ti is a qualitative data management system developed in 1989 at the Technical University of Berlin, and released commercially in 1993. The company, ATLAS.ti GmbH has been operational for nearly 30 years and their software is now in its 7th version which was used in this study. The qualitative data management system allowed for a variety of data to be uploaded and organized in different folders. From there, each survey, interview transcript and documents were coded. Once the codes were identified, then portions of the interview transcripts and documents were marked as quotations to be used in Chapter 4. The software used allowed for quotations to be sorted and organized by code. Next, the descriptive codes were analyzed and interpretive codes were developed which resulted in making connections between descriptive codes and interpretive codes. For example, all of the codes related to community outreach and addressing issues were analyzed and connections were formed to fourteen descriptive codes listed in Table 1. The coding process continued with the identification of four additional interpretive codes as development of self and career development which contained 13 descriptive codes. In addition, the interpretive codes of accepting differences and personal insight were identified and contained eight descriptive codes. Once the descriptive codes and interpretive codes were identified, three common themes were identified in the documents, surveys and interviews. The ATLAS.ti program was used to develop the themes in the coding process but the wording used by the ATLAS.ti program refers to them as families instead of themes. In addition, ATLAS.ti kept all of the codes, themes and quotations organized in one location.

Explication Phase

The fifth phase of heuristic inquiry, explication refers to the process of deep examination of themes and qualities that have surfaced during the illumination phase. Moustakas (1994) points out that in the explication phase, the researcher engages in focusing, indwelling, self-exploration, and self-disclosure, which in turns allows the researcher to recognize the uniqueness of the experience. In explication, the complete picture of the phenomenon begins forming. In addition, new views, alternative explanations, and new patterns are identified, final corrections and modifications are made, and a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon is painted. After sixteen year as a service-learning educator, I have recognized the uniqueness of the service-learning experience through a different lens. Through quiet meditation and reflection, I began to understand that the uniqueness of the service-learning experience is not linked only to the experience itself. Rather, the uniqueness of the experience comes from teamwork, community partners, institutional support, the challenge, helping others, making a difference and giving back. In sum, the uniqueness of the service-learning experience comes from the whole rather than the parts. As a student, it was sometimes difficult for me to picture the connections that must occur to create a service-learning experience. As an educator, I now understand the amount of hard work that goes into creating a service-learning experience. It was at this phase that everything found its place, new themes and ideas emerged and the story of the service-learning inquiry began to take shape.

Table 2 further illustrates the codes and themes that were developed through the coding process:

Table 2

List of Codes and Themes

THEMES	INTERPRETIVE CODES	CODES	DEFINITION OF CODES	
Theme #1 Community Awareness / Involvement	Community Outreach: Participants identified their growing sense of responsibility to do something about community problems.	Service-learning	Students who are participating in activities that address community need to promote student-learning	
		Learned	Gaining knowledge and education from service project	
		Involvement	A chance to get involved with community work or make connections with others or organizations	
		Service	To provide a service to others or a community	
		Opportunity	A chance that offers an advantage	
		Volunteering	Providing assist without anything in return	
		Community	Group of people who live or work in the same area	
		Community Partner	Organizations who work together for a common goal	
		Addressing Issues: Experience that leads students to want to learn more about an issue	Social Problem	Relating to the way in which people in groups behave and interact
			Society	A structured community of people bound together by similar traditions or institutions
			Outreach	A group in society who might otherwise be neglected
			Activism	Aggressive action in pursuing political or social end
			Impact	To have immediate and strong effect or someone or something
			Advocate	To support or speak in favor of someone or something

Table 2 Continued

THEMES	INTERPRETIVE CODES	CODES	DEFINITION OF CODES
Theme #2 Personal Growth and Development	Development of Self: The opportunity to gain personal meaning from a service experience to enhance a sense of self	Passion	Participants who have expressed an intense feeling or enthusiasm for the service-learning experience
		Compassion	A desire to help or sympathy for others
		Understanding	Ability to perceive and explain the meaning or the nature of somebody or something
		Confidence	Build self-assurance or a belief in your ability to succeed
		Empathy	Ability to identify with and understand somebody else's feelings or difficulties
		Self-esteem	Building confidence in your own merit as an individual or student
		Career Development: Progression in a chosen profession	Leadership
	Fundraising		To organize activities of collecting money for a cause or nonprofit organization
	Communication Skills		Improvement to exchange information between people
	Time Management		A system that enables events to occur at multiple times
	Networking		A practice of gathering contacts such as business opportunities
	Training		A way to acquire new skills
	Professionalism		The skills or character of a highly trained professional

Table 2 Continued

THEMES	INTERPRETIVE CODES	CODES	DEFINITION OF CODES
Theme #3 Reflective Change	Accepting Differences: Reflection that leads to understanding of others	Relationship	A significant connection or similarity between things or time
		Difference	A change that has an effect
		Diversity	Ethnic variety, socioeconomic and gender variety, in a group, society, or institution
		Experience	Knowledge or skill gained through being involved in or exposed to something new
		Culture	Shared beliefs and values of groups
		Tolerate	Those who are participating in activities that address community need to promote student learning
	Personal Insight: Allows students to finds new ways to view themselves and the world	Reflection	Careful thought, especially the process of reconsidering previous actions, events, or decision
		Change	Making a difference in one's attitude or belief

Creative Synthesis Phase

The final phase of heuristic inquiry is creative synthesis. It represents the final integration of the data, qualities, and themes discovered in the explication phase (Moustakas, 1994). Furthermore, creative synthesis can be presented in the form of a narrative, poem, painting, story, or some other creative form. It is not a mere summary of what went on in the study. It is the complete depiction of a human experience in all its wholeness. My quest to

understand the service-learning experience has now come full circle; this dissertation is my story and the story of former participants of a service-learning program. This story presents the uniqueness and value of the service-learning experience and at the same time answers the research questions which are: *what types of service-learning activities do students engage in while in college? What are the perceived benefits of participation in service-learning? What do students do to continue service-learning after graduation?* The creative synthesis is established from the research questions; its origin is from the researcher's responses to the research questions and the study participants' responses to the interview/survey questions. I understand that heuristic research begins and ends with me, but I sought to incorporate both the study participants' experiences and my personal experiences in the creative synthesis to paint a complete picture of the service-learning experience. The details of the study participants' service-learning experiences and the stories they shared with me, along with my personal service-learning experiences will be provided in chapter four of this study.

Soundness of the Study

In qualitative studies, steps must be taken to produce authentic research; I took several steps to achieve sound conclusions. Lincoln and Guba (1985) list the following as the essential criteria for quality qualitative research: confirmability, credibility, dependability and transferability of the research. The four above strategies gave me the tools necessary to ensure trustworthiness and quality in my research.

Confirmability

Confirmability in qualitative research is defined as the degree to which the outcomes could be confirmed or corroborated by other people. Confirmability can be compared to

objectivity in quantitative studies. Confirmability in qualitative research asks the following question, “do the conclusions depend on the subjects and conditions of the inquiry rather than on the inquirer, can the findings of the study be confirmed by another?” Lincoln and Guba (1985). To enhance the confirmability, I personally interviewed participants and identified themes from the face-to-face interviews. I guarded against influencing their responses during the interviews by letting the participants speak freely and not interjecting when they were speaking. My goal in this study was find the truth about the participants’ service-learning experience without discussing my experiences with service-learning. I was mindful throughout this study that the study findings are a result of the experiences of the participants, as opposed to my personal preferences. I relied on my participants to read, reflect on and respond to my interview questions, creating an interview partnership (Weiss, 1994). During the interview, with continual feedback from my participants, I was able to keep my personal subjectivities at bay. I incorporated respondent validation, otherwise known as member checks, into the research process. Member checks are used to gain feedback about the data collected. Maxwell (2005) stated, “Member checks are the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do and the perspective they have on what is going on” (p. 111). I audio taped each interview to provide me with a greater likelihood of correctly interpreting the participant’s interview statements. Using the audio tapes, I transcribed each participant interview. To minimize errors from the transcripts of the interviews, I e-mailed each participant a printout of their interview transcript. In the e-mail message, I asked each participant to reply and indicate whether they agreed with the accuracy of their transcript.

All of the interview participants replied to the e-mail indicating that they agreed to the accuracy of the interview transcript. To ensure the confirmability of the study findings, I also consulted with my principle advisor for this study and discussed the coding results with a member of my committee who is an expert in phenomenological research. In this process, another person reviews and asks questions about the qualitative study so the account would resonate with individuals other than the researcher. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested, “[Find] someone who knows a great deal about both the substantive area of the inquiry and the methodological issues” (p. 303). This step is an important check on the confirmability of the procedures used in this study.

Credibility

Credibility in qualitative research is defined as the confidence of the data. The goal of credibility is to demonstrate that the inquiry was conducted in such a manner as to ensure that the subject was accurately identified and described (Marshall & Rossman 1999).

Credibility can be compared to internal validity in quantitative studies. In order to evaluate the credibility of this research study I used the following: gathered thick descriptions of the phenomenon being studied, triangulation and only used participants who voluntarily agreed to participate in the study. In order to achieve credibility, I collected rich data to provide a complete summary of the participants’ service-learning experience. To do this, I audio taped each interview and then personally transcribed each interview for a detailed theme coding. During the interview process, I took my own personal notes through journaling and followed-up with detailed field notes immediately after each interview. The use of audio recordings and transcriptions enabled me to review the major themes and ideas that emerged, allowing

for greater richness of data, thus producing a full and revealing picture of what is going on. Creswell (2007) said, “Rich and thick data transport readers to the setting and give the discussion an element of shared experiences. These results become more realistic and richer, which adds to the credibility of the findings” (p. 191-2). Another way to develop credibility is through triangulation, which involves collecting data from multiple sources. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), “Triangulation is the most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (p. 314). Triangulation is the act of bringing more than one source of data to bear on a single point. In addition, Mathison (1988) stated, “Triangulation has raised an important methodological issue in naturalistic and qualitative approaches to evaluation in order to control bias and establishing valid propositions because traditional scientific techniques are incompatible with this alternate epistemology” (p. 13). In my study, I collected data from the following sources: participant survey responses, participant interviews and documents. Data from multiple sources can be used to corroborate, elaborate, or illuminate the study topic. According to Marshall and Rossman (1999) “Designing a study in which multiple cases, multiple informants, or more than one data gathering method are used can greatly strengthen the study’s usefulness” (p. 144). To guarantee the trustworthiness of this study, the participants were under no obligation to participate and could withdraw from this study at any time with no ramifications. Additionally, at the beginning of each interview session I ensured the interview participants that there were no right or wrong answers to the questions being asked and encouraged the interview participants to be frank in their responses to the interview questions.

Dependability

Dependability in qualitative research is defined as the stability of data over time and over conditions. Dependability can be compared to reliability in quantitative studies. In other words, dependability is an evaluation of the quality of data collection, data analysis, and theory generation. Lincoln and Guba (1985) described dependability as the notion of reliability in quantitative research. In order to evaluate the dependability of this research study I used the following methods: inquiry audit, computer based coding program and a code-recode process. Lincoln and Guba (1985) emphasized inquiry audit as one measure which enhances the dependability of qualitative research. To enhance the dependability of my qualitative research study, I had two individuals review my findings, both are well acquainted with this study. One was my principle advisor for this study and the other was a member of my committee, who is an expert in qualitative research; neither participated in the interview process, both contributed independent reviews of the research data. Both of the individuals who reviewed my findings asked questions to clarify my thoughts, played devil's advocate with the information, solicited feedback on the data analysis process and encouraged me to think of different ways to present my findings. After transcribing each interview, my principle advisor reviewed all the interview transcripts. In addition, my principle advisor also reviewed the survey results for this study. Next, the interview transcripts and the survey results were then coded and themes were developed. Once this step was completed the codes and themes were then checked by my principle advisor and a member of my committee who is an expert in the coding process of qualitative research. The computer program I used to assist in the coding of my results for the survey responses and

interview transcripts was Atlas.ti. This computer program allowed me to organize text from the interview transcripts and survey results to improve the coding process. To ensure dependability I also conducted a code-recode procedure. After receiving feedback from my principle advisor and member of my committee on the interview transcripts and survey results I again re-coded the interview transcripts and survey results. After receiving feedback from the interview participants on the accuracy of their interview transcripts I again re-coded the interview transcripts. After these coding checks were made the results revealed adequate agreement among coding results and the codes were consistent over time.

Transferability

Transferability in qualitative research is defined as the degree to which the results of a research study can apply or transfer beyond the bounds of the project. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), transferability asks, “are the conclusion of a study transferable?” (p. 346). Transferability can be compared to external validity in quantitative studies. In regard to the transferability of this study, the topic of a student’s perspective of service-learning in higher education could be replicated using other service-learning program locations outside of the Midwest. In addition, using thick descriptions, my research questions and my coding themes, it is anticipated that readers of this study will expand upon the research findings and apply the findings to their own research into service-learning.

Ethical Issues

In order to perform this research with ethical integrity, I took several steps to protect my participants during the study. First, I obtained the mandated approval from the Social

Sciences Institutional Review Board (IRB) as required by the University of Missouri-Kansas City, and followed the guidelines set forth by the IRB to protect the confidentiality of the participants. Second, I fully disclosed the nature of my study to the participants; each participant signed a consent form and verbally consented on audio-tape at the beginning of the interview process to voluntarily participate in this study. Third, I removed any comments from the transcript that the participants deemed off-the-record to maintain the purity of the interview. Additionally, following the interview I provided transcripts of the interview to each of the study participants to ensure the interview content was accurate.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the methodology that was used in this study. This chapter also outlined the, role of the researcher, soundness of the study, design of the study, data collection, data analysis and ethical issues. By using the described methodology, this study produced a true description of the lived experiences of service-learning from the university graduate's perspective. Throughout the process I was mindful of my own experience with service learning but sought to keep the experiences of the participants at the forefront of data analysis. The interpretation of qualitative data began at the point of the initial collection of data with my journal used to capture hunches about the meaning of the data and my reflections about the process. The next chapter presents the findings of the study nested in the experiences of university students with service learning and their subsequent involvement after graduation.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

Service-learning programs create mutually beneficial relationships between the community, college and student. In this study, service-learning was defined as a teaching tool used to connect students to the community and engage them in purposeful learning. Robinson and Barnett (1996) stated, “Service-learning combines community service with academic instruction while focusing on reflective thinking and civic responsibility” (p. 1). The phenomenon investigated in this study was the lived experiences of students who participated in service-learning programs/projects and have continued to serve their community beyond graduation. Gaining insight on the influence service has on the larger community over time will lead to a better understanding of how service-learning affects student engagement following graduation. The unit of analysis was student perspectives of their experiences with service-learning while in college and following graduation. The motivation for conducting this study was due to the limited amount of research available which focuses on the influence of the lived experience of service-learning from a university graduate’s perspective. In fact, searches specifically conducted in the JSTOR and ERIC databases for peer-reviewed publications on university graduate’s perspective of service-learning benefits since 2009, only revealed nine articles. In addition, searches conducted in the JSTOR and ERIC databases for peer-reviewed publications specifically looking at the lived experiences of service-learning participants since 2009, only revealed three articles. The limited amount of peer-reviewed qualitative research and available research which

focuses on the influence of the lived experience of service-learning from a university graduate's perspective means that a research gap exists in the literature. This research gap means that educators and educational institutions have an incomplete picture of the service-learning experience from the university graduates' perspective. In order for service-learning to reach its full potential, educators and institutions need to have a complete understanding of what service-learning entails.

In this study, a three-step approach produced data that described the ways that university graduates experience and perceive service-learning activities during college and after college. The first step included a web-based e-mail survey to ensure that study participants met the required criterion. The second step included face-to-face interviews with ten cases study participants who were selected from the results of the survey responses. Throughout this process, a journal of field notes was developed by the researcher to reduce researcher bias. The third area of data collection was to review documents the university's service-learning program objectives and obtain a list from each participant of current community involvement. The ten case study participants were all involved in a service-learning program at a Washburn University while in college and now have been university graduates for two to five years.

All of the data were coded and analyzed using (Miles & Huberman, 1994) coding process for qualitative data. The findings illustrated the participants' service-learning experiences during college and after graduation: capturing their efforts to sustain engagement with service-learning in their respected communities. The following research questions were used to explore their experiences with the phenomenon: 1) What types of service-learning

activities do students engage in while in college?; 2) What are the perceived benefits of participation in service-learning?; and 3) What do students do to continue service-learning after graduation? This research inquiry will provide educators with a better understanding of the meaning of service-learning activities from a university graduate's perspective.

Chapter Organization

This chapter presents the study's findings from the analysis of all data sources. I first provide a summary of the data collection followed by findings from documents related service-learning program and the larger open-ended survey for the purpose of describing the content and context of service-learning at Washburn University. Third, each of the ten embedded cases is described using findings from individual open-ended surveys, in depth interviews, and the researcher's field notes maintained in a journal for each participant. I conduct a cross-case analysis for the ten embedded cases, identifying common themes across the cases. Finally, I answer the research questions through summarizing the findings from the multiple data sources which gives a complete picture of the data.

Summary of Data Collection

In this study, I gathered and analyzed data in four different ways: document, an e-mail survey, interviews and researcher field notes. The purpose of documents was to capture the content and context of service-learning program which constituted the larger case.

The e-mail survey generated feedback from a larger population of service-learning participants which aided in describing the context and content of the program. I was also able to use the open-ended survey as a sampling strategy to identify participants for the

embedded cases and to make meaning of their experiences. Data for the cases consisted of individual open-ended surveys, in-depth interviews, documents listing each participant's current level of community involvement following graduation and the researcher's journal entries for each participant. The purpose of the face-to-face interviews was to generate data from each study participant based on their perspective of their service-learning experience while in college and after graduation. The list of activities aided my understanding of how they were able to sustain service-learning as alumnus. The purpose of the field notes through journaling was to support the heuristic nature of the inquiry.

Content and Context of Service-Learning Program at Washburn University

Washburn University, located in Topeka, Kansas, is one of the last remaining municipal universities in the United States. The university's faculty, staff and students hold, as one of their core values, a mandate to be engaged with the community outside the walls of the institution (Washburn University, 2014). This section explores the seventeen year history of transformation and incarnation of service-learning and engagement on the Washburn campus as it relates to the establishment of an infrastructure to encourage and support institution-wide efforts in this area.

The modern institutional culture of community engagement at Washburn University began in 1995 with the establishment of a student-directed service organization called Learning in the Community (LinC). While it had the support of a university faculty advisor, it was solely a registered student organization through Washburn's Student Activities and Greek Life Office sponsored by the Human Services Department on campus and was

completely operated by one student coordinator who took on this role as an internship project for her major in the department. In its first year, the organization had no budget save the \$2000 that could be requested, but was not guaranteed, from the Washburn Student Government Association to support its activities as long as the beneficiary was students, not the community. In what was, in all likelihood, a surprise to everyone but the student coordinator, the organization proved a success. A partnership was formed with the Volunteer Center of Topeka in which LinC recruited and referred over 100 Washburn students to be placed in volunteer positions in the community in its inaugural year. Additionally, a relationship was formed with the Chesney Park Neighborhood Improvement Association, the low-income neighborhood adjacent to Washburn's campus. This partnership led to the first annual Into the Streets event, one of many neighborhood clean-up projects involving hundreds of Washburn students and Chesney Park community members. While these accomplishments in and of themselves were successes in that they encouraged student engagement with the community, the student coordinator also spent time working with the faculty advisor carefully thinking about the sustainability of the project through the development of a campus-based infrastructure to support it. This resulted in obtaining space for a "permanent" LinC office, developing a ten year strategic plan for LinC, and recruiting multiple students to help run and expand LinC the following year (Washburn University, 2014).

LinC continued to operate in much the same way for the next several years although each new group of student coordinators, while mindful of successfully sustaining the programs that were already in place, developed initiatives that expanded the opportunities

available to students in thoughtful ways that could be implemented successfully while meeting the identified needs of the community and students. Initiatives such as Alternative Break, Hunger and Homeless Awareness Week and an annual campus-wide food drive to support the city of Topeka's annual food drive each February were implemented while still maintaining Into the Streets and doing general volunteer recruitment and referral. At the same time, each group of student coordinators was aware of the strategic plan left by the original student coordinator and committed to moving her vision forward. This included slowly moving from referring Washburn students to the Volunteer Center's identified positions to developing relationships and a network with nonprofit organizations to make direct referrals for students based on their area of interest. During this transition students began attending national conferences to share what Washburn was doing and to learn about the best practices being done by other institutions.

In 2001, Washburn University, through the LinC student organization, formed a partnership with the Bonner Foundation in Princeton, New Jersey. This partnership now offered scholarships and educational awards to students who committed to performing 900 hours of community service. Up until this point, the organization focused strictly on volunteerism and short-term events with little or no reflection or purposeful knowledge and skill attainment. By establishing a relationship with the Bonner Foundation, LinC was not only able to offer scholarships to students, but to implement the developmental model of service and leadership into an organizational framework. This model guides students to increase the depth of their engagement while gaining an understanding of being stewards of place and their role as civically engaged citizens. This new relationship afforded access to a

national network of institutions of higher education which provided a wealth of information on how to incorporate engagement into the academic realm in a way that would raise the profile, respectability and sustainability of LinC. The Bonner Leader AmeriCorps Program began at Washburn with sixteen students at various points in their academic careers since LinC was still a student organization sponsored by the Human Services Department, many of the students in the first class were Human Services majors. While students in this major are by all accounts good fits for the mission of the program, especially in regard to addressing unmet human needs through nonprofits, it brought very little diversity in thought or creative, challenging conversations about the issues being addressed through their service. Therefore, LinC made a decision to purposefully recruit members from across campus. This was a strategic move to broaden not only the scope and impact of the Bonner program, but of LinC itself. The inclusion of students from units across campus laid the foundation for students to spearhead a call for the expansion of community engagement across campus (Washburn University, 2014).

As LinC continued to evolve several changes were made that supported its eventual institutionalization as a full-fledged center serving the entire campus. These steps were taken with deliberative thought, student and stakeholder feedback and a strategic motive to increase the visibility of LinC and eventually establish it as a freestanding academic unit on campus. Through the encouragement of the Bonner Foundation and the support of the Federal Work Study Coordinator, all Bonner Leader AmeriCorps members who qualified for federal work study were awarded funds to support their work in the community. While most of these positions are filled by AmeriCorps members, there were also a significant number of

Washburn students that LinC placed in community based positions (Washburn University, 2014). This was an important step in increasing the breadth and depth of engagement across campus. It allowed students who had a desire to be engaged in their community, but otherwise would have had to obtain a part-time job, the opportunity to do so. This was an especially important accomplishment for Washburn University as a large portion of the student body is commuter-based rather than residential with many having financial need that requires them to have part-or-full-time employment outside of their academic work.

The most significant change for LinC came in 2006 when the Vice President of Academic Affairs (VPAA) made the decision to implement a new program on campus: the Washburn Transformational Experience (WTE). This idea was formulated because the administration of the university recognized that there were opportunities for some students at Washburn which enhanced their educational experience and academic study: leadership participation, study abroad experiences, research and/or creative work with a professor, and community service (Washburn University, 2014). It was, therefore, his idea that these same opportunities should be encouraged and open to all students. At this time, three of the focus areas already existed as independent entities while community service was still being coordinated as a sponsored student organization. In order to remedy this, the VPAA recruited the faculty advisor of LinC to develop a plan for including community service in the Washburn Transformational Experience (WTE); thus making LinC an entity on par with the Leadership Institute, International House and other academic units on campus. This request proved to be a turning point for community engagement at Washburn. It should be

noted that the reason the VPAA felt community service needed to be included was because: “these students have been doing such amazing things I think all students should have the same opportunity.” The WTE program was based on the Bonner Leader model (it required 150 hours of service; regular opportunities to reflect on this service; provided an opportunity for the students to do a presentation of their learning; and was student directed, developmental, and long-term); (2) the establishment of a free standing academic unit with a full-time director, assistant director, and administrative assistant to oversee student initiatives and coordinate the new program; and (3) a small budget, in addition to salaries, to support the program. So, after twelve years of deliberate and strategic planning, what began as a student organization had finally become a full-fledged Center for Community and Civic Engagement on campus (Washburn University, 2014).

For the first three years the Washburn Transformational Experience (WTE) was a University requirement for all bachelor degree seeking students. This new initiative required LinC to focus attention on enrollment, placement, and facilitation of reflection meetings for nearly 250 new students the first year. By year three, there were nearly 450 active participants in the Community Service track of the WTE. This influx of new students created some new challenges which were met by providing training and organization of the student leaders who were well established in the community through existing programs. Unfortunately, after three years the faculty voted to remove the requirement and the WTE became optional. While this dramatically reduced student participation, many of the academic the units continued to work with LinC to connect their student with the community.

The reduction in numbers also allowed LinC to regroup and develop a new strategic plan (Washburn University, 2014).

In 2007, the Corporation for National and Community Service awarded LinC the grant allowing the placement of up to 40 VISTA members across the state of Kansas. This addition was a strategic move for a number of reasons. It strengthened the relationships with community partners and helped them to build the capacity to not only weather the economic hardships of being nonprofits in a weak economy. It allowed the partners the opportunity to develop new programming to meet the increasing needs of the community. At the same time new meaningful engagement opportunities for Washburn students were created.

The direction LinC took following the change with the WTE has been to both strengthen and grow the programs that have been the most important to supporting a campus-wide culture of engagement while at the same time broadening its scope. The Community Service WTE had most certainly stretched the staff and resources of LinC fairly thin in the previous three years, so this became an opportunity to take a step back to reexamine the focus of LinC as a whole. This was done, in part, by engaging in a formal strategic planning process with outside facilitators and stakeholders from across campus and the community which has taken it to where it is today.

Today, the Bonner Leader AmeriCorps Program remains LinC's "flagship" program although it now looks different than it originally did (Hoy & Johnson, 2013). At this point, all members of the program commit to being engaged for a minimum of 450 hours per year for at least three years (with four years being highly encouraged). There are approximately 42 active Bonner Leaders at any given time and their academic majors crisscross the campus.

The Bonner Foundation has also allowed LinC to expand its reach by awarding approximately sixty 300-hour AmeriCorps positions. Additionally LinC offers AmeriCorps positions to students enrolled in academic internships that address poverty in the community. The Community Based Federal Work Study program has also grown with 29% of all federal work study funds going to community based positions (Hoy & Johnson, 2013). In addition to the continuation of several of the foundation programs that marked LinC's early years, the connections that had been thoughtfully made with academic units throughout the years has expanded with LinC moving into a consulting role to incorporate service learning into the curriculum. Through the connection to the academic units LinC and the fact that it is a direct report to the VPAA, LinC is now recognized as an academic program rather than a student organization. This has offered LinC an opportunity to develop a true academic program in the form of a minor in Poverty Studies.

Summary of Documents

Washburn University's Service-Learning Program documents were used in this study which included: program mission statement, program objectives, and student learning outcomes. All information used in this study was obtained by the researcher and is publicly available. Collectively, the documents used provided content and context and helped guide and focus the study, they also helped form the interview questions and overall research questions of the study. When developing the interview questions, documents allowed the researcher to use words and phrases specific to the Washburn University Service-Learning Program, which in turn, made the language used in the interview questions easily identifiable by the case study participants. Washburn University's program mission statement, defines

the purpose and goals of the service-learning program. Consistent with the mission of the University, service-learning promotes an opportunity for Washburn students, faculty, and staff to engage in meaningful service experiences that enhance the educational experience while improving the community. Through ongoing interaction with students, service-learning provides opportunities for leadership and engagement that result in the development of productive and responsible citizens (Washburn University, 2014). The objective of the service-learning program at Washburn University is to develop, organize, support, integrate, assess and educate community partners, students and faculty to develop a cross cultural understanding for just community participation in a diverse local community and world (Washburn University, 2014). Student learning outcomes at Washburn University allow students who participate an opportunity to demonstrate an understanding of community issues, demonstrate an appreciation for diversity and articulate the needs of the community encountered through the service experience. Additionally, students have the opportunity to enhance personal/professional leadership skills and develop future career contacts (Washburn University, 2014). Overall, the findings of this study showed that the respondents' service-learning experiences and skills gained, aligned with the student learning outcomes of the Washburn Service-Learning program. An additional document used in this study was the researcher's personal journal. The journal provided a means not only for collection and recording data but also a vehicle for self-reflection. The findings from the researcher's personal journal did reveal that the case study participants and the researcher had similar service-learning experiences and outcomes while in college and after. In a heuristic case

study, personal reflection is an integral part of this study and will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

Summary of E-mail Survey

The participants of this study were all university graduates from Washburn University who were either currently working or attending graduate school. Of the 63 e-mails sent, 28 individuals completed the web-based survey. The e-mail survey responses included feedback from 21 females and 7 males. The findings from the e-mail survey sought to discover the locations where the respondents completed their service-learning experience, the number of years the respondents participated in a service-learning program, a brief description of their service-learning experience while in college and their willingness to participate in a face-to-face interview. Overall, the findings from the e-mail survey showed that the respondents performed two to four years of service with community organizations such as: afterschool programs, community health organizations, literacy programs and outreach programs. The e-mail respondents showed diversity amongst each other when describing; (1) the people in which they interacted with during their service-learning activities while in college, for example: age, gender, income level, ethnic background and educational level; (2) the service-learning activities performed while in college, for example: acting as mentors, establishing summer camps for youth, working with the elderly and participating in service abroad programs; and (3) the perceived benefits gained from their service-learning experience while in college, for example: confidence, leadership skills, event planning, career development and networking skills. However, the e-mail respondents did show some commonalities when describing the value of the service-learning experience, the importance of addressing

community needs and the importance of community involvement. The e-mail survey was an important first step in this research in that it allowed me to understand the service-learning experience broadly and apply those insights to a selected group for further research.

Summary of Interviews

The following section presents summaries of each of the within-case interviews and surveys conducted for this study. Each of the within-cases themselves were given a random pseudonym. This section provides a context for each of the within-case study participant's experience with service-learning during and after college. A total of ten face-to-face interviews and surveys were conducted for this portion of this study. The first part of each face-to-face interview was spent reviewing the study: consent forms; confidentiality; and the process of transcript, coding, review and the opportunity for corrections of transcripts. During the second part of each face-to-face interview, the participants were asked to verbally consent to be audio-taped. Once this was completed, I began asking the scripted interview questions.

Case #1 – Ann

The face-to-face interview with Ann was conducted via Skype which was the most convenient way to conduct this interview for this participant because she is now attending graduate school outside the state of Kansas. The interview lasted forty-six minutes in duration.

Ann spent a total of three years working with the service-learning program as an undergraduate student at Washburn University. Throughout her time in the service-learning

program, she was able to describe many ways that service-learning influenced her as an undergraduate student. Ann explained that the experience that influenced her most was the role she played as a coordinator position for a compeer program. During this experience she educated the public on mental health issues. The biggest part of the position was recruiting and interviewing individuals to later be set-up in a peer relationship with an individual diagnosed with a mental illness. Ann described the community partnership between the university and her service site as a strong relationship because the Director at the service site was a former service-learning participant many years ago. Ann stated, *the relationship was strong because the Program Director and I were both passionate about mental health and serving our community.*

By being involved in service-learning, Ann expressed how she learned how to address community issues. One of the biggest things she learned was how uneducated in general the population was with regards to mental illness. She described that this was evident in her educational outreach and the questions/responses that she and the Program Director would receive throughout the programming. Ann also learned how divided the community was in regards to the feelings about mental health and peer-to-peer rehabilitation. Lastly, Ann discussed that during her time at her service-learning site the state of Kansas was considering taking voting privileges away from individuals with mental illness. She continued by stating, *this brought to light just how stigmatized mental illness still is and how influential politics can be within a state.*

During her time at her service-learning site, she talked about how she became aware that she did have inner biases in that she overcompensated for individuals that had a mental illness. Ann explained:

At the time this startled me because it made me feel as if I could not make a career working with individuals with mental illness but I was able to work through those feels and gain confidence in my career choice. I also learned how important it is to be an advocate for what one is passionate about.

Also during this time of the interview, Ann expressed that she believed that her service-learning experience helped her develop more confidence and improve my self-esteem. When discussing career development, Ann's body language got expressive when asked about how her service experience created opportunities later in life or beyond graduation. She stated:

OH MY GOSH did it ever!!! My experience went above and beyond in opening doors and is still doing so. For starters, it provided me with the skills needed for any occupation such as communication, organization, and planning. It also provided me the opportunity to explore a career that I was passionate about and helped prepare me for working in a mental health profession. It gave me the ability to separate myself in a competitive application process for a graduate program in psychology.

Ann went on to share that her service-learning experience gave her affirmation that she was making the right career choice. She discussed that before her service-learning experience she knew she enjoyed psychology and would like to be able to help individuals with mental illness challenges. However, in the back of her mind she always doubted herself and her career choice. She explained that she always felt like if she was actually to be put in front of someone with a mental illness she would not know what to do let alone help him/her. Ann went on to express that after her service-learning experience, she is more confident and is able to say, *I'm passionate about clinical psychology and I have helped individuals with a*

mental illness challenges and want to continue. Ann talked about how she learned valuable career skills such as: communication, leadership, and planning through her service-learning experience. She also learned a great deal about how to make community connections in order to recruit volunteers, obtain money for projects, and sustain programs.

Lastly during the interview session, Ann discussed how she became greatly involved with the social justice community and the importance of accepting differences in others. She believed that being a part of the service-learning program in general changed her level of activism. Ann has become more aware of social issues and now is an advocate for equality amongst the LGBTQ community, immigrants, and literacy. She explained that she would often leave her service-learning site wondering how she could help change others attitudes to be more open minded about accepting differences amongst the population. Ann shared that the most rewarding part of her service-learning experience was being able to educate the public about mental health issues and do her part in reducing the stigma of mental illness issues in her community. Ann stated, *everything is interconnected and in order for the processes by which we live by to function properly we all have to do our part.* She expressed that she would not be the person she is today if was not for her service-learning experiences.

Field notes from the interview session indicated that Ann used the following key words or phrases including:

- *Learned recruiting and interview skills*
- *Passionate about service-learning*
- *Learned about divisions of different communities*
- *Become more aware of inner biases*

- *Learned how important is it to be an advocate for what one is passionate about*
- *Provided education to the public about mental illness*
- *My experience with service-learning went above and beyond opening doors and still does*
- *Obtained skills needed for my occupation*
- *Helped build confidence and self-esteem*
- *Opportunity to explore a career*
- *Set me apart from others when applying to graduate school*
- *Now make volunteering a part of my life as a result of my service-learning experience*
- *Learned to how make connections to recruit other volunteers*
- *Gained fundraising skills*

The interview session with Ann was very informative. The interview flowed nice and I could tell she had reviewed the interview questions in advance of the interview session. At time of the interview, Ann was expressive and talked about her past experience with service-learning while in college.

Ann's survey data revealed that her service-learning experience lasted three years with a community organization that assisted individuals with mental illness. In addition, Ann participated in other service-learning projects sponsored by Washburn University such as: Into the Streets, Numana food packing event and Topeka Green Fair. During those three years, she believed that because of her service-learning experience, she learned above and

beyond classroom work. She stated, *all the skills I learned through my service-learning opportunities have been transferable to any new challenge I am presented with.* Ann also identified skills gained through her experience as leadership skills, delegating skills, communication skills, planning and organizing skills. Ann explained that most of the individuals that she worked directly with were low-income families. Ann also explained that most of the services she provided were targeted to empower individuals from low-income families and those who deal with mental health issues on a daily bases. Following Ann's graduation from college she has continued to stay involved in her community.

Case #2 – David

The face-to-face interview with David took place in an office at the community organization where he worked full-time. The office was a standard office setting with a desk, computer and file cabinets. David was seated at his desk and I was seated across from him. This interview lasted forty-two minutes in duration and was insightful. The interview began by David explaining that before college he had never participated in a service-learning program or been exposed community service work. However, he shared that all that changed once he became involved in the service-learning program in college which lasted two years.

The interview began with David describing the service-learning experiences he had while in college. He explained that he was involved with two projects. The first project focused on trying to get more males involved with the local Head Start Program. He spent his time talking at different community events to educate others about the Head Start Program and the benefits gained from such a program. The second service-learning

experience David discussed was his work with a local peace and justice organization. His role was to organize the annual peace camp which was a summer camp for youth in the area. After he began organizing the summer camp, he quickly realized how much work would be involved so he recruited a college friend to help. David explained that the first year was a huge success and they continued to run the summer program for four years even after he had graduated from college. He explained that in order to organize such an event to take place, the preparation took months in advance. Each year of the peace camp, he would organize week long schedules and would piece it together. The camp involved youth ranging in ages from 5 to 13. David explained that even years later, he can still recall the youth he worked with at the summer camp. He went on to share that in his current place of employment he has come into contact with some of the same youth from the summer camp.

While working at the summer camp, David explained how he would organize different events to get youth to be active in the community and educate them on different ways to handle situations in their live without resulting to violence. He went on to explain that many of the youth he would come into contact with were having trouble in school with poor grades, anger issues and low attendance. Throughout the summer, David would try and teach the youth different ways to dealing with anger and be successful in school. From his service-learning experience he learned that there is a huge need for adults to volunteer to be mentors for youth in the community. David stated, *I wanted to help youth to get to where they need to be, to go to school and stay out of trouble so that was my focus and that's what I did.* When asked what you learned about yourself due to your service-learning experience,

David discussed how learned to be passionate about the work he did and how to invest his time to make a change in others' lives. David stated:

I learned that I could blend service-learning with my regular life and being a student. It's not something you have to dedicate yourself to; you can blend the two together. I didn't really see my service-learning experience as work...my goal was to help people.

When discussing career development due to his service-learning experience, David's body language got expressive when asked about how his service experience created opportunities later in life or beyond graduation. David stated, *my service-learning experience helped me get the job that I have now*. He also believes, he learned a great deal about networking and event planning through his service-learning experience. He shared that his service-learning experience not only helped him get a job but also gave him experience to develop a non-profit organization to send girls to school in Africa. David explained that his service-learning experience gave him a chance to meet different people he would have never come in to contact with by sitting in a classroom. He explained that the summer camps were rewarding experiences for him but he also learned that he hates planning the logistics that goes into a developing large event as a summer camp. David explained that he would rather be actually doing the events with youth. He stated:

When I am in the heat of things and flying by the seat of my pants, that's something I can do and do well. I enjoyed seeing the kids have fun and enjoy themselves during the camp. Just to see the kids elated about what they learned about peace and at the end of each peace camp they participated in a peace rally. The kids even made posters and we did a little march around the area. Usually we went down by an intersection and we would hold up a sign and yell give peace a chance, or whatever they come up with. Yeah it was fun.

While talking about the summer camp, this was the second time during the entire interview that DW got excited about sharing his experiences. He talked with hand movements and showed excitement and passion as he reflected about his service-learning experience. He went on to open-up and share that he believes that *service-learning changes lives*. At the end of the interview David stated, *looking back, I enjoyed my service-learning experience, meeting new people and then see them throughout the years afterwards. It was definitely a project that I enjoyed and I stuck with it for a couple of years*. In his current place of employment and years after graduating from college, David still participates in projects sponsored by the service-learning program at Washburn University.

Field notes from the interview session indicated that DW used the following key words or phrases including:

- *Learned leadership skills*
- *A chance to meet new people*
- *Worked with variety of community partners*
- *Made lots of new contacts*
- *Experience with event planning*
- *Obtained a job*

Overall the interview with David was good. However, it was hard at times get him to answer the interview questions completely. At the end of the interview David indicated that he had not looked over the interview questions ahead of the interview session.

David's survey data revealed that his service-learning experience lasted two years with a community organization that assisted youth with anger issues. While working in the

community, David created and ran a summer camp for youth that focused on finding peaceful ways to deal with situations other than violence. David's survey data identified skills gained through his experience as cultural awareness and community involvement. David explained that most of the individuals that he worked directly with were youth ranging in age from 5 to 11, and were from all races and genders. David's service-learning experiences last two years, he continued to run the summer camp for an additional three years following graduation.

Case #3 – Holly

The face-to-face interview with Holly was conducted via Skype which was the most convenient way to conduct this interview for this participant and lasted fifty-two minutes in duration. Holly spent four years working with the service-learning program at Washburn University. After graduating from college, Holly has traveled around the world with the Peace Corps before getting married and having a child. At the time of the interview she was living in the Midwest. Holly began the interview session by explaining that throughout her life she has volunteered on a regular basis with organizations in the community. She explained that the manager of the wildlife refuge told her about the service-learning program at Washburn University because he too had been in the service-learning program at Washburn University a few years prior to working with Holly. After contacting the service-learning program, Holly immediately got involved with the program and completed four years total with the service-learning program. Over the years, Holly continued with the wildlife refuge until she started working with a literacy tutoring program. The literacy

program provided tutoring to K-12 students and adult education. In addition to the K-12 program, Holly also was the supervisor for the adult education program.

Through her service-learning experience, she had the opportunity to attend multiple conferences to learn more about service-learning programs across the country. While attending the conferences, Holly explained that she did presentations on the literacy tutoring program she was involved in as a student. During a second conference experience, she learned how to develop community gardens. After returning to Washburn, Holly and other students started their own community garden with the help of a local business in the area. Holly described her favorite service-learning project to be the service-learning trip to Nicaragua where she help to provide fresh, clean water to a village.

Holly expressed that she learned a great deal about the community due to her service-learning experience. Holly stated:

I didn't really have an understanding of the kind of divide between the populations of the city in terms of wealth, disparity and standard of living. Working in the community brought light to that situation in my mind. It also helped resolve some stereotypes that I had and it taught me a lot about our social services agencies and local government.

Holly talked a great deal about the personal and professional skills she gained throughout her service-learning experience. She explained:

Service-learning forced a lot of organizational, logistical skills that I had no idea that I had. My service-learning experience made me more focused, kept me busy and kept me definitely driven more academically. My service-learning experience helped me select the graduate school I attended.

When discussing different aspects of the service-learning experiences, Holly's body language got expressive and I could see the excitement while remembering her favorite experiences.

She talked about how rewarding it was to get to pass on all the work that she had done to future service-learning students. Since graduating, she returned two years later to find those students she helped train are still training others to work with the literacy program. Holly described that moment by stating, *it was touching to know that a program I help develop is still doing the great work that I helped start in the community. Service-learning really made a positive impact on me and my life.*

As far as career opportunities, Holly believed that her service-learning experience has completely driven her career that she has now. She went on to state:

As I started the service-learning program, I was majoring in biology while in college. But once I got a chance to work with the literacy program and teach in a classroom as an educator and trainer, I absolutely loved it...I loved being constantly challenged. I loved education because I liked learning at the same rate as my students.

Holly described how her service-learning experience helped her to make the decision to join the Peace Corps. While in the Peace Corps, her practicum was in South Africa where she taught in a secondary school and also did community outreach by working in the community garden in the town. When asked if she thought her service-learning experiences changed her level of activism/advocacy, she replied, *definitely! Serving in the community has become a way of life.* Field notes revealed that while discussing her level of activism/advocacy that Holly smiled, got very expressive and showed passion while she spoke. Her service-learning experience had made her more aware of judgments, stereotypes and generalization. Holly talked about how she has a greater ease at looking at the whole picture as opposed to the more ethnocentric point of view of situations she finds herself when traveling around the world. Holly explained that she learned countless skills such as: leadership development,

time management, prioritizing, conflict resolution, cultural awareness, cultural communications, and community advocacy because of her service-learning experience. Since graduating from college, Holly has continued her service work by working with a community organization and volunteering on the weekends. Holly stated:

Community would not exist without supportive individuals who care and a population that comes together. If you only choose to only come together in a dire situation then that connection isn't there and you'll just have ever man for them self. Service-learning gave me a feeling of connection with others...it made me realize that you don't need necessarily need the faith based element to feel a since of community. Especially when living away from family, your community becomes your family.

At the end of the interview Holly shared her favorite service-learning story:

During a service-learning trip to Nicaragua we were digging a trench in a mountain region on a hillside. We were digging a trench for water irrigation for the farm which never had water irrigation. Up to that point the people who lived in the area, were having to in the morning walk with their buckets to water for miles and then walk back to their homes with the water to use. We worked so hard for four or five days, we had buried the hose and we were continuing to dig the trench when a fellow student struck the water hose and broke it in half. At that point we could do nothing more than just laugh it off, fix it and moved on. We learned from the people of the village that they face many problems and challenges in the region everyday but they fix them and move on. In addition to working on the water irrigation system, we also got the opportunity to work in an orphanage while in Nicaragua. It was an eye opener, because the orphanage wasn't a typical orphanage. It was a ten foot cement wall around a dirt floor and then about a six-by-six cement building that just had an oven in it, with no ventilation. So they were burning their cooking fire with no ventilation, in essence it was making them sick with a lifelong impact for their lungs. Their meal was nothing but squeezed plantains and cabbage. It wasn't very nutritious, but it was something to fill their stomachs. Also while we were there we learned that glue sniffing to get high was a problem. To kill the hunger pains children would sniff glue so they couldn't feel the pain. All the college students could see that growth stunting was a huge problem and was happening in all the children. I was holding this baby and the baby was supposedly almost a year old but the baby was only the length of a ruler. For the rest of my life, I will never forget my service-learning experiences...they definitely changed my career path, the way I view the world, interact with others and serve my community.

While sharing the above story, field notes revealed that Holly got emotional and teary eyed while talking about this service-learning experience. Throughout the entire interview session Holly was expressive, showed hand movements and showed passion as she discussed her service-learning experiences. Field notes from the interview session indicated that Holly used the following key words or phrases including:

- *Training opportunities*
- *Conducted presentations*
- *Learned about divisions of different communities*
- *Changed major due to service experience*
- *Will never forget my service-learning experience*
- *Got a job because of my service learning experience*
- *Provided networking opportunities*
- *Got to travel to different countries*

Holly's survey data revealed that her service-learning experience lasted four years with the same community organization. Holly explained that her service-learning experience came from teaching English as a Second Language and Adult Education courses in the community. During this time, Holly also supervised a literacy program and a Headstart program for young children in the community. Holly believed that her service-learning experience changed her career's ambitions and moved her toward the field of education. She stated, *since my service-learning experiences I have taught language, cross-cultural communication, service-learning project management in many countries.* She also identified skills gained through her experience as organizational skills, cultural awareness and

community involvement. Holly explained that most of the individuals that she worked with were of all ages, income levels, race/ethnicities and education levels. In addition, to working with the community organization, Holly also attended many service-learning conferences and went on numerous service-learning trips with Washburn University.

Case #4 – Kris

The face-to-face interview with Kris took place in a conference room at a local college which was located in the town she currently resides in the Midwest. The conference room was a standard meeting setting with several chairs around a large table. We were both seated at one end of the conference table while Kris was seated across from me. This was a private space that had been reserved specifically to conduct the interview. The interview session lasted forty-five minutes in duration.

Kris explained that her service-learning experience lasted for two years while in college and was a mediation/restitution program. The purpose of the program was to work with adolescents, to keep them from going into the prison system. Kris had a chance to work directly with the coordinator of the program where she helped with grant writing, conducted phone surveys, wrote public service announcements and set-up mediations visits between youth offenders and victims. Kris believed she learned a lot because she had never done this type of community work until her service-learning project. She stated:

While working in the community, I learned a lot more about the judicial system, learned even more about the school system, and learned the process of mediation. I even attended classes outside of college to become certified to conduct mediation.

Due to her service-learning project, Kris explained that she learned how crime affects victims and how mediation can help youth to give them another chance in life without going to jail. During her service-learning experience, Kris discussed how she learned a lot about her own biases and fears towards adolescents. Over time, she was able to begin to see youth in a different light, a different way. Kris stated, *before my service-learning project I hadn't realized how easily youth were discarded and put in the detention center...I wanted to create change to policies that effect youth in our community.* Kris described that the process of conducting mediation with youth offenders and their victims in the same room was little awkward at first, but she worked through the awkwardness by interviewing of both individuals separately beforehand. Kris revealed that by the end of each mediation session the youth offenders understood the inconvenience and pain they caused the victims and it was eye opening experience for the youth. Field notes revealed that Kris got emotional as she described a time while working with a young male offender. She stated:

I was working with one young man in the mediation program that was moved to tears while he talked to his victim and said he didn't realize it would hurt anyone and promised that he would never do anything like that again. He seemed like the one youth out of all the mediations sessions that really just made a mistake and was really going to change his life and equally the victim was touched by it. In the end, the victim asked for the youth not have to pay restitution but to do some work in the community. The most rewarding aspect of my service-learning project was being able to see change in the youth up close and personal. As a student you don't get that opportunity by sitting in a classroom but you do via service-learning.

When asked if service-learning affected her career choice she stated, *absolutely!* Kris believed that her service-learning experience created opportunities for her after graduation because she ended up getting a job working with individuals coming out of jail that were

required to obtain employment. Kris stated, *my service-learning experience gave me the confidence needed to work with offenders.*

Kris believed she views the world of community service differently as a result of her experiences with service-learning. She stated, *I enjoy helping and volunteer sometimes more than I have time for. My attitude has changed, before service-learning, I had a mindset that somebody else will do it and my now attitude is what if nobody else does it.* She explained the skills she gained due to her service-learning experience as confidence, leadership skills and more focused academically. At the end of the interview, Kris shared that she felt that it is important to get involved in the community. She stated:

If you're not involved you're not really helping your community. I no longer sit back and let everyone else do things to improve my community. I want to be involved, be a part of change and be a responsible member of my community. I would have never developed this type of attitude toward service nor done any community service without the service-learning program at Washburn University. My experience with service-learning developed such a hunger for community involvement for me.

The interview session with Kris was informative. At the beginning of the interview, Kris appeared to be unsure of the process and nervous about answering questions. However, as time went on, she opened up more and was much more at ease by the time the interview concluded. Although Kris was shy and reserved at times during the interview, she still provided to share needed information about her service-learning experience while in college and her current level of community service. Field notes from the interview session indicated that Kris used the following key words or phrases including:

- *Learned leadership skills*
- *Confidence builder*

- *Worked with variety of community partners*
- *Learned grant writing*
- *Give you the ability to meet new people*
- *Learned more about college*
- *Was able to see change in those who I was serving*
- *Obtained a job*
- *Received training*
- *Improved interview and writing skills*

Kris' survey data revealed that her service-learning experience lasted two years working with youth in the community. Kris had the opportunity to participate in juvenile mediation projects with the Center for Peace and Justice. She also completed various community service activities such as: park clean-ups and community painting projects. Kris believed there was an increase in integrity that was gained from her service-learning experience by being involved in the community. She stated, *I definitely learned a lot about mediation and restitution while doing my service-learning activity. It was an invaluable experience!* Kris further stated, *I am much more aware of the needs of my community and how the government has addressed those issues.* Kris explained that most of the individuals that she worked were youth with all different ethnic backgrounds and income levels. In the end, Kris shared: *My service-learning experience, led me to take a new approach when viewing my community and formulating solutions to social issues.*

Case #5 – Lisa

The face-to-face interview with Lisa was conducted via Skype which was the most convenient way to conduct this interview for the participant. The interview lasted fifty-five minutes in duration. At the time of the interview, Lisa had recently moved outside the state of Kansas but was still living in the Midwest where she works full-time for a local non-profit organization with youth and is attending graduate school.

While in college Lisa's service-learning experience lasted three years where she worked with a local hospice center with individuals receiving hospice care and sometimes provided bereavement care as well when needed. While Lisa described her service-learning experience, field notes revealed that she was expressive and made long lasting eye contact. In order to prepare for her work with the hospice organization, the organization provided extensive training on end of life issues, the grieving process and how to deal with families involved. She explained:

The hospice organization wanted to make sure I knew how difficult this type of work was going to be and they were very supportive if I had questions. They basically facilitated my interaction with the clients and the patients. In the end, I was grateful for the learning experience and the time and effort the organization put into making sure I was well educated about my role as a service-learning student.

Lisa went on to discuss that through her service-learning experience she learned how supportive the community was and how supportive community members can be towards others. Field notes revealed that Lisa appeared to be honestly grateful for what she had learned about the community during her service-learning experience. She stated, *the biggest thing that I learned is being able to understand where other people are coming from and respect their viewpoint.*

During the interview session, Lisa revealed that her most rewarding part about working with the hospice organization was being able to sit and talk with the individuals that she cared for. She stated, *they really enjoyed just having someone to talk to and just the joy that I was able to give them at such a crucial point in their life was incredibly rewarding.* Lisa revealed that this experience was one of the difficult things she have ever done, but it was probably also one of the most rewarding throughout her college experience. She stated, *being able to help people out when they need it the most and being able to comfort the people I worked with made the experience with it.* Lisa's body language got expressive, showed passion and smiled when asked if her service experience created opportunities later in life or beyond graduation. She stated,

Absolutely, with the service-learning program I had the opportunity to do so many different things. In addition to the work I did with the hospice, I went to Nicaragua for a service project and met such a diverse population. Honestly, just the opportunity to work with community members was such a valuable experience to have had and it's something I am going to take with me for the rest of my life...it made a huge impact on me personally and professionally. This experience changed my life.

Lisa believed that due to her service-learning experience she obtained a job because of the contacts she made and the outstanding letters of recommendation she received after graduating from college. She stated, *my service-learning experience gave me more that I could have ever asked for.*

Prior to her service-learning experience in college, she had been involved in volunteer work in her community through high school. However, Lisa explained that her level of community involvement escalated when she became involved in the service-learning

program at Washburn University. She stated, *my service-learning experience goes beyond just volunteering for an organization...you truly get to be a part of the organization and make a difference.* At the end of her second year with the service-learning program, she signed up to complete a third year because she really enjoyed being involved and helping the program. During her third year, she took on the responsibility of helping other students find community organizations to serve as service-learning partners. Lisa stated, *I really enjoyed being able help other students get involved in service-learning and provide guidance when needed.* Field notes revealed that Lisa smiled a great deal when talking about how she interacted with other students as a part of the service learning experience. Lisa explained that she gained many skills due to her service-learning experiences as communication skills, how to work with community partners, professionalism, organizational skills, how to multitask and fundraising. She stated, *looking back and reflecting on my experience, there were a lot of valuable things that I learned that I have applied to ah so many other areas of my life.* Lisa went on to explain that she believed it is important to get involved in the community in which you live and work. She stated, *whether people realize it or not, their community gives so much to them, they get so much from where they live and it's important to give back.*

The interview session with Lisa was informative and flowed more like a friendly conversation instead of a question/answer session. I could tell she loved working on the various projects and learned from those she came in contact with. Lisa made great eye contact, was expressive and showed passion while talking about her service-learning

experience while in college. Field notes from the interview session indicated that Lisa used the following key words or phrases including:

- *Training opportunities*
- *Supportive community*
- *Learned to respect others view points*
- *Communication skills improved*
- *Most rewarding experience of my life*
- *Got a job because of my service learning experience*
- *Think differently about people*
- *Learning more about my community*
- *Learning more about professionalism*

Lisa's survey data revealed that her service-learning experience lasted three years working with a local hospice organization. She believed that her service-learning experience impacted her deeply. She stated,

I gained leadership experience, delegation experience, organizational skills, and professionalism. I gained experience working in the community, collaborating with other organizations on projects, recruiting and organizing volunteers, and fundraising. Perhaps the most important experience I gained was learning how to make a difference and fight for social justice issues. I learned how to advocate for a cause and I found my voice. If I had not been involved in the service-learning program, I never would have gone to Nicaragua, which was a life changing experience. Participating in the Service-Learning Program was the best decision I have ever made.

Lisa explained that during her service-learning experience, she interacted with a very diverse group of people as young as 6 and adults as old as 92. She also encountered a variety of races, ethnic groups, and worked with both males and females on a regular basis. In the end, Lisa revealed that she also learned a great deal from her fellow service-learning peers during reflection sessions. Lisa stated, *through the reflection meetings, I learned how to process how I felt about the work I was doing in the community and how to understand the plight of the individuals I was working with.*

Case #6 – Lesley

The face-to-face interview with Lesley was conducted via Skype which was the most convenient way to conduct this interview because she was living outside the United States. At the time of the interview, Lesley was a teacher in Asia. The interview session lasted forty-one minutes in duration.

Lesley explained that during her first year as undergraduate studies at Washburn University, she was involved in the service-learning program which last four years total. She explained that she served in a variety of capacities with the service-learning program including: disaster relief projects, alternative break programs, Numana food packaging events, and as a camp counselor. Lesley believed that through these varied experiences, *she gained a better understanding of the culture we live in and the struggles that people encounter and learn to overcome in life.*

During her service-learning experiences, she worked with a variety of community partners. For example as counselor, she had the unique opportunity to work alongside kids

who had physical disabilities and to help them enjoy their summer. Lesley stated, *I sought to love each child and to show each child that they were important, smart and they could do things.* Lesley explained that this work allowed her to see how a service organization functions and how you can make a huge difference in the lives of those you touch. While working in the community, Lesley noticed how obesity has become a more prevalent issue especially among the low-income families. She explained that at the summer camp they would receive donations of 150-300 calorie brownies and cakes, but fresh fruits and vegetables had to be purchased. Lesley stated, *because of the service-learning opportunities I had in college, I have become an advocate for those who don't have a voice against injustices they experience.* Throughout the interview, field notes revealed that Lesley often got expressive, laughed a lot and used hand movements while talking. Lesley described her most rewarding parts of her service-learning experiences to be getting to know the people from different communities and organizations. During her service-learning experience, she believed that the most valuable professional skill gained was the ability to networking with others. She stated, *I now have a great desire for community involvement which is because of the service-learning experiences I had in college. I find myself encouraging my own students to look for ways they can serve their community.* Due to her service-learning experience, Lesley explained that she is more aware of the needs of others in her community. She recognizes that when she is serving others she *makes sure to treat them with dignity and increase their self-worth rather than make them feel helpless.* Lesley felt she grew as a leader, an advocate, an organizer and a visionary during her service-learning experience.

She stated, *I learned about teaching, mentoring, needs of the hungry and how to respect the community I served in.* By serving in the community, she explained that she can better understanding and appreciation the community and world she lives in.

Field notes from the interview session indicated that Lesley used the following key words or phrases including:

- *Gained better understanding of the culture we live in*
- *Worked with variety of community partners*
- *Learned how service organizations function*
- *Learned how obesity is more prevalent among lower class*
- *Became an advocate for others who don't have a voice against injustices*
- *Obtained networking skills*
- *Became more aware of the needs of those around me*
- *Grew as a leader, advocate, organizer and visionary.*

Lesley's survey data revealed that her service-learning experience lasted four years working with an afterschool tutoring program in the community. In addition, she also participated in service-learning projects such as: disaster relief efforts, Numana food packing events and served as a camp counselor. Lesley's survey data identified skills gained through her experience as cultural awareness, confidence and learned to advocate for others. She stated,

I gained a cultural awareness by working on projects with others from diverse populations. I grew in my leadership abilities to cast a vision for change and to draw others into the service. My confidence increased and I am now more of an advocate for the under-served than I was before my service-learning experience.

Lesley explained that most of the individuals that she worked with were youth 6 to 16 years old and many were from minority groups such as African American and Latino. Throughout her service-learning experience, Lesley explained: *I saw the impact of obesity, poverty and illiteracy among children as major social issues that need to be addressed which is why I became an advocate for those who don't have a voice.*

Case #7 – Nate

The face-to-face interview with Nate was conducted via Skype which was the most convenient way to conduct this interview. The interview lasted fifty-eight minutes in duration. At the time of the interview Nate was living in the Midwest where he works full-time for city government.

While in college Nate participated in the service-learning program for two years. He explained that one of his largest service-learning projects was when he organized a group of seventy-two students to travel over spring break to New Orleans, after hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast. Overall, Nate shared that he completed a lot of other projects with the service-learning program at Washburn University, but this was the biggest project he ever planned and organized. For the New Orleans project, Nate explained that he recruited ten organizations in the community that supported the project. This gave him great exposure working with community partners. Nate stated, *it was really the entire community that went to New Orleans over spring break...without everyone's help the group would have never of made the trip happen.* The second service-learning project Nate described was a trip to Ocean Springs, Mississippi over winter break. He again worked with the community partners for assistance with donations and funding for the trip. Throughout his service-

learning project, Nate learned that service-learning work isn't easy. He stated, *people think it's going to be fun and easy but it is a lot of hard work. A good service-learning project takes time to develop...it is not a one-time project.* Nate explained that he learned a lot about people from different parts of the United States. He stated, *looking back on the experience, I had the opportunity to work with a diverse population and learn about different cultures.* During his two service-learning trips, Nate revealed that he knew that he and his peers made a difference in individual lives and in the communities of New Orleans and Ocean Springs. He explained that during the trips they were surrounded by the devastation caused by the hurricane but that did not stop them from getting work done. Field notes revealed that Nate got very expressive and made lasting eye contact when explaining his service experiences in New Orleans and Ocean Springs.

Nate explained that his service-learning experience created opportunities for him after college. Nate stated, *it opened up so many different doors for me. I ended up getting into a highly competitive graduate program.* Field notes revealed that Nate appeared to be honestly grateful for opportunity to complete the service-learning program and the way it positively affected his future. Nate went on to discuss that he now has a better awareness of the importance of being involved in the community. Nate explained that before service-learning he didn't really understand all the needs that were out there, and that people really need to get invested in their community. Nate described that he gained leadership, organization and communication skills due to his service-learning experience. He stated, *my service-learning experience gave me confidence which has helped improved the way I communicate with others and my ability to think critically.* Since his service-learning

experience in college, Nate has worked with other community organizations and civic groups. He is now organizing large groups of his co-workers to volunteer in the community where he now resides. Nate stated, *you never know who you will meet while during a service project*. Field notes revealed Nate smiled when answering almost every question during the interview process. He was expressive and showed passion as he shared his experience. At the end of the interview Nate, shared his favorite service-learning story as he stated:

Some of the best memories I have were sitting with other students and advisors reflecting on our service-learning work. Service-learning basically ignites a passion in students to get out in your community and see what we can do. I never would have imagined leaving the state for a service project but ended up leading seventy-two students on a spring break service-learning trip that was unbelievable. None of the students complained about the work that had to be done...they were ready for anything. They got up every morning ready to start working, cleaning, gutting houses, cleaning debris from the yards.

During the interview session, Nate was very willing to share his experiences with service-learning while in college and after college. Field notes from the interview session indicated that Nate used the following key words or phrases including:

- *Service-learning is not as easy as other might think*
- *Learned about people*
- *Learned to handle difficult situation that may occur*
- *Communication skills improved*
- *Gained leadership skills*
- *Got a job because of my service learning experience*
- *Think differently about people*
- *Built confidence*
- *Importance of being involved in your community.*

Nate's survey data revealed that his service-learning experience lasted two years working with youth in the community. Nate organized two different service-learning trips to help with hurricane relief. Nate's survey data revealed that he believed that his service-learning experience benefited his entire life. He stated,

My life is vastly different because of my service-learning experience in college. I am the person I am today because of the experience. It's amazing to be able to help other people and make a difference in the community and is why I got involved with the Service-Learning Program at Washburn University. What I didn't expect was the growth I gained in organizing people and projects, being a leader, being counted on to follow-through and just being able to better understand the needs of people.

Nate explained that most of the individuals that he worked with were college students from all races and genders. Nate stated: *I enjoyed networking with others who care about similar issues and not to only look at social problems in isolation but work together, we found ways to help individuals who face social issues every day.*

Case #8 – Susan

The face-to-face interview with Susan was conducted via Skype which was the most convenient way to conduct this interview. The interview lasted forty-eight minutes in duration. At the time of the interview Susan was living in the Midwest where she works full-time.

While in college Susan spent two years working with the service-learning program at Washburn University. Her service-learning experience was working with a community organization which provided free services to survivors of sexual and domestic violence which included: a 24-hour hotline, emergency shelter, counseling, case management, support groups, public education outreach, protection from abuse/stalking order support, and

advocacy. By working in the community, Susan explained that she learned that often a victim's experience is tangled with other issues such as substance abuse, chronic homelessness, single parenthood and mental health issues which can make sorting through them and accessing support a challenge and increase their barriers to independence. Susan stated:

I learned how traumatic it is to live with an offender in the home for not only the adult being abused, but the children who don't get to choose where they live or grow up. I learned how resilient people are and to empathize with their story even though my own personal story doesn't reflect the same terrifying moments.

Susan described her most rewarding part of your service-learning experiences to be while she was working in the battered women shelter where she felt she had the most impact because of the relationships she built over time. Throughout the service-learning experience, Susan explained that she became very passionate about her involvement in ending violence against women. Field notes revealed that Susan got expressive and emotional when describing her time working in the shelter.

As a result of her service-learning experience, Susan believed that her career was affected in a positive way and she gained valuable skills working in the community which was unlike what she was learning in a classroom. Susan explained that the service-learning program also changed her level of activism/advocacy within the community. Susan stated, *my involvement in service-learning supported my level of involvement and made me feel less isolated because it helped me join forces with other like-minded individuals.* Susan described the skills gained due to her service-learning experience as an increased confidence, developed good listening, communication and problem solving skills. Since graduating from

college, Susan is still active in her community and supports different civic organizations. She stated, *it's important to invest yourself in the community because it really does take a village.*

During the interview session, Susan was expressive while sharing her experiences with service-learning while in college. Field notes from the interview session indicated that Susan used the following key words or phrases including:

- *Became educated about social issues like domestic violence*
- *Learned to listen to others*
- *Gained knowledge about what is happening in my community*
- *Learned how resilient people are and to empathize with others*
- *Service-learning provided the feeling that I was making a difference*
- *Obtained employment because of service-learning experience*
- *Made me feel less isolated*
- *Brought out a sense of dedication to work*
- *Helped build confidence.*

Susan's survey data revealed that her service-learning experience lasted two years working with victims of sexual and domestic abuse in the community. While working in the community, Susan served as a court advocate and assisted with individual and group counseling sessions for abused women/children. Susan's survey data identified skills gained through her experience as community involvement, sexual and domestic violence education, victim's perspective, and knowledge of batterers. Susan explained that most of the individuals that she worked with were women of all socioeconomic status, race, religion,

sexuality, education level—along with their children, infant to 17 year olds, males and females. Susan stated: *I developed a heightened awareness about social issues, such as the lack of victim safety due to weak punishment for offender's crimes (when caught) and that hurting someone is less of an offense than getting caught with drugs.*

Case #9 – Mary

The face-to-face interview with Mary was conducted via Skype which was the most convenient way to conduct this interview. The interview lasted fifty-nine minutes in duration. At the time of the interview Mary was living in the Midwest where she is attending graduate school full-time. Throughout the two years she spent in the service-learning program, Mary was able to describe many ways that service-learning influenced her as an undergraduate student. While in college, Mary's primary service-learning site was working with a neighborhood association near the university. Mary explained that in order to provide a service to the community, the university created a summer camp for the kids living near the university. The camp was designed be low-cost for the parents but still appealing to kids over the summer. Mary organized learning activates that were fun for the kids and designed to improve their reading and math skills. She also organized field trips every week, including spending time at the university. Mary explained that she organized a science week and had college faculty members conducted different science experiments for camp. The primary goal was to provide a safe summer place for kids to learn new experiences over the summer months.

Through the service-learning experience, Mary felt that the biggest thing she learned from the whole experience was to be open and listen. She stated, *service-learning taught me*

to be more understanding and open. You never know what someone's background is or what they have been through. Field notes revealed that Mary smiled when talking about the summer camp; she was very expressive and showed passion about the skills she gained during her service-learning experience. Mary explained that during her service-learning experience there was never a time she felt more awkward but she learned from the experience and turned it into something positive. She described that the first day at her service site when she left thinking this is probably the worst idea she ever had and by the end of the summer she bawled her eyes out and was so sad it was over. Mary stated, *looking back on this experience, I would tell others that it is so easy to have a thousand reasons not to get involved but by the end you never know what you're going to get out of it.* Mary described the skills gained due to her service-learning experience as: an increase of organizational skills, built her confidence, team building, conflict resolution and the capability to break down-down biases. She stated,

During my service experience there is no other place you are confronted more with so many personalities and so many different opinions. You learn to work towards a common goal which can prepare you for graduate school or the workplace.

Mary shared that her service-learning opportunity gave her a voice to stand up for injustice and gave her the confidence to finish college and pursue graduate school. As a result of her service-learning experience, Mary explained that it brought out biases that she was forced to deal with it. She stated, *I learned not to make snap judgment just because someone looks a certain way or acts a certain way.* Since graduating, Mary is still involved in the community by working with an outreach program providing meals to homeless individuals during lunch.

She shared that her service-learning experience helped her figure out who she was as a person, what her beliefs are and the things she was passionate about. Mary stated, *I have nothing bad to say about my service experience in college, I loved it. It was probably one of the best things I ever did.* In the end of the interview Mary shared her favorite service-learning story:

At the summer camp, I got to know this one young kid who we will call Johnny, who was 10 years old. He had this really bubbly personality, was very friendly and talked to everybody. Due to a heat advisory we took everyone to university to stay cool. As we were getting everyone inside and they were all sitting down, I realized Johnny had not come back into the building. I couldn't figure out what was going on so I walked out to the parking lot and found him with another camp counselor. Johnny was in tears, just pouring down his face. I asked what happen, she said, I have no idea, he just started crying, he wouldn't talk and we sat there for twenty minutes. Finally I found a piece of paper in my backpack and I told him to write down what he was upset about or who he was mad at and he wrote down "my mom." So I thought he had an argument or something. I was trying to ask him what had happened or say something. Did you have a fight? No he said...he was mad because she had died. I finally realized it was a year to the day of her death. I had to end up calling his grandmother who he was living with to talk to him and try to calm him down. I sat there for an hour and a half with him, while he cried. That was the saddest thing and finally he started talking. He was angry at his dad because his dad was in jail and his mom had died. He was mad and how do you deal with something like that when you're ten years old. After all the kids left for the day I have never cried so hard in my life. As time went on and the weeks by, I learned his response to everything was anger and he had a very short temper but didn't know how to deal with emotions like that at such a young age. For the rest of the camp, we worked with him on his anger and the way he lashed out at others. During the last day of camp, his grandma pulled me aside to thank me for not giving up on Johnny and giving him the extra attention he needed. Service-learning transformed the way I think about others and my own life.

As Mary reflected on service-learning experience, she got emotional and teary eyed. I could tell she was deeply affected by her service experience and enjoyed sharing her stories.

Field notes from the interview session indicated that Mary used the following key words or phrases including:

- *Gave me confidence*
- *Worked with variety of community partners*
- *Service-learning help give me passion about a cause or a community organization*
- *Give you the ability to meet new people*
- *Became an advocate for others who don't have a voice against injustices*
- *Breaks down biases*
- *Became more aware of the needs of others.*

Mary's survey data revealed that her service-learning experience lasted two years working with youth in the community. Mary worked in a distribution center to organize donations during the holidays and participated in several service-learning trips. Mary's survey data revealed that she had been involved in volunteerism and community service before she entered college. Through the service-learning program at Washburn University she explained that she *learned how to work with a diverse set of people, all of whom have different backgrounds, levels of education and had different beliefs. It was also a great way to develop both cultural and community awareness.* Mary revealed that most of the individuals that she worked with were from different ethnic groups, varying levels of education levels, adults and children. Mary revealed that she has been involved with service work her whole life and that the service-learning program at Washburn University was a

great way to continue her service work while in college. Mary shared, *working closely with different service programs made me aware of social issues that I didn't even know existed. It was great to work with different people, all working towards the common goal of making the community a better place to live.*

Case #10 – Joe

The face-to-face interview with Joe was conducted via Skype which was the most convenient way to conduct this interview. The interview lasted fifty-one minutes in duration. At the time of the interview, Joe was living outside the United States where he worked full-time.

While in college, Joe's service-learning experiences lasted three years where he worked with an afterschool program as a tutor and a project assistant. Joe also attended two service-learning trips outside the state of Kansas. One took place in Nicaragua and the other took place in Louisiana. With the afterschool program, Joe worked with youth from the ages of kindergarten through eighth grade. He explained that he developed a great relationship with the staff that was running the program and the students that attended afterschool. Joe described his most rewarding relationship was with the students that he had a chance to see every day. Joe stated, *they just become a part of my life and I become a part of their life. I learned a lot from all of them.* From the afterschool program Joe explained that he learned that what makes the biggest difference for the child is their home life and how it would carry on into their social and school lives. He explained that when he started the service-learning program, he didn't have any fears or biases. Joe explained that he was so motivated to help and be a part of something different than going to classes then to work. Joe stated, *the*

afterschool program and the service-learning trips were the most incredible experiences for me; they shaped me as a person and changed my path for a college. As a result, Joe's personal challenge is to find opportunities to help in the community everywhere and anywhere. He explained that with every project he had the opportunity to learn something and it has provided him the opportunity to learn about himself. Joe stated:

While in Nicaragua it was my first experience to work with people living in a poverty stricken area of the world. After returning I felt like that it was my obligation to help because I have the ability and the will to make a change in others' lives.

Joe believed that his service-learning experience influenced his career and built valuable skills for his future such as: conflict resolution, fundraising, organizational skills, leadership development, and how to work with difficult people. At the end of the interview, Joe shared his favorite service-learning story:

At the afterschool program that I was working at in college, I met a young boy that we will call Jack who also had a little brother who attended the program. Both boys came from a broken home...Jack and his little brother had bad behavior issues every day. They would run around and cause all kinds of problems but when I finally got Jack to settle down he was a good kid. After I got to know Jack he finally calmed down and was always willing to help out. I remember I brought a couple of activities to the program for the kids to try after they completed their homework. One of activities was poi spinning; which is a visual performance with lights on the end string. Jack was really excited and it motivated him to complete his homework. The others kids in the program lost interest in poi spinning but Jack really took a liking to it. Every day we would practice and one day he asked if he could do it for his talent show at his school. So every day we would practice after he finished his homework. By the time the talent show arrived, he was advanced in poi spinning when most of the time it takes normally a couple of weeks to learn, he learned in a couple of days, amazing. Upon Jack's request, I attended the talent show at his school. After he did his performance, he got a huge applause, his mom began to cry and he ran over to me and said "did you see me...did you see me." He was beaming and was proud of his performance. He went over to his mom and gave her a big hug because she was crying. This was the most memorable experience of my service-learning project at the afterschool program. I not only taught Jack to be creative but he taught me reliability, patience and compassion.

As Joe reflected on his service-learning experience, he got excited about the information he was sharing. I could tell he was deeply affected by his service experience and enjoyed sharing his stories even though he was located in a different country at the time of the interview. Field notes from the interview session indicated that Joe used the following key words or phrases including:

- *Conflict resolution*
- *Built organizational skills*
- *Leadership develop*
- *How to work better with others*
- *Confidence builder*
- *Travel experience*
- *The ability to meet new people*
- *Was able to see change in others.*

Joe's survey data revealed that his service-learning experience lasted three years working with youth in an afterschool program. Joe also participated in several service-learning trips. Joe explained that he had the opportunity to work with youth from low income families and became more aware of issues that start at the family level such as: poor study habits, nutrition and violence. Joe's survey data identified skills gained through his experience as cultural awareness and organizations skills. Joe explained that most of the individuals that he worked directly with were at-risk youth from kindergarten through eighth grade of all races and genders.

Interview Section Summary

The above section presented a summary of each within-case interview and survey with a case study participant. The summaries were written to present the context of the survey/interview and to highlight the service-learning experience during and after college. The greatest commonality across all the within-cases was that service-learning is worthwhile. All of the within-case study participants discussed that service-learning has the power to be an educational experience for those involved while in college, and long after they have graduated. It was revealed that service-learning has the power to increase community awareness and create strong community involvement. Community involvement became apparent as the within-case study participants were able to reflect and describe in detail their service experience several years after graduating from college. All of the within-case study participants acknowledged they gained skills due to their service experience while in college. The next section will begin a deeper analysis of the data organized by research question.

Case Study Participants

Out of the 28 individuals who responded to the web-based survey, ten were selected for the embedded case studies. The criterion for the case study included university graduates with long-term involvement in service-learning experience between 2001 and 2010, and have been out of college for at least two years. The selection of the participants was also based on the extent to which their responses generated thick description: 1) comments containing specific details about the service experience; 2) comments mentioning specific people, places, or events; and 3) comments containing the former students' feelings about their service-learning experience. The ten participants selected for face-to-face interviews included seven females

and three males. The interview participants were now living in different cities in the United States and as far away as Finland and China. Of the ten face-to-face interviews that were conducted, two interviews were in-person and eight were completed using the web-based computer program, Skype. The two in-person interviews took place in Topeka, Kansas; one at the participant's office and the other in a conference room at Washburn University. Due to the geographic location of the rest of the interview participants, Skype proved to be an effective way to connect with the interview participants without delaying the data collection process. By using Skype, I was still able to see and hear how each interview participant answered the interview questions and talked about their service-learning experiences. In this study, when quoting the research participants, italicized text was used when their quote was 40 words or less. When participant quotes were greater than 40 words, they are formatted as italic, block quotes, single space. If it is a direct quote from literature, it is not in italic. This method was recommended by the graduate studies office to help the reader separate the voices among the researcher, the literature and primary sources. The method used is different from guidelines set by the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA). According the APA guidelines, quotes of 40 words or more are usually single space blocked, if quotes are less than 40 words they are in text paragraph, regular font—no italics.

A Prelude to the Findings

This study provided a forum to explore the ways that service-learning influenced undergraduate students while in college and their current level of community involvement following graduation. Several conclusions can be made from the findings: Service-learning

increases community awareness and creates strong community involvement. Service-learning participation leads to personal growth and development. Exposure to service-learning activities while in college leads to lasting behavioral changes among those who participate.

Research Findings

In this study, I reached out to university graduates who were involved in a service-learning program while in college. I wanted to listen to their perspectives of service-learning. I was curious to learn how service-learning shaped students while in college. I was also curious about whether their involvement in community activities had continued following graduation from college. Using the research participant's voice, this section will address the research findings and emphasize the true essence of what service-learning meant to undergraduate students in higher education. The researcher formulated three questions to specifically address the research topic. The three research questions explored through this study were:

1. What types of service-learning activities do students engage in while in college?
2. What are the perceived benefits of participation in service-learning?
3. What do students do to continue service-learning after graduation?

Using the research questions, e-mail survey, participant interviews and documents, I was able to collect information on the true essence of the service-learning experience. The discussion below highlights the findings based on the research questions.

RQ 1: What types of Service-Learning Activities do Students Engage in while in College?

College level service-learning activities go beyond simply helping out and volunteering. This study found that while in college the participants of this study were active in their community through service-learning in school-based and community-based programs. Interview participant #1 discussed involvement in a literacy program by sharing:

While in college I started a literacy program. After my service-learning experience concluded I returned three years later to find the program that I started and those that I trained were still training others. It was touching to see that the program I helped develop was still doing great work in the community, it really impacted me.

Interview participant #6 shared an example of working as an advocate for others by stating, *Due to the service-learning activities I had while in college, I am now an advocate for those who don't have a voice against the injustices they experience.* Interview participant #4

worked as an advocate for youth in the community while in college by explaining, *I worked with adolescents, to keep them from going into the prison system by using meditation and restitution.* By serving as an advocate for women in the community, interview participant #8 added,

I helped provide services to survivors of sexual and domestic violence. This was a valuable experience because I got to work alongside the staff, in the end it turned out to be the most influential time of my education because I learned the most about being a social worker in the field.

Interview participant #2 explained involvement in an after-school program by stating, *while in college, a classmate and I helped run camp for kids. Eventually, we took that project over and ran the program for four years.* Interview participant #5 provided an example of working with a health organization by adding, *I provided respite care for people under*

hospice care and sometimes I provided bereavement care for their family members as well.

Interview participant #9 discussed working with a neighborhood program while in college by stating:

Where the university is located there was a pretty significant divide, just one single street between goes from the wealthy side of town to the bad side of town. In that area there were kids extremely at risk from low income households. In order to provide a service to the community the college created a camp for kids living in that neighborhood. Other camps in the community were expensive for families, especially families with multiple children. So my service-learning project was to design a camp that was low cost for the parents but still appealing with kids. So we developed fun activities to help kids improve math, reading and science.

These findings demonstrated the broad experiences of students involved in service-learning programs. Comments from the participants also show that service-learning activities go far beyond the college campus. For example, the participants of this study were active in their community through service-learning in the following ways: literacy programs, health organizations, after-school programs, advocacy groups and neighborhood associations. The influence of service-learning activities is substantial and lasting; the time and effort that individuals put into these activities extend beyond good will and good deeds.

RQ 2: What are the Perceived Benefits of Participation in Service-Learning?

In order for service-learning to work effectively you must have students who are willing to learn in a different manner. Students learning in a service-learning environment face real-life, real-world challenges while working in the community. Students working in these situations create options, develop resiliency, learn persistence and identify new avenues of approach when facing challenges; this type of learning is something that is much different

than learning in a traditional classroom setting (Kaye, 2010). Service-learning activities afford the individuals who participate the opportunity to venture out into the real-world, providing them with a valuable form of education. The knowledge and experiences gained from the service-learning activity cannot be taken away; these perceived benefits are lasting and play an important role in the service-learning experience.

The participants identified a number of benefits received from participation in the service-learning program. Three themes emerged from the data which included: Theme #1: Community Awareness/Involvement, which also included two interpretive codes, Community Outreach and Addressing Issues. Theme #2: Personal Growth and Development, which also included two interpretive codes, Development of Self and Career Development. Theme #3: Reflective Change which also included two interpretive codes, Accepting Differences and Personal Insight.

Theme #1: Community Awareness/Involvement

The first theme identified was Community Awareness/Involvement, which was defined as the link between community outreach and the desire to learn more about addressing issues that exist in the community. The two interpretive codes which made up the theme Community Awareness/Involvement were identified as Community Outreach and Addressing Issues. Community Outreach was defined as the way the study participants identify their growing sense of responsibility to do something about their community problems. Addressing Issues was defined as an experience that leads students to want to learn about an issue that impacts their society.

Based on the interpretive code of community outreach, students in service-learning programs have become active members in the community, to help address community problems and learn in a different way (Jacoby, 1996). Interview participant #8 discussed community outreach by stating, *it's important to invest yourself in the community because it really does take a village. Systems don't get changed without the work of activists. Everyone's story is personal and unique, but so often not considered or included.* Interview participant #1 stated, *during my service-learning experience I was able to educate the public on mental health issues.* Interview participant #3 added, *in the community I serviced as a literacy program tutor and supervised the adult education program. I also recruited other classmates to become tutors in the community.*

When discussing service-learning, it is the importance of community outreach that meets real community needs that benefits all those involved (Billig & Kraft, 1998; Burns, 1998; Education Commission of the States, 2002; National Commission on Service-Learning, 2002; National Service-Learning Cooperative, 1998; Scales & Roehlkepartain, 2004). Interview participant #7 reached out to the New Orleans community by stating, *the largest service-learning experience I had was organizing a trip of seventy-two college students to help with clean-up efforts after Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast.* In the Eyler and Giles study (1999), 66% of students believed their service met a community need fairly often or very often. Interview participant #6, supported this by stating:

Due to my service-learning opportunities I had in college, I noticed how obesity is becoming a more prevalent issue especially among low income families. However, I came to recognize that the blame or cause for this issue cannot be placed solely on low income families. In fact, it is cheaper to buy the food loaded with high-fructose corn syrup and fat, it is no surprise that it is those products that many low income families call their meals. Moreover, at my service site we would receive donations

from big food corporations. I was amazed that they would donate the 150-300 calorie brownies and cakes, but fresh fruits and vegetables the organization had to purchase.

Interview participant #10 also supported this by adding, *after completing 1200 hundred hours of service work at the afterschool program, the youth I was working with began to rely on me as if I were part of the full-time staff.*

Researchers with the National Service-Learning Cooperative (1998) distinguished service-learning from other educational methods in that, “at its very core is the emphasis on efforts to meet genuine community needs, to make a difference in ways both students and the community see as important and worthwhile” (p. 4). Interview participant #9 supported the above statement by sharing, *once you step-out and make a difference in your community it enhances every aspect your life and community.*

Due to their participation in community outreach programs, the study participants could identify their growing sense of responsibility to community issues. This is supported by Eyler, Giles and Schmiede (1996) who point out students involved in service-learning programs which combined structured reflection with service are more likely to talk about what they had learned about social issues, and also how their perspective about community problems change over time. In addition, Eyler, Giles and Schmiede reported, “students who are engaged in service-learning incorporate greater dimensions of the experience and are much more likely to report a sense of application of ideas to social problems and an understanding of the problem and issues surrounding them” (1996, p. 16).

Based on the interpretive code of addressing issues, the interview and survey results showed that all participants learned more about social problems which led them to want to learn about an issue that impacts their society. Interview participant #1 stated:

One of the biggest things I learned was how uneducated in general the population was with regards to mental illness. This was evident in our educational outreach and the questions/responses the director and I would receive when evaluating the program. Another big thing I learned was how divided the community was in regards to their feelings about mental health and peer-to-peer rehabilitation.

Janet Eyler (2000) stated, “Service-learning allows students to confront issues and problems in complex natural contexts, helps students to develop a deeper understanding of subject matter, students learn how the community decision-making processes work and ways of transferring knowledge into practical application” (p. 12). Interview participant #8 stated:

I developed a heightened awareness about social issues, such as the lack of victim safety due to weak punishment for offender’s crimes (when caught) and that hurting someone is less of an offense than getting caught with drugs. During my service-learning experience, I became more equipped in arguments about abuse of women, children, welfare, etc... I became more aware about the ignorance of domestic violence and substance abuse in the community.

Interview participant #4 further shared:

From my service-learning experiences, I now believe everyone deserves a second chance, instead of just automatically putting youth in detention centers. I hadn’t realized how easily they are discarded and are labeled as “no good youth” instead of giving them a second chance to prove otherwise. I want to be that person who is working in the community to create social change and address policies that effect youth in our community.

Several of the survey respondents discussed how their service-learning experiences lead to an increased awareness of social needs. One survey respondent shared, *because of my service-learning opportunity, life changing experiences occurred during this part of my life. I*

learned more about the hardships of poverty and the great need for social and economic justice. Another survey respondent added,

I am more aware of the needs of my community and how the government addresses social issues (well or poorly). My service-learning experience, led me to take a new approach when viewing my community and formulating solutions to social issues.

Interview participant #3 stated:

Before my service-learning experience, I didn't really have an understanding of the divides between the populations in the area I was working in terms of social issues such as: wealth, disparity and standards of living. Working in the community brought light to that situation in my mind. It also helped me resolve some stereotypes that I had and taught me a lot about our social services agencies and local government.

When students learn in a community-based setting, they have the opportunity for true, meaningful application of their knowledge and skills and they are able to integrate all they have learned and apply it in a community-based situation (Burns, 1998; Scales & Roehlkepartain, 2004). Interview participant #5 confirmed this by stating:

I learned that many social issues are tangled with other issues such as substance abuse, chronic homelessness, single parenthood and mental health issues which can make sorting through them and accessing support a challenge and increase their barriers to independence. I gained knowledge about what is happening in my community and learned how to address issues instead of looking the other way.

Interview participant #9 further shared:

Where our university is located had a pretty significant divide, just one single street separates the wealthy side of town from the low-income side of town. In that area there were kids extremely at risk, and families living in poverty. In order to provide a service to the community, the college created a summer camp for the kids living in the low income area. Other summer camps in the community were expensive for families, especially families with multiple children. So my service-learning project was to design a camp that was low cost for the parents but still appealing with kids. Normally we would try to target learning activities that were fun for the kids and

improve their learning skills. Instead we focused on literacy and improving math skills which was the biggest social issues that needed to be addressed. We did field trips every week including spending time at Washburn University so the youth would feel comfortable on a college campus and see that going to college should be goal for them one day.

Students involved in service-learning programs are able to extend their learning beyond the classroom, by participating in projects that meet genuine community needs (Scales & Roehlkepartain, 2004). Interview participant # 1 explained, *I used what I learned in the classroom to organize different events to get youth to be active in the community and educate them on different ways to handle situations in their lives without resulting in violence.* The participant experiences above show that service-learning teaches one how to address important issues which impact society and the importance of community outreach.

Theme #2: Personal Growth & Development

The second theme identified was Personal Growth & Development, which was defined as a link between personal meanings gained from a service experience and career preparation. The two interpretive codes which made up the theme of Personal Growth & Development were identified as Development of Self and Career Development. Development of Self was defined as the opportunity to gain personal meaning from a service experience to enhance a sense of self. Career Development was defined as the progression in a chosen profession.

Based on the interpretive code of development of self, it was clear that all study participants, from interviews and survey results, believed that service-learning helped them in so many different ways, it's not just about learning, it helped them become more self-

assured. The survey responses revealed the following personal characteristics that were developed as a result of their service-learning experience: Confidence, Self-esteem, Compassion, Understanding, Empathy, Leadership skills, and Decision-making skills. Several interview participants added the following statements regarding their increase in personal character traits due to their service-learning activity:

I grew as a leader, an advocate, an organizer and a visionary. Moreover, I learned about teaching, mentoring and how respect the community I served in (Interview participant #6).

I learned so many skills such as confidence, team building, conflict management and the capability to break down biases (Interview participant #9).

From the youth at the afterschool program, I learned reliability, compassion and patience (Interview participant #10).

It provided me with the ability to develop skills in communication, leadership and planning. I also learned how to recruit volunteers, fundraise, how to sustain programs and advocacy skills (Interview participant #1).

The most rewarding aspect of the project was being able to see change in the youth up close and personal. As a student you don't get that opportunity by sitting in a classroom but you do via service-learning (Interview participant #4).

Socially, students who participate in service-learning report a positive impact on their own social responsibility, civic attitudes, and volunteerism (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Interview

Respondent #8 stated:

I've gained the ability to believe in myself and an increase in my confidence level. No other college experience has even done that for me. I've developed good listening, communication and problem solving skills. I never dreamed I would walk away gaining so many life skills.

Several interview participants began their service-learning experience with a degree of uncertainty, but by the end of the project, respondents discussed their transformation.

Interview participant #9 shared:

During my service-learning experience there was never a time I felt more awkward but I learned from the experience and turned it into something positive. For example, the first day I left thinking this is probably the worst idea I have ever had and by the end of the summer I bawled my eyes out and was so sad it was over. Looking back on this experience, I would tell others that it is so easy to have a thousand and one reasons not to get involved. However, by end of the project you never know what benefit you're going to get out of it.

Interview participant #4 further added, *my attitude has changed, before service-learning I was more of somebody else will do it and my now attitude is it more of what if nobody else does it.* As the statements above show, one benefit of service-learning on self-development is a greater sense of self-worth due to the service experience. Watkins and Braun (2005) state, service-learning experiences help students to be more aware of their inner world while they become more acquainted and involved in the outer world. Interview participant #3 shared, *servicing the community just became a part of my life. I will never forget my service-learning experience...it definitely changed the way I view the world, interact with people and serve my community.* Service-learning experiences help students acquire a greater sense of who they are as civic-minded, socially conscious persons, students and pre-professionals.

Based on the interpretive code of career development, the data analyzed showed a strong connection between service-learning and progression in a chosen profession.

According to Jacoby, "Students who are progressively more involved in service-learning throughout their college years gain a wealth of experience that can be very attractive for

graduate admissions, committees and employers” (Jacoby, 1996, p. 225). Interview participant #1 shared:

My service-learning experience went above and beyond opening doors and is still doing so in my life and profession. For starters, it provided me with the skills needed for any occupation such as communication, organization and planning. The service experience gave me the confidence I needed to obtain a job right out of college.

Astin et al.’s (2002) sample included over 22,000 undergraduate students enrolled in colleges throughout the United States. Analysis of the findings revealed that service-learning has a significant influence on students’ academic outcomes, values, self-efficacy, leadership, career plans and plans to participate in further service-related activities after college.

Interview participant #2 stated, *due to my service experience it helped me get the job I have now... I learned a great deal about networking and event planning through my service-learning experience. It gave me a chance to meet different people.* Career support can also come in the form of letters for recommendation for service-learning students. Jacoby supported this by stating, “The rich relationships give rise to the request for recommendation letters and offer a comfortable and safe opportunity to discuss students’ ideas and plans for the life choices they are making” (Jacoby, 1996, p. 226). Participant #5 supports Jacoby’s statement by adding:

I got a job because of my service-learning experience. I made good contacts and was able to get outstanding letters of recommendation references after graduating. My service-learning experience gave me more than I could have ever asked for. I learned communication skills. I learned how to work with community partners, professionalism, organizational skills and how to multitask. I learned fundraising skills, leadership skills and how to delegate.

Interview participant #7 identified an example of the career benefits gained from the service-learning experience by stating:

The service-learning experience helped with acceptance into graduate school. It opened up so many doors for me. I ended up getting my graduate degree because of my service-learning experience. Honestly, I thought I had no shot at getting in. My advisor told me not to get my hopes up because it was a competitive selection process. After applying, I did get accepted into the program because they were looking for students who were really invested in making a difference in the community. I believe my service work made a big difference on my application.

Interview participant #9 further discussed the importance of service-learning on career development by stating:

The fundamental skills that I learned during my service experience were amazing for me personally. I learned how to manage conflict and how to deal with people you may not necessarily see eye-to-eye with. In addition, I learned how to improve my time management and organizational skills. These are benefits everyone can use in every aspect of life including the workplace. I have received better jobs due to my work in the community. During my service involvement there is no other place you are confronted more with so many personalities and so many different opinions. You learn how to mesh all of that into a common goal which prepares you for graduate school or the workplace.

The survey respondents identified several examples of the career knowledge gained through their service-learning activities: networking, organizational skills, leadership development, grant writing and fundraising. A survey respondent supported the above statement by sharing, *I learned valuable skills needed in the workplace such as: leadership, delegating, communicating, planning and organizations skills.* The statements made above illustrate that service-learning activities influence career development for those who choose to participate.

Theme #3: Reflective Change

The third and final theme, Reflective Change, was defined as the ability to accept differences and how the participants view the world based on their service experience. The two interpretive codes which made up the theme Reflective Change were identified as Accepting Differences and Personal Insight. Accepting Differences was defined as reflection that leads to an understanding of others. Personal Insight was defined as students find new ways to view themselves and the world.

Based on the interpretive code of accepting differences, typical outcomes of service-learning programs include: raising social awareness; connecting students to diverse people and experiences; and providing practical experience that move learning beyond narrow intellectual engagement and highlights the connections between learning and living (Boyle-Baise, 2002; Eyler & Giles, 1999). Interview participant #3 shared how service-learning helped overcome personal stereotypes by stating, *I have become much more aware of judgments, stereotypes and generalizations. I now look at the whole picture as opposed to a single point of view. Service-learning helped resolve some of the stereotypes I had.* Interview participant #10 added, *when working with youth, I learned that they deal with traumatic events in their lives differently than adults...mainly by acting out. I learned to deal with their anger so everyone could move forward.* Survey respondents noted that their service-learning experience exposed them to different socioeconomic backgrounds, cultural differences and diverse minority groups. The exposure to individuals different from themselves brought about a change in perception and attitude. Three survey respondents shared the following statements in regard to understanding others:

I gained a cultural awareness about the African American population through service projects with them. Furthermore, by engaging in service projects in the “bad part” of town I grew to love the community.

I found cultural awareness, empathy, passion and a greater understanding of how big this world is.

I was able to interact with a widely diverse group of people; both adults and children of varying backgrounds, ethnic groups and levels of education.

A survey respondent specifically detailed the individuals encountered through the service-learning experience:

The majority of people that I worked with were living in poverty. Many of these individuals were members of racial/ethnic minority groups. There were many single mothers, who were raising their children alone. Although some of whom I worked with at the homeless shelter/rescue mission held higher education degrees, many of the people I worked with had not graduated from school or completed their GED's.

Interview participants noted the same interactions that the above survey participants had when working with groups different from themselves. Interview participant #5 shared:

I think very differently about the plight of people who are in a bad position. I think very differently about how to help them get out of that and how important it is to not to put a Band-Aid over the situation, but to basically see issues from the grassroots perspective and we have to make a difference. That's the only way to really eradicate social issues and the many injustices that exist.

Interview participant #6 added to the discussion by stating:

By serving as a service-learning participant in college, I have a better understanding of the community and a greater sense of appreciation for the community and world we live in. The more I served in the community the more similarities and the fewer differences I noticed between us.

Service-learning extends college into the community in a way that engages persons from a wide range of backgrounds and belief systems. Furthermore, accepting differences is the foundation of personal knowledge. Interview participant #8 shared, *everyone's story is*

unique, but so often not considered or included...we must accept people as they are not who we want them to be. Interview respondent #9 added, *the biggest thing I walked away from this experience was how to deal with people in difficult situations. It taught me to be more understanding and open. You never know what someone's background is or what they have been through.* Service-learning skills enhances and develops the attitudes needed to become educated persons, well-informed citizens and civic-minded individuals (Watkins & Braun, 2005).

Based on the interpretive code of personal insight, the belief that the individual has something to contribute and something to gain from the community is a condition of service-learning. Any individual believes he/she is superior will communicate that attitude, consciously or unconsciously, throughout every aspect of the experience; nothing will be accomplished and the initial feelings of hope will turn to suspicion and distrust (Jacoby, 1996). It is only when individuals set aside their own personal biases that the recipients of the service-learning experience receive the true benefits of the service. Interview participant #1 shared, *the most rewarding part of my service experience was being able to educate the public and do my part in reducing the stigma of mental illness in my community.* Interview participant #4 contributed by added:

My service-learning experience dealt with individuals coming out of jail who were required to get jobs. I did have that bias of them just not being good people. But, I felt like maybe if they had a second chance they wouldn't be in this situation, so I helped them get back on track. The experience working with offenders and individuals in the prison system changed me; my mind set had changed because of my service-learning experience.

Several interview and survey participants added the following statements regarding their perceived change in the way they view themselves and the world around them:

The biggest thing I learned is being able to understand where other people are coming from and respect their viewpoint and deal with it from their perspective (Interview participant #5).

There is nothing that will change your life more. Being involved in your community is life changing; it is not any more complicated than that (Interview participant #9). My life is vastly different because of my service-learning experience in college. It's amazing to be able to help other people and make a difference, that's why we all get into service-learning (Survey respondent).

Working directly with youth from lower socio-economic backgrounds at the after-school program helped me to become more aware of issues that start at the family level (Survey respondent).

Interview participant #8 details how service-learning equals personal change and creates a shift in how one views the world by stating:

My involvement in service-learning supported my level of involvement and made me feel less isolated because it helped me join forces with other like-minded individuals. I think it increased and brought out a sense of dedication to my work. My eyes were opened to what it's like to live in poverty as a homeless, abused, single mom with three kids.

The true essence of service-learning begins at the individual level. It is important to respect people as unique individuals while also recognizing their cultural backgrounds. There is no recipe of interaction based on a person's age, gender, religion, race, ethnicity, level of abilities, or sexual orientation (Watkins & Braun, 2005). It is only when common ground is found among all involved that the intended recipients of the service-learning experience realize the true benefit of the service.

RQ 3: What do Students do to Continue Service-Learning after Graduation?

Service-learning relationships can be extremely rewarding for the participants. The individuals met and relationships made are something that will never be forgotten. As a result of their service-learning experiences, ten out of ten interview participants continue some form of service for the community and credit service-learning as an undergraduate as the reason for their continued service following graduation. Service-learning acts as an impetus for activism/advocacy and community involvement following graduation. The following list highlights some of the ways the interview participants are currently involved in their community: Civic Organizations (Rotary Club, United Way, Red Cross, Social Justice Outreach), Educational Programs (teaching GED classes, After-School Programs, Mentoring Programs), Community Service Agencies (Habitat for Humanity, Big Brother Big Sisters, Meals on Wheels) and Professional Development (Community Committees, Board of Directors, Board of Trustees).

The following interview participants specifically detailed their level of community involvement following graduation. Interview participant #1 stated:

Service-learning in general changed my level of activism. I now know I can help change something. I am greatly involved in my fellowship Social Justice Community. This year issues we advocated the most for was, equality for the gay and lesbian community, immigrants and improving literacy.

Interview participant #10 stated, *Service-learning has made me more community orientated but I am still learning how to become part of the community.* Interview participant #6 explained their current level of involvement following graduation as

My present community involvement is different because I'm living overseas. I am seen as a leader in the community as a foreign teacher. I encourage students to engage in deeper conversations about the world they live in and their role in society. I am limited in some ways to personally serve in projects, but I encourage my students to take part in serving others.

Interview participant #9 stated their current level of community involvement centers around, *an outreach program that provides meals for homeless individuals.* Interview participant #4 concluded by stating:

I sign up for more than I probably should. I am a member of the Board of Directors, on three committees outside of work and I'm a first aid instructor. I don't get paid for these jobs; I do it on my free time.

Service-learning activities shape activism, advocacy and community involvement.

The interview participant statements above indicate that service-learning is a life-long catalyst for change for those who participate.

Summary of Findings

After analyzing all data sets, it is clear that the case study participants gained from their service-learning experiences while in college. Several conclusions can be made from the analysis of data. They are: 1) community awareness leads to community involvement; 2) service-learning leads to personal growth and development; and 3) service-learning participation leads to lasting behavior changes.

It can be concluded that service-learning increases community awareness and creates strong community involvement. Interview participant #1 supported this by stating; *in order for the processes by which we live by to function properly we all have to do our part. I would not be the person I am today if it were not for my service-learning experience.*

Community involvement became apparent during the interview process as the participants were able to reflect and describe in detail their service experience several years after graduating from college. The following participant statement identified the growing sense of responsibility to do something about community problems. Interview participant #6 sums up the above statement by concluding, *service-learning prepares you with the skills needed to be a leader, an advocate, an organizer and a visionary. Moreover, you learn how to teach, mentor and respect the community you serve in.* The data revealed that service-learning improved the participant's ability to transfer what they learned from the experience and frame that experience around a social issue.

Each participant was able to identify key elements that led to personal growth and development during their service experience. Interview participant #8 highlighting the role that service-learning played on shaping a career path:

My career was affected in a positive way due to service-learning, because it gave me "in" so to speak with the agency I was serious about, that I cared about and wanted to help. Service-learning gave me the skills necessary to apply what I'd learn and gain experience in the field, which is unlike how you learn in school.

Interview and survey participants both acknowledged they gained skills due to their service experience while in college. Overall, the participants became more *confident, understanding, supportive, and gained a great sense of tolerance for others.* Interview participant #1 summed up this statement by sharing:

My service-learning experience went above and beyond opening doors and is still doing so in my life and profession. For starters, it provided me with the skills needed for any occupation such as communication, organization and planning. The service experience gave me the confidence I needed to obtain a job right out of college.

The data revealed that service-learning activities have a lasting influence on personal growth and career development for those who choose to participate.

Through personal reflection, it became clear that exposure to service-learning activities while in college lead to lasting behavioral changes among those who participate. In all three data sets, students improved their ability to, *accept differences in others*. Interview participant #5 supports this statement by adding, *the biggest thing I learned is being able to understand where other people are coming from and respect their viewpoint and deal with it from their perspective*. Interview participant #9 further elaborated on the statement made by interview participant #5 by stating, *service helps you figure out who you are, what your beliefs are and what you're passionate about. I have nothing bad to say about my service experience, I loved it. It was probably the best thing I ever did*. The findings proved that service-learning participants experienced a character transformation during their service, which in turn, provided them with the ability to accept differences and shaped how they now view the world. In conclusion, I identified that service-learning has the power to be an educative experience for students while in college and long after they have graduated.

Personal View of Service-Learning

While reviewing all of the data collected and talking with the case study participants; I often found myself reflecting and reminiscing about my own service-learning experiences. The following represents examples of my most memorable service-learning experiences as an undergraduate student at Washburn University and as a service-learning educator.

After transferring to Washburn University from a community college, I had no idea what the future had in store for me personally and academically. After changing my major to

Human Services, I began to take my academic studies more serious. One of the first classes I took within the Human Services department required service-learning hours outside of class time. I had no idea what service-learning was at the time but the idea sounded scary. Since it was a requirement of the class, I began working at group home for youth who were not allowed to live a home due to an unsafe environment. I cherished the experience to work one-on-one with the youth living in the group home, listening to their stories and giving advice when needed. I got to know their hopes, dreams and fears for the future. I got close to one young boy during this time and I finally got up the courage to ask him, “Were you scared the first time you had to sleep here?” I still remember the serious look on his face as he replied, “No, this group home saved my life, living here I have a bed and have food to eat. I now live with people who care about my day and how school is going, before I didn’t have any of those things in my life.” At the end of each day I would have the opportunity to talk with the staff about my experiences. It was through those conversations that I would reflect on the interactions I had with each youth at the group home. I remember feeling a little guilty that I had two loving parents at home and all the clothes I could wear; while some of the youth I worked with were living out of trash bags. The staff at the group home helped me work through my feelings of guilt. When I left the group home each night, I thought that you don’t get that kind of education by sitting in a classroom. From this service-learning experience, I learned that life is hard no matter your age, background or how you were raised; what does matter is how you handle those challenges and your attitude towards the future. The staff at this service-learning location taught me that there are people in the community who care about one another and are willing to help others.

My second most memorable service-learning experience occurred in 1995 as an undergraduate student. I was given the opportunity to establish Washburn University's service-learning program called Learning in the Community (LinC). During my time with the LinC program, I reported to a faculty member who was also one of my instructors that semester. I remember at first the faculty member was perplexed about my ability to do the job because at that time I was not very vocal in his class. After I completed training to learn how to recruit volunteers with the local volunteer center things started come together for me at the LinC program, I was able to connect college students to service locations within the Topeka area. I enjoyed my service-learning experiences, but often wondered if there were other students who had the same passion as I did to help the community. One of the program's goals was to have 100 Washburn University students placed in volunteer locations in the community during the program's first year of existence. At the time, I thought that this was a goal that I could never accomplish, I was completely wrong! By the end of the first semester we had placed 100 students in volunteer position in the community. These students were not only Human Service majors but they were students from across campus, majoring in all areas of study.

By 1997, the LinC program had finally established itself campus-wide and was making an impact in the community. Community partnerships began to form with the surrounding neighborhood associations adjacent to campus; one of the neighborhood associations was Chesney Park which is considered a low-income area across the street from Washburn University. Through this partnership, I met the President of the Chesney Park Neighborhood Association who was hesitant to work with the LinC program; he believed we

would never be able to get students to volunteer in the area. In order to kick-off our new formed partnership, the LinC program wanted to organize an event called, Into the Streets, where Washburn University students and community members come together and conduct several neighborhood clean-up projects at once. With the Chesney Park Neighborhood Association President being skeptical of the clean-up program, I knew I had to pull this event off in grand fashion. I recruited several other service-learning classmates for help, we spoke to students and all the Greek organizations on campus to get their support and participate in the Into the Streets project. While most of the organizations on campus were supportive others would shut their doors in our face, but that was okay, because it only made me more determined to make this event a huge success. The date was set and the location for each neighborhood clean-up was selected. We had hundred over 100 volunteers show up the morning of the event ready to work. After the work was completed all of the volunteers, including community members, were invited back to Washburn University for lunch and to reflect on the entire event. Once the reflection was completed, it was time to celebrate our newly formed partnerships and friendships. At the end of the project, I still remember feeling a wave of relief that we really had made it happen and that the project was a success. I also recall the Neighborhood Association President who was skeptical of the project at first, looking at me and saying, "I don't know how you pulled this off but I'm glad you did...great job." I will never forget that day nor will I forgot the many hours I spent in the LinC office planning projects and talking with my peers about service-learning. The Into the Street project is still an annual event for the LinC program at Washburn University.

That girl that was not vocal in class now had a voice and the confidence needed to accomplish great things. After I completed my time with the LinC program, I graduated and passed the responsibilities of student coordinator to a new group of Washburn students. Looking back seventeen years later, the LinC program has grown and developed beyond my wildest dreams. New projects and partnerships have formed and scholarships are now available to Washburn University students who participate in service-learning. The LinC program has an established office on campus with a full-time director and staff to run the program. Throughout my time working for the LinC program, I learned organizational skills, teamwork, leadership skills, culture awareness, community involvement and the ability to network with others. Remember the faculty member who questioned my ability to establish the LinC program? He is now the program director for the LinC office and has been my mentor since I was a student at Washburn University. This same faculty member helped me get my first job in service-learning as a director at the community college where I have worked for the past sixteen years. If it was not for the service-learning program at Washburn University and my mentor, I would probably not be working in the field of education or teaching my students the value of the service-learning experience.

As a service-learning educator in higher education for the past sixteen years, I have developed dozens of strong community partnerships which are vital to the service-learning experience for my college students. One of my most recent and now favorite service-learning projects I complete with my students is called, "Five Days of Giving." For the past three years, I have offered a service-learning project where my students devote five consecutive days to work in our community over the college's Thanksgiving break. Each

year, we work with several nonprofit organizations that are in desperate need of help during this time of the year. The “Five Days of Giving” project always begins in one of the busiest inner city homeless shelters in the Kansas City area where we prepare and serve meals for over 100 individuals in need. The second of the five days, is spent providing support to adults with physical and mental disabilities by playing games, making crafts and singing songs to provide them with emotional support and intellectual stimulation. The third day, we work to fill and organize a local food pantry with food and non-food items we collected over an eight week period. The fourth day, we assist families by walking them through the food pantry and helping them pick out food and non-food items for their family. Lastly, on day five, we dedicate Thanksgiving Day to preparing a Thanksgiving feast at a local food kitchen for 150 homeless individuals. Through this service-learning project my students and I are dedicated to serving others, building relationships with members of our community and bonding with individuals to help them appreciate the spirit of giving. Looking back on the last three years with this project, the “Five Days of Giving” service-learning experience has been an eye-opening experience for those who have participated; its brought awareness about families in need and the importance of helping those who truly need our support. This service-learning project makes a difference and also makes my students grateful for the opportunity to give back to their community. Overall, this service-learning experience helps increase the sense of self-efficacy as well as teaching my students that they can make a difference addressing social challenges and community needs. Just like the case study participants in this study, this service-learning experience helps inspire my students to see

how their relentless and tireless efforts can make a difference on the community in which they live and work.

Personal Reaction to Case Study Participants

While conducting the face-to-face interviews, I could always relate to each service-learning experience expressed by the study participants. The following represents my personal reaction to some of the stories shared by the study participants.

Mary (case study participant #9) talked about the young boy she worked with at the summer tutoring program that is offered for youth living in the Chesney Park neighborhood; it reminded me of my own interactions at the group home where I conducted my first service-learning project. Mary talked about how it took all summer for this one individual to open-up to her, but he finally let his guard down enough to enjoy the summer program. Like Mary's experience, many of the youths I worked with were also guarded and it took a while for them to open-up to me.

When David (case study participant #2) was explaining his work with an afterschool program to teach youth different ways to handle situations in their lives without resulting in violence; it made me recall the time I was working with youth living in the foster care system. Many of the youth I worked with would get in fights at school because they had no idea how to handle situations without getting angry and resulting to violence. It was my job to teach them anger management skills; it was not an easy job, many of these individuals were hard to reach.

While talking with Holly (case study participant #3) she discussed her first experience attending and presenting at professional conferences as a service-learning student at

Washburn University. Holly explained how she gained public speaking skills which she now uses in her career. While I was a student in the Washburn University service-learning program, I also had the opportunity to attend and present at professional conferences. During college, I presented on how the LinC program was established at Washburn University and what it takes to secure institutional support for service-learning programs. After college, I still attend the same professional conferences but now I present with my service-learning students.

Nate (case study participant # 7) explained his service-learning experience with the clean-up efforts after hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast of the United States; it reminded me of two service experiences I had with my own students. As a service-learning educator, my students and I assisted with tornado relief efforts in Joplin, Missouri and Moore, Oklahoma. I could relate to Nate's story because my students and I have also helped people rebuild after the devastation caused by natural disaster. Service-learning projects that help others who have been affected by such tragic events give an individual a sense of accomplishment upon completion.

While talking with Joe (case study participant #10) I was touched by his favorite service-learning story about a young boy who he met at an afterschool program. While working with this young boy, Joe talked about how he learned to be more patient, compassionate and reliable. Throughout Joe's service-learning experience as a college student, Joe formed a bond with this individual and they both looked forward to the time they got to spend together. As a service-learning educator, I try to explain to my students that you never know what types of relationships can be built through the service-learning experience.

All of the case study participants' expressed how the service-learning experience created opportunities for personal/professional growth such as an increase in confidence, career development and leadership skills. As Ann (case study participant #1) explained she believed that her service-learning experience helped her build skills for any occupation and improved her confidence level. I could relate to Ann's experience, without service-learning I truly believe that I would not be in the field of education nor would I have been given an opportunity to educate my own students on the value of service-learning. Due to my service-learning experiences while in college, I built the confidence needed to secure a career in higher education; I had no idea that sixteen years later, I would still be committed to the field of service-learning.

In the end, my service-learning experiences mirrored the participants' views on service-learning. Overall, I could relate to each of the case study participants' as they shared their service-learning experiences. During several of the face-to-face interview sessions, some of the study participants' thanked me for taking them down memory lane and taking the time to conduct a study about service-learning experiences from a university graduates' perspective. However, one difference between my service-learning experiences and the study participants' service-learning experiences was that the study participants were able to enter into an established service-learning program that was ready and able to assist them with meeting their needs and the needs of the community. The majority of the time I spent working with the service-learning program at Washburn University was during the capacity building phase. Prior to my time at Washburn University, no community partnerships or service-learning projects had been established on campus. During the capacity building

phase, it was my job to help build and establish the community partnerships and service-learning projects for the future of the service-learning program at Washburn University. The foundation for the service-learning program at Washburn University had been laid, the study participants did not have to devote the majority of their time to building the program. Instead, the study participants were able to focus on the gratification received from the experiences gained through participation in a service-learning program, which in turn, created memorable personal experiences for them.

For me personally, it is amazing to see how the service-learning program at Washburn University has grown over the years since I graduated. The program has gone from one faculty member trying to juggle a full teaching schedule plus run the service-learning program with a student coordinator, to three full-time employees and multiple programs to support the service-learning program mission at Washburn University.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 4 revealed the findings based on the data analyzed within this study. This chapter provided information which addressed the research questions and highlighted the specific themes which emerged. This chapter also illustrated the study participants' thoughts and opinions regarding their service-learning experiences while in college. Lastly, this chapter explored the study participants' current level of community involvement following graduation from college. Chapter 5 will provide a discussion of the implications of the study topic, recommendations for the field of service-learning and further research as it relates to service-learning.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Introduction

Across the country, students and educators are leaving the classroom and working in and with their communities in order to make the learning experience come alive. This approach to learning is called, service-learning, and its goal is to address real-life situations such as poverty, hunger and racism. Simply put, service-learning is a teaching tool used to connect students to the community and engage them in purposeful learning (Jacoby, 1996). Students engaging in service-learning programs learn how to understand and address the underlying social, political and economic issues that contribute to our country's social ills. In essence, the student learns how to become an educated community member and problem-solver through serving the community and reflecting on the meaning of that service.

Service-learning has a 300-year history in the United States, tracing its roots back to Harvard College in 1636. Service-learning was born from a tradition of addressing complex social issues and an emphasis on working towards common community goals while in college, service-learning. Service-learning also addresses citizenship education and preparation for participation in a democracy. Astin (1994) stated, "service-learning is the most effective means of accomplishing higher education's mission, to produce educated citizens who understand and appreciate not only how democracy is supposed to work but also their own responsibility to become active and informed participants" (p. 24). The importance of service-learning stems from community-based educational experiences; these experiences teach service-learning participants how to apply individual knowledge and skills when

addressing complex social issues. The participants of this study identified knowledge and skills as two key elements they received as a participant in a service-learning program as an undergraduate student. I believe it was important and necessary to conduct this study from the university graduates perspective because each service-learning experience is distinct and individualized. By listening to the individuals in this study, what they had to say about their service-learning experiences while in college, I used their collective voice to discover, what I believe is the heart of service-learning, the deliberate application of individual knowledge and skills to positively transform themselves, others and their communities.

Summary of Research Questions and Methodology

The purpose of this heuristic case study was to describe the service-learning experiences of ten study participants from Washburn University. I sought to describe the meaning of the service-learning experience from the university graduate's perspective, specifically focusing on the benefits gained and motivations to initiate service-learning, thus making heuristic case study the logical research method to employ. The major technique used for this inquiry was case study through the lens of heuristic inquiry as a form of phenomenology.

In this research, the case study design provides an in-depth description of the meaning of the service-learning experience from the university graduate's perspective, specifically focusing on the benefits gained and motivations to initiate service-learning. A case study design was useful to understand the complexities surrounding the influence of service-learning, it also allowed for the identification of people, places and events that influence service-learning participants. Case study design was also an effective method when studying

lived experiences, it accurately lends itself to understanding how individuals interpret and give meaning to those experiences.

The experiences and stories shared by the university graduates' in this study were used to answer the research questions, which were: What types of service-learning activities do students engage in while in college? What are the perceived benefits of participation in service-learning? What do students do to continue service-learning after graduation?

Discussion

This study found that the participants learned life-long skills from their service-learning experiences; lessons that cannot be learned from a textbook or from an in-class lecture. In a prior study conducted by Eyler and Giles (1999), they state that, "Service-learning, which involves different roles for students from those typically encountered in the classroom, seems like a natural fit for achieving such goals of higher education as interpersonal competence, personal development, and increased experience with and tolerance for diversity" (p. 23). The findings from my study support Eyler and Giles findings that service-learning experiences made a difference, that it strengthened the participants' abilities to obtain employment and enhanced their personal attributes. For example, interview participant #2 believed that due to her service-learning experience it helped her get a job and she learned a great deal about networking and event planning. Moreover, service-learning provides the spark needed to create responsible community involved individuals. The findings of my research study were as expected, the students who participated in a service-learning program while in college continued to be engaged in their community following graduation. For example, interview participant #6 believed that she gained a better

understanding of the community and a greater sense of appreciation for the community and world. Collectively, the study participants in my study noted that such issues as, raising children, entering the job market, attending graduate school and military service all affected the participants' current level of community service beyond graduation. However, despite these issues, all study participants found time to be involved in their community and credit their service-learning experience while in college for their continued level of involvement.

Key Benefits of Service-Learning

Service-learning is comprehensive teaching strategy that provides benefits for students that traditional courses cannot by promoting enriched and enhanced learning in a community-based setting. Service-learning allows students to gain skills, experiences and confidence in their abilities and skills. Not only do they gain skills; they also gain the ability to demonstrate those skills to educators and prospective employers. The positive key benefits of service-learning will be examined throughout this section using my research study, literature on the subject of service-learning and previous research conducted on the topic of service-learning. The following represents a roadmap for discussing the key benefits of service-learning from the study participants' perspective: Community Awareness, Addressing Social Issues, Acceptance of Differences, Personal Development and Career Development.

Community Awareness. Participation in a service-learning program leads to greater community awareness and students who believe that they are active community members. Service-learning assists students in learning about community issues on a local and intimate

level and in many ways it provides the motivation for caring about their community. A 1995 study conducted by Eyler and Giles identified 1,544 students at twenty colleges and universities who participated in service-learning classes. The colleges selected for this study had a variety of service-learning activities and represented different types and geographical locations. The focus of the study centered on the impact of service-learning programs on students' citizenship values, skills, attitudes and understanding. In regard to community awareness, this study found that, 66% of college students surveyed believed that their service met a community need fairly often or very often. Additionally, Eyler and Giles (1999) believed that this study illustrated, "Students develop more complex and adequate ways of viewing the community they live in when they participate in a service-learning experience" (p. 148). Based on the research findings from my study, the research participants collectively believed that service-learning leads to a broader sense community awareness. In addition, the research participants of my study emphasized that the service-learning experience gave them the opportunity to make a difference in their community.

Addressing Social Issues. Service-learning programs develop students who are more aware of their community, but service-learning also affords them the chance to address social issues within the community. Bryant, Schonemann, and Karpa (2011) believed service-learning programs help students understand the process of gathering a greater depth of knowledge about an issue, how to identify resources and then how to work to make positive social change, which can entail both individual and group actions, such that they become active and efficacious. Many of the participants' interviewed for my study concurred with Bryant et al.'s belief in social change and their ability to affect it. The study

participants voiced that their service-learning experiences taught them how to bring about positive social change. In a study conducted by Eyler, Giles, and Braxton (1997), they studied the question of the impact of service-learning on citizenship skills and personal/academic outcomes. Using data gathered from more than 1500 students at 20 colleges and universities, they found clear differences in attitudes, skills, values, and understanding of social issues of college students who participate in service-learning, in contrast to those who do not. In addition, Eyler et al. (1997) “found those who participated in service experiences felt more connected to community, seeing the systemic or political nature of the social problems and felt a need to give priority to greater social justice. Providing opportunities for students to link community service with their classroom experience adds value to their college experience and enhances qualities of understanding and commitment that lead to effective citizenship” (p. 14). In my study, the interview participants discussed a heightened sense of awareness of social issues due to their service-learning experiences. The interview participants’ believed that their service experiences taught them how to address the important issues that impact society and how to bring about positive social change.

Accepting Differences. Service-learning programs increased the study participants’ ability to make connections with others from diverse backgrounds. The study participants discussed that their service-learning experiences helped them to overcome personal stereotypes and judgments of others; exposure to individuals different from themselves also brought about changes in their perceptions and attitudes. In 2006, the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) conducted a survey-based study using thirteen colleges to

investigate the relationship between service-learning participation and academic learning. A total of 2,317 students and 68 faculty members participated in this study. The primary focus of this study centered on the relationship between service-learning participation and academic learning. One component of the AACC's study identified the benefits of service learning, the study participants believed that learning to accept differences is a benefit that comes from participation in a service-learning program. The findings from the AACC's study revealed that service-learning allows students to identify their own biases and taught them how to replace those biases with accurate information about others. An AACC faculty study participant noted, "Without service-learning students lack the understanding of their own biases. To be culturally competent, you have to understand where you're coming from before you can change; that would not be present without service-learning" (Prentice & Robinson, 2007 p. 11). Similarly, another faculty member represented in the AACC study explained, "Service-learning teaches students to place themselves in someone else's shoes and see yourself in that person's position" (Prentice & Robinson, 2007 p. 11). Effective service-learning programs value diversity in the projects selected and in the populations served. When individuals discuss and value diversity and when diverse individuals and groups participate and work together to complete a project, interaction and respect for all involved can result (National Service-Learning Cooperative, 1998). The literature shows that the typical impacts of service-learning programs include: raising social awareness, connecting students to diverse people and experiences and providing practical experience that move learning beyond narrow intellectual engagement and highlights the connections between learning and living (Boyle-Baise, 2002; Eylar & Giles, 1999). The study

participants in my study echoed the above statement by noting, service-learning experiences extend the college classroom into the community in a way that engages persons from a wide range of backgrounds and belief systems, thus creating a culture of tolerance. It is only when individuals set aside their own personal biases that the recipients of the service-learning experience receive the true benefits of the service.

Personal Development. Service-learning programs help the participants become more confident individuals. My study participants' reported a greater sense of purpose, self-esteem, empathy and compassion. The results of my study support a series of survey-based studies conducted by the National Commission on Service-Learning (NCSL) in 2002, involving 1000 undergraduate students which measured personal growth from the service-learning experiences, behavior changes, and disposition towards others. The results of the NCSL study found that service-learning participants feel more confident in their ability to identify issues, work with others, organize, take action and build a commitment to participation over the longer term. Service-learning programs create personal awareness and a more complete understanding of values and beliefs, which in turn, helps an individual to overcome fears and assumptions. In addition, a comparison study conducted in 1994 by Batchelder and Root, investigated the key characteristics of service-learning experiences on the cognitive, moral and ego identity development of undergraduate students. The study included 226 undergraduate students from a mid-western liberal arts college. The results of the comparison study advanced the idea that participation in a college service-learning program facilitates student development. This study specifically produced the following results: service-learning influences the student's thinking about social problems, service-

learning students demonstrate greater resolve to act in the face of acknowledged uncertainty and service-learning develops a more mature form of moral reasoning (Batchelder & Root, 1994).

Career Development. The results of my study showed a connection between service-learning and progression in a chosen profession. A longitudinal study by Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda and Yee (2002), explored the comparative effects of service-learning and community service on the cognitive and affective development of college undergraduates. Using both qualitative and quantitative measures, Astin et al.'s (2002) study used a survey design to determine if and how career development is enhanced by service-learning experiences. The study conducted by Astin et al. (2002) included over 22,000 undergraduate students enrolled in colleges throughout the United States. Analysis of the findings revealed that service-learning has a significant impact on students' academic outcomes, values, self-efficacy, leadership, career plans and plans to participate in further service-related activities after college. Previous research by Waterman (1997) also showed a connection between service-learning experiences and the influence it plays on the service-learning participants' career development. Waterman (1997) stated, "Students working in the community on service projects gain exposure to a wider array of work environments than might otherwise be possible; this suggests possible career directions, whereas for others it may confirm or disconfirm decisions previously made" (p. 4). Based on their service-learning experiences, my study participants believed that the experiences taught them a great deal about career direction and development. My study participants further believed that they gained career skills such as: networking, leadership development and communication skills, which in turn,

made them more attractive candidates in the job market. My study participants' believed that their service-learning experiences went above and beyond opening doors for them personally and professionally. Based on my study and the literature found, service-learning programs provide valuable, hands-on learning experiences for students and give them tangible career skills that they can use in living productive, successful lives.

Using my study, literature on the subject of service-learning and previous research studies conducted on the topic of service-learning this section explored the key benefits of participation in a service-learning program. The literature and previous research studies on the topic of service-learning gave further credence to my study participant's belief their service-learning experiences acted as an impetus for positive personal gain. In conclusion, the benefits of service-learning can be measured by increased cognitive abilities, tolerance, awareness of social issues, community awareness, moral development and career development.

Implications of Findings

Previous research on the connections between service-learning and a student's perceived benefits gained from the service-learning experiences show a strong correlation. The results of this study also show a connection between service-learning participation and an increase in the perceived benefits gained from service-learning experiences.

The participants of this study reported the greatest benefits gained from their service-learning experience came in the areas of teamwork and career development. This may indicate that service-learning provides students with opportunities to learn information that is necessary for their development and preparation for a professional career. In addition, the

study participants provided a more intricate look into what motivates an individual to engage in service-learning as an undergraduate student. The study data indicated that the participants were motivated to engage in service and were more willing to devote time and effort to such services and will sustain such activities over a longer period of time. The results of this study further suggest that service participants who are motivated before, during and after their service-learning experience are more likely to receive tangible benefits from their service involvement. The study participants' motivation during the service-learning experience had a dramatic impact on the participants of this study, their motivation translated into tangible benefits for the participants such as: career development, networking skills and teamwork.

Overwhelmingly, the study participants described the value of service-learning in that it provides varied, unique and sometimes unexpected opportunities for them to practice their skills when confronting complex real-world situations and problems. The study participants suggested that the essence of service-learning was about serving others, giving back to their community, being a part of something bigger, putting the needs of someone else ahead of their own, making connections and tolerance. The study participants believed that their service-learning experiences provided them with a chance to better understand their community needs, which in turn, facilitated their reported increases in social development. A unique aspect of service-learning is that students learn beyond the classroom. The service-learning opportunity allowed the participants an opportunity to interact with individuals different than themselves. The study participants reported one of the benefits of service-learning is that it allowed them to confront their own unconscious biases and prejudgments.

Often the study participants described that before their service-learning experience, they had never previously interacted with people from such diverse ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. The study participants reported some hesitation at first, but repeatedly the study participants reported that they developed compassion and caring when they discovered that they were no different from them.

Also illustrated in this study was the value of the service-learning experience with respect to the duration of the project, intensity of the project and site location. Service-learning programs differ greatly within higher education; service-learning programs vary from one-time projects, to semester long course requirements to full academic year involvements, programs that offer students repeated service opportunities are more likely to have a greater impact than the impact of a program that happens only once or twice. Additionally, the more intense the service-learning experience is the more likely it is to provide the qualities associated with long-term service participation. This study suggested that service experiences that are more intense and create strong emotional bonds among the participants are more likely to foster a spirit of giving, which in turn, supports service following graduation. Service-learning site location also makes a difference in the quality of the service experience. The study participants were part of an established service-learning program and were placed in environments where their service made a real difference; they saw the impact of their service, which created a sense of accomplishment. The continuation of service following graduation was the participants' perceptions of the quality of their service-learning experiences. Service-learning site location is also a critical element in continued service participation as is the quality of the service. Taken together, these results

suggest that service-learning site location creates meaningful work for the participants and the outcome of the service experience is more rewarding, which forecasts continued service following graduation.

Finally, because so much of the perceived benefits gained from the service-learning experiences centered on career development its importance will be addressed further. The study participants often stated that because of their service-learning experiences, they believed they were better prepared to enter the job market upon graduation. Further, they believed that their service-learning experiences placed them in situations which taught them important skills and knowledge. The study participants often remarked they also gained increases in confidence due to their service experiences. The positive experiences the study participants gained from their service-learning experiences suggested that they would be better prepared when they entered the job market upon graduation because they received real-world benefits from those experiences.

The next section examines my recommendations to improve service-learning in higher education.

Recommendations

In order to make service-learning programs a sustainable part of the college structure, the following are my recommendations for creating a commitment to service-learning in higher education.

Recommendation #1: Career Development

To take full advantage of the benefits received from participation in a service-learning program, service-learning program offices should work in concert with the campus career center. Typically, campus career centers provide career planning, career counseling, career resources and resume writing assistance. The career center is the place that has career information, information on the job duties, the places that hire a person with certain skills, educational requirements, salary ranges and working conditions. But, for service-learning students the campus career center could go one step further. To better prepare service-learning students to enter the job market following graduation, the service-learning program office and campus career center could host advanced resume writing workshops. These workshops are the appropriate forum to gather and disseminate the information necessary to put together an effective resume based on service-learning experiences. These workshops would teach service-learning students to focus on the achievements and accomplishments gained from their service-learning projects. These workshops could help service-learning students document the experiences that potential employers want to see in an individual entering the job market, such as: experience working in a team environment, networking skills, experience working in a culturally diverse environment, volunteering and organizational skills. Additionally, each semester these workshops could also host former members of a service-learning program to come and speak to current members of a service-learning program where they would help identify and quantify the value of the service-learning experiences. The former members of service-learning programs could also help current service-learning members explore career options and gather information needed to

make good career choices. Ultimately, these workshops would help participants of a service-learning program avoid misidentifying and misinterpreting the service-learning experiences when crafting their own resumes.

Recommendation #2: Student Participation and Recognition

Service-learning programs within higher education would not exist without students who are willing to participate and give back to their community. However, students may begin their service-learning experience simply wanting college credit hours or the ability to say they volunteered on a resume or scholarship application. But the reality is much different; service-learning influenced them in ways that they could have never imagined. Service-learning enables students to take initiative, make decisions, interact with community partners, learn about the role of government, develop critical-thinking skills, put their ideas into action and assess and evaluate what happened. But college students want more. They want to be recognized for their vital role in improving community needs. Service-learning is not selfish service in which the participants receive awards, plaques, letters of recommendation and certificates. Service-learning is about being recognized for improving society through service. College administrators and community partners should recognize service-learning students for their extra work, extra effort and extra time and give them some form of recognition for their contributions. I believe it is as easy as “thank you.” Students need to hear first-hand that their service makes a difference and makes the college look good in the community. Because service-learning students play a vital role in building a positive image for the college they should be rewarded with a centralized office that provides an area

for students to network, to learn, to grow and decompress. Zlotkowski (1996) found that a centralized service-learning office could also support the professional development of students, faculty and staff who participate in service-learning activities, ensuring that service-learning becomes part of the culture of the college campus. Expanding on Zlotkowski's statement, a centralized office could also afford service-learning alumni an opportunity to stay connected to the service-learning program office. Encouraging alumni to keep in touch with the service-learning program office helps spread the message of the service-learning mission beyond the college campus, thus ensuring the substantiality of the service-learning program. It is a fact that office space is limited on college campuses. However, the activities that service-learning students participate in and the positive image that is created by those activities should not go unnoticed. Giving service-learning students, alumni, faculty and staff a centralized office to conduct service-learning activities out of, a space to call their own, is the way that college administrators can say "thank you" without actually saying it.

Recommendation #3: Service-Learning Program Assessment

Site location is an important part of providing a service-learning program in higher education. Without service-learning sites and community partners, students would have nowhere to complete their service work or gain valuable life experiences. However, in order for this relationship to work, good communication lines must exist between the community partner and the service-learning program office. Open lines of communication must exist so that service-learning activities can be specifically tailored to meet a specific community need. When the service-learning program office and the community partners work together

to address community needs, service-learning students are able to diligently focus their activities to address that specific need. This relationship fosters a combined vision for the common good. Open lines of communications at the conclusion of the service-learning activity is equally important. Feedback is important for the service-learning program office, the student and the community partner, it helps refine the experience. To enhance the service-learning experience, community partners should be given an opportunity to formally evaluate the performance of the service participants and the service-learning project itself. For example, community partners could be given mid-term and end-of-term evaluation forms to complete based on sliding scale to rank the effectiveness of the student/project. These evaluation forms could be used as an effective assessment tool. These evaluation forms could evaluate the student's level of reliability, initiative and ability to work with others. This same evaluation form could also evaluate the service-learning project goals and ability to reach the targeted population. The service-learning program office would then review the evaluation forms received from the community partner in order to refine, enhance and improve the next service-learning project involving that community partner or service site. The evaluation forms could also be expanded to include student feedback regarding their service-learning experiences while working with community partners. Collectively, the evaluation forms, as an assessment tool, could measure the health of each individual service-learning project from the standpoint of all of those involved. Feedback and open lines of communication could create clarity and a deeper understanding of the goals and purposes of the service-learning activity.

By implementing these recommendations, I believe service-learning program offices, service-learning students and community partners will all benefit from service-learning programs, projects and activities.

Future Research

This study described the ways that university graduates experienced and perceived service-learning activities during college and after college. I attempted to capture the voices of the undergraduate student's perspective in terms of their commitment to community involvement following graduation. I developed this study using face-to-face interviews from service-learning participants who have been out of college for two to five years because little or no research highlighted their perspective of the service-learning experience. However, more can be done; the following examples direct how this study could be replicated or extended:

1. Examine a service-learning program on an urban campus to understand the student's perspective of their service-learning experiences. Understanding their perspective in an urban setting allows more opportunity for the field of service-learning to be more encompassing. Understanding different service-learning perspectives and varying experiences could add depth to future research. Making the research more diverse benefits the field by making it fully representative of our multicultural society, thus elevating service-learning's transformative potential.

2. Study service-learning programs on multiple campuses. Such a study would allow comparison between geographic regions, four-year versus two-year college setting and socioeconomic status.
3. Compare service-learning experiences by gender. By using gender as a variable, researchers could evaluate whether or not gender plays a role in service-learning program outcomes. A cross-case analysis approach could also be developed in order to compare research findings by gender.
4. A quantitative study could be developed with surveys or a mixed-method approach could be developed, which combines face-to-face interviews and surveys to generate data on service-learning experiences from university graduates' perspectives. Using a scale survey you could ask participants to rank the impact their service-learning experiences had on their knowledge of social issues, community involvement, self-esteem, academic learning, career development, leadership skills, team building and acceptance of others.
5. Using the themes that were developed in this study, an assessment tool could be created to evaluate service-learning programs. This assessment tool would allow service-learning program students and community partners to formally evaluate the service-learning program's effectiveness and future program goals.

Personal Reflection

This case study represents the service-learning experiences from the viewpoint of ten Washburn University graduates. In over twenty years, no researcher has documented the influence that service-learning had on undergraduate students attending Washburn University

or researched their continued service following graduation. This subject is very personal to me, due to my experience with service-learning at Washburn University, which is why I chose to conduct a heuristic case study. In this study, I was able to collect and analyze data from the program where I had my first my service-learning experiences as an undergraduate student. From that point on, community service has been an important part of my life. I now have the opportunity as an educator to expose my students to service-learning experiences and work with them to meet community needs. The entire process of putting this study together and to see how others have benefited from the work I started at Washburn University has been a humbling experience for me. This study allowed me to come full circle in my quest to understand the essence of what the service-learning experience has meant for students in higher education.

Conclusion

Using the voices, perspectives, and experiences of former service-learning students at Washburn University, this study illuminated the influence of service-learning experiences and identified how these individuals continue to stay involved in their community following graduation. The former student voice provided useful insights into the complex and wonderful field of service-learning. For the study participants, their service-learning experiences while in college were a powerful, transformative time in their lives. Their service-learning experiences created a sense of purpose, along with self-discovery, knowledge, teamwork and a deep seated sense of applying best efforts toward improving their community.

However, limited qualitative research is available to document service-learning experiences from a university graduate's perspective. Shumer (2001) emphasized that there is a need for more qualitative research in service-learning, qualitative research seems not only most appropriate but, in fact, necessary. This study was conducted to satisfy this need and to expand college educator's knowledge about service-learning outcomes and their understanding of the lived experience from the university graduate's perspective. Higher education will benefit from the knowledge that comes from understanding the importance of the service-learning experience and how service-learning experiences shape an individual as they weave their own patterns of learning and understanding while in college. This study also lends further credibility to the field of service-learning.

I treasure my service-learning experiences. My service-learning experiences taught me how to achieve a greater sense of self and purpose through service. Service-learning has become an integral part of my life; I'm passionate about service-learning. I will close with a simple word of advice, if you are looking for an adventure, an adventure that will transform your life for the better, just enter the world of service-learning.

APPENDIX A
E-MAIL REQUEST FOR PARTICIPANTS

E-MAIL REQUEST FOR PARTICIPANTS

Greetings:

My name is Stacy Tucker-Loner and I am a former graduate of Washburn University, former member of the LINC program, and a doctoral candidate in the University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC) Higher Education Administration program.

At this time, I am soliciting volunteers who will agree to be part of my dissertation research. The purpose of this study will be to understand the ways that university graduates were impacted by their service-learning experience. At this stage in my research, service-learning will be defined as a teaching tool used to connect students to the community and engage them in purposeful learning. The title of the study will be *From Service-Learning to Post Graduation Service: Insights from University Graduates*.

If you are willing to share your experiences, please take the short survey, 15 minutes completion time estimate, found at the link provided below:

<http://edu.surveymzmo.com/s3/1179303/Service-Learning-Insights-from-University-Graduates>

The deadline to complete the survey is May 14, 2013 by midnight.

Based on survey responses received, I will select participants for a 45-60 minute audio-taped face-to-face interview. No compensation is available to participate in this study. The interview will consist of questions regarding past service-learning experiences and current community service involvement.

I very much appreciate anyone willing to assist me in completing my research.

Thank you,

Stacy Tucker-Loner
913-488-0035
SLT989@mail.umkc.edu

Dissertation Committee Member:
Dr. Rick Ellis
785-670-2117
rick.ellis@washburn.edu

This study had been approved by the UMKC Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Participant Interview Scheduling Script

This script will be used during telephone or e-mail conversations to schedule interviews of those individuals who returned a signed consent form.

Student Investigator:

“This is Stacy Tucker-Loner, I am contacting you because I received your signed consent form and wanted to schedule your interview at your convenience.

The interview can be conducted face-to-face or as a web-conference via Skype.

Please let me know what day, time and method works best for you and I will initiate the interview accordingly. Thank you for your time.”

APPENDIX B
INFORMED CONSENT COVER LETTER

INFORMED CONSENT COVER LETTER

[Date]
[Participant Name]
[Address]

My name is Stacy Tucker-Loner. I am a doctoral student in the University of Missouri-Kansas City Higher Education Administration program under the supervision of Dr. Bonita Butner. In order to complete my dissertation, *From Service-Learning to Post Graduation Service: Insights from University Graduates*, I plan to study the impact of service-learning on university graduates. I have received permission from the University of Missouri-Kansas City Institutional Review Board to contact you regarding the possibility of your participation in my doctoral dissertation research.

You are receiving this request based on your reply to a request for participants and on your prior participation in a service-learning program. The interview should take approximately 45-60 minutes and will be conducted at your convenience, in person face-to-face or a web-conference via Skype. No compensation is available to participate in this study. This study involves no known risk to you nor will benefit you directly/indirectly as the participant.

If you are willing to participate in this research by answering questions about your past service-learning experience and current community service involvement, please sign and return the enclosed Informed Consent form. Upon receipt of the form, I will contact you to discuss the most convenient means for you to participate in the interview.

I appreciate your consideration of this request, and look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Stacy Tucker-Loner
Doctoral Candidate
University of Missouri-Kansas City
SLT989@mail.umkc.edu
913-488-0035
Attachment (enclosure): Informed Consent Form

APPENDIX C
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

From Service-Learning to Post Graduation Service: Insights from University Graduates

The purpose of this study is to describe the ways that undergraduate students benefited from their service-learning experience while in college.

You are receiving this consent form to participate in an interview based on your response to a request for volunteers and your prior participation in a service-learning program.

Participation is entirely voluntary. Participants may choose to not participate or to withdraw their participation at any time. Deciding not to participate or choosing to leave the study will not result in any penalty. During participation, participants may choose to not answer any question. Not answering questions is not the same as leaving the study. If participants decide to leave the study the information already provided will be withdrawn and not included in the results. No compensation is available to participate in this study. It involves no known risk to you nor benefits you directly/indirectly as the participant. Interview results will be anonymously published as part of my dissertation and may be presented at professional meetings or in publications. The data collected will provide information that will be useful to others charged with making decisions regarding service-learning practices and programs.

Upon your agreement, you will be asked, during a pre-arranged, 45-60 minute in person face-to-face interview or web-conference via Skype about your past service-learning experience and current community service involvement. The interviews will be audio taped and once transcribed by the principal investigator, destroyed. A copy of the transcribed interview will be provided to you for your review.

Participants will not be identified by name and no comments will be associated to any one person specifically. Pseudonyms or a phrase such as, "one participant stated..." will be used to refer to information obtained during the interview.

As a participant, you have the right to ask questions and to have those questions answered. If you have questions regarding this project, contact information for me and/or my advisor as the secondary investigator, is listed below. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant that have not been answered by the investigator, or to report any concerns about the study, you may contact the University of Missouri-Kansas City Institutional Review Board at (816) 235-1764.

You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the investigator or the University of Missouri-Kansas City. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Your signature on this Informed Consent form indicates your willingness to participate in the above-mentioned research project. Please return the signed form to me in the enclosed, self-addressed, post-paid envelope. A copy of this signed form will be provided to you for your records.

_____ Initial here if you agree to be audio-taped

Transcriptionist Confidentiality Agreement

As the student investigator, I will act as the transcriptionist for any audio taped interviews and will maintain confidentiality as detailed above.

_____ Date: _____

Stacy Tucker-Loner

Stacy Tucker-Loner, Student Investigator
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(913)488-0035

Bonita Butner, PhD, Principal Investigator /Advisor
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APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW SCRIPT

INTERVIEW SCRIPT

Establish contact with participant:

Contact Information:

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ (Home)

(Office)

(Cell)

(Fax)

Set up meeting date, time, and place.

Location of Interview _____

Time of Interview _____ to _____

One week prior to interview, mail or fax (circle one) interview questions to participant.

Two days prior to interview, confirm time and location with participant.

Materials to bring:

- a. _____ Interview Questions (2 copies)
- b. _____ Participant Consent Form (2 copies)
- c. _____ Voice Recorder
- e. _____ Writing pen (3)
- f. _____ Notepad
- i. _____ Bottles of Water (4)

Arrive at site 40 minutes prior to interview start time.

Set up tape recorder. Test.

Greet Participant upon arrival.

Settle into taping setting.

START TAPING

Script to begin Interview:

I would first like to thank you for agreeing to participate in this study.

I am Stacy Tucker-Loner the student researcher and will be interviewing today which is, date, _____ at _____ o'clock.

Will you please state your full name?

Will you verbally confirm that you have signed the participant Informed Consent form?

Do you agree to be audio-taped for the purposes of this interview?

We will now begin your interview. I have several questions for you that you have had the opportunity to review prior to this interview. I anticipate that this interview will last approximately 45 minutes to one-hour. Let's begin!

Turn to scripted interview questions and begin interview session

APPENDIX E
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The below questions were constructed by a combination of the review of the literature and the researcher's personal knowledge of the field. The interview questions that were used in this study include the following:

- RQ1 1. Describe a service-learning experience you had while in college.
- RQ2 2. Describe the relationship with the community partner and the project.
- RQ3 3. What did you learn about the community through this experience?
- RQ2 4. What did you learn about yourself as a result of your experiences? (*Probe: Did you become aware of biases or fears? What did this teach you about your interaction with individuals different than yourself? Did this experience make you think differently about policy or social issues?*)
- RQ2 5. What was the most rewarding parts of your service-learning experiences? (*Probe: Provide examples*)
- RQ2 6. Did your service-learning experience create opportunities? (*Probe: How have those opportunities served you since graduating?*)
- RQ2 7. Do you think your career was affected as a result of your experiences with service-learning? (*Probe: Provide example.*)
- RQ3. 8. Do you think your service-learning experiences changed your level of activism/advocacy, etc.? (*Probe: Provide example.*)
- RQ3 9. What do you do differently as a result of your experiences with service-learning?
- RQ1 10. What skills have you gained due to your service-learning experience?
- RQ3 11. What is your current involvement in the community?
- RQ3 12. Why did you feel it was important to get involved in the community?

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VITA

Stacy Tucker-Loner was born on February 6, 1973, in Kansas City, Missouri. As a child she lived in Excelsior Springs, Missouri where she graduated from Excelsior Springs High School in 1991. After graduating from high school she attended Maple Woods Community College in Kansas City, Missouri for two years and then transferred to Washburn University in Topeka, Kansas. In 1997, Stacy obtained a Bachelor's Degree in Human Services from Washburn University. In 2003, Stacy received a Master's Degree in Adult Education from Kansas State University. In 2008, Stacy began work on her Ed.D. in Higher Education Administration at the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

Stacy began her professional career at Kansas City Kansas Community College in 1998; she is still employed there today. For the first four years of her employment at Kansas City Kansas Community College, Stacy worked as the Director of Service-Learning where she worked to establish a service-learning program for the community college. In 2002, the service-learning program at Kansas City Kansas Community College became self-sustaining; community college faculty members were requiring students to participate in service-learning activities as a course requirement. In 2002, Stacy accepted a position as the Director of Phi Theta Kappa. Phi Theta Kappa is the International Honor Society for two-year colleges. Phi Theta Kappa focuses on student academic achievement as well as community service. In 2009, Stacy's responsibilities changed. She took over the duties of academically advising honors students as the Director of Honors Education/Phi Theta Kappa. In this position, she oversees operations for the honors education program and works directly with faculty members to develop the honors course schedule each semester. In addition to working full-

time as a Director, Stacy also began teaching part-time as an Adjunct Instructor for Kansas City Kansas Community College. Her teaching duties include: Academic Strategies for First-Year Students, Honors Critical Thinking, Honors Leadership Development, Honors Strengths Quest and Honors Service-Learning Capstone Course. Throughout her time at Kansas City Kansas Community College, Stacy has served on many campus and community committees such as: Staff Senate, United Way Committee, College Senate, Phi Theta Kappa Kansas Region Advisory Board and Graduation Committee. Stacy also serves as the Chair for the Honors Education Advisory Council.