

PERCEPTIONS OF INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCES
IN A SERVICE LEARNING COURSE

Patricia L. Brown

Dissertation submitted to the faculty of
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

In

Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

Dr. Travis Twiford, Chair
Dr. Deborah Marks
Dr. Jerry Niles
Dr. Richard Salmon
Dr. John Schreck

July 24, 2007
Richmond, Virginia

Key Words: Service Learning, Community Service

PERCEPTIONS OF INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCES
IN A SERVICE LEARNING COURSE

By

Patricia L. Brown

Chair: Dr. Travis Twiford
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

Abstract

Service Learning is an instructional approach that has been gaining national attention in the past several years. The concept was supported by John Dewey as early as 1915 but not given serious attention by educational leaders until about 30 years ago. Currently, a growing number of schools across the country are incorporating community service activities into the curriculum. In this study, seven individuals who were enrolled in such a course while in high school were interviewed. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the perceptions and experiences of these former high school students while enrolled in a service learning course coupled with the passage of time to reflect upon the experience. The major research questions were: 1. Does service learning foster in students the perception of a more empathetic nature in their understanding of the recipients of the service work? 2. Are the perceptions of the students as to their desire to perform volunteer work in the future affected by service learning experiences? 3. How do students perceive the usefulness of the service learning curriculum as to linking classroom work with the volunteer experience? Service learning was defined generally as a structured elective course that combines classroom instruction with volunteer service in the community. A qualitative design was chosen for the research as this method allowed

for a more in depth description of the main focus of the study—the perceptions of these former students. The findings from this study support the inclusion of service learning courses in high schools; however, there was an overall consensus from the seven participants that work must be done by educators in order to provide more structured and viable curriculums for these courses. The participant responses were generally favorable regarding their actual volunteer experiences, supporting the assertion that volunteer work supported by a well designed service learning course increases a student’s ability to feel empathy for others along with the desire to be a lifelong volunteer.

Dedication

There are so many people I would like to thank that it is difficult to know where to start. The ones who probably best understand what this journey has been like for me are my dear friends in the Richmond 2000 cohort. First of all, I want to thank our cohort's "den mother", Kathy Ely. She has been there for us through the years and whatever we needed, Kathy knew who to ask or how to do it. The summer of 2003 at OTR bonded our group for life and without their continued support, I would not be writing this page today. I extend special thanks for the support and friendship of Kim, Jim, Dave, Tom, Mark and Sarah. I also need to give thanks to Princess and the boys, three furry little guys who kept us all sane that summer.

Of equal importance to me in this journey are the members of my committee who worked with me so patiently. My special thanks goes to Debbie Marks who kicked me in the behind a few times and encouraged me when I was most discouraged, and Travis Twiford who has worked with me since the beginning and without whose help I do not believe I would have completed my work. Dr. Schreck was wonderful in both his editorial comments and insights into my work over the years. Dr. Niles and Dr. Salmon provided valuable critique and suggestions, helping me to see what I was really trying to convey through my words and descriptions. I am extremely grateful for this wonderful committee that was not one bit shy about offering suggestions for improvement and commenting on what they thought was really good in my work. I could not have asked for a better group of people than those on this committee.

I have been blessed with the support of so many friends, colleagues and family members who encouraged me and always assured me that I would make it, even if I

didn't think it was possible. I would love to name them all, but there is not room here to do so. I could not have written this work without the support of my mother, Helen, my brother, Mark, sisters-in-law Mikell and Dee, and my nephew, Andy. I cannot even begin to name all the wonderful friends who have been there for me throughout this process, but special thanks from the heart goes to Ginger and Judy who more than once had to listen to me rant and rave about how this paper would never come to be. My family and friends always knew that I would complete this work, even though I did not always believe this myself.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Dedication.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	vi
Chapter I: Perceptions of Individual Experiences in a Service Learning Course.....	1
Overview of Service Learning in the United States.....	5
Service Learning and Student Reflection.....	6
Purpose of the Study.....	7
Research Questions.....	8
Overview of the Study Methods.....	8
Limitations and Assumptions.....	9
Definitions.....	10
Significance of the Study.....	11
Overview of the Dissertation.....	12
Chapter II: Review of Related Literature and Research Studies.....	14
History of Service Learning in the United States.....	14
The Need for Research in the Area of Service Learning.....	18
Service Learning Issues as Addressed in the Literature.....	20
Student Perceptions of Service Learning.....	20
Increased Empathy and Desire to Volunteer in Students.....	26
Support for Proposed Study.....	34
Chapter III: Methodology.....	36

Overview of Methods.....	36
Assumptions and Rationale for a Qualitative Design.....	37
Type of Design.....	37
The Researcher’s Role.....	38
Procedures.....	38
Gaining Access and Entry.....	38
Participant Selection.....	39
Assurance of Confidentiality.....	40
Data Collection Procedures.....	41
Means of Collecting Data.....	41
Interview Procedures and Protocols.....	42
Data Analysis Procedures.....	43
Data Management.....	44
Credibility.....	46
Transferability.....	47
Dependability.....	48
Chapter Summary.....	48
Chapter IV: Findings.....	50
Description of Participants.....	51
Findings from the Participant Interviews.....	53
Perceptions of Service Learning before Enrollment in the Course.....	57
Volunteer Activity Prior to Course.....	57
Reasons for Choosing a Service Learning Course.....	58

Understanding of Term “Service Learning”	59
Perceptions of Experiences While Enrolled in a Service Learning Course.....	60
Most Rewarding Aspect of the Course.....	61
Most Frustrating Aspect of the Course.....	62
Choice of Volunteer Activity.....	64
Feelings as to Value of Volunteer Service.....	65
Meaningful Classroom Instruction.....	67
Connection of Classroom Instruction to Volunteer Activity.....	69
Elective or Mandatory Course.....	70
Perceptions Looking Back on the Service Learning Experience.....	70
Most Helpful Classroom Activity.....	71
Value of Service to the Community.....	72
Feelings of Recipients of Volunteer Service.....	74
Volunteer Experience after the Course.....	75
Desire to be Lifelong Volunteer.....	76
Changes in Feelings Concerning Others.....	78
Changes in Attitude to Volunteering.....	79
Reflection as to Feelings Concerning Others.....	79
Current Volunteer Activity.....	80
Recommendation of Service Learning Course.....	81
Summary.....	82
Chapter V: Summary, Discussion and Conclusions.....	84
Summary of Findings.....	84

Research Questions..... – Empathy.....	84
Research Questions – Lifelong Volunteer.....	86
Research Questions – Classroom Instruction as Linked to Volunteer Experience.....	88
Limitations of the Study.....	89
Conclusions.....	91
Recommendations for Future Study.....	93
Reflections.....	97
References.....	99
Appendix A – IRB Participant Consent Form.....	106
Appendix B – Interview Questions.....	111

CHAPTER 1
PERCEPTIONS OF INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCES
IN A SERVICE LEARNING COURSE

Chris* was a student the researcher came to know in the role as his high school administrator. He experienced many problems during his freshman and sophomore years with issues such as cutting class, tardiness, and referrals for disruptive behavior in class. Minimal academic efforts on Chris' part were reflected in his barely passing grades. He was never outright rude or disrespectful to his teachers or administrators but by the end of his sophomore year, he was hanging out with a rough crowd,

In the fall of his junior year, some subtle changes were noticed in Chris. He now had a girlfriend with whom he spent much of his time and he was seldom seen with the same crowd that had caused such concern the previous year. His girlfriend was a member of a newly formed student service club, designed to assist a local animal humane group in their rescue efforts. Chris started showing up at weekend adoption events and helped with fundraising activities at school football games and in the community.

The changes in Chris were small things but as time passed, more aspects of a new person were observed. The student that once projected an attitude of alienation and self-absorption now exhibited caring and concern for the welfare of these animals that he was helping. His administrator has not followed up with Chris since he graduated, but conversations near the completion of his senior year indicated Chris' intention to continue with some type of volunteer work as he realized how much he had gained personally from the experience.

* A pseudonym is used to protect the identity of the student whose story is related here.

It is not believed that involvement in the service club was solely the reason for this drastic change in Chris but it appeared that the work with this club and the students in it gave him a sense of purpose and a feeling of acceptance. A student with no connection finally had a group to which he belonged; he seemed to have developed a sense of self-esteem that is often the result of the satisfaction gained from helping someone or something else. Service to one's community benefits the recipients of the volunteer work but often the one that devotes hours to volunteer service receives the greatest benefits.

Experiences with students such as Chris prompted the researcher's interest in investigating student perceptions of service learning courses, focusing the three primary research questions: 1. Does service learning foster in students a more empathetic nature in their understanding of the recipients of the service work? 2. Are the perceptions of the students as to their desire to perform volunteer work in the future affected by service learning experiences? 3. How do students perceive the usefulness of the service learning curriculum as to linking classroom work with the volunteer experience?

A student such as Chris could easily fall through the cracks in the current standards driven atmosphere of public education. Pickeral (2000) contended that the public is demanding higher standards in education through tests to measure performance accountability, a concept that sounds good in the abstract, but one that is difficult to implement. Billig (2000) noted that school leaders are worried about the impact of student alienation on negative student behaviors, making the task of achieving such standards even more difficult. In a time when the American educational system is under attack on many fronts and its students sometimes are seen as undisciplined, self-centered

underachievers, service learning initiatives around the country offer one approach to counter the culture of apathy that defines many of our young people.

In a report on the power of service learning as an educational tool, the National Commission on Service-Learning (Fiske, 2000) maintained that many of today's youth shun activities such as voting and other civic responsibilities, and see no reason to work for good grades. Additionally, some of these young people see no problem with cheating. Perhaps unfairly, media and the general public consensus depict a number of our youth as self-centered, materialistic creatures. Even worse, Billig (2000) noted that a large number of adults fear youth violence and drug use as the norm for many children even at the middle or elementary school level. Billig further asserted that students involved in service learning were less likely to become caught up in behaviors that led to sexual activity or violence, and were less likely to be arrested during the time of participation in service learning.

An examination of some of the efforts to engage children and young adults in service to their community revealed a surprising array of programs designed to teach values that support a life of caring and community commitment. The researcher explored the perceptions of these experiences of young adults who participated in a service learning program in high school, specifically as to how the course changed their feelings of empathy for others, affected their desire to participate in volunteer work and how well they felt that classroom instruction linked the volunteer service to class activities.

Study participants were former high school students who were enrolled in a service learning course while in high school. Service learning cultivates "civic awareness and citizenship, foster[s] cooperation and acceptance of diversity, support[s] character

education, and enhances[s] academic achievement” (Andersen & Murphy, 1999, p. 8). Such attributes of a good service learning program may foster the outcomes that were studied in this research.

The concept of service learning is not a new one but many school leaders do not have a full understanding of the effectiveness of service learning for the students enrolled in these courses. Loupe (2000) contended that the quality of service learning programs varies widely but that administrators in schools with effective programs cite community support and teacher training as key elements of success. Programs without this strong administrative and community support are seen as detrimental to academic achievement.

These programs of service to the community consist of a highly structured curriculum that combines classroom instruction with field experience. Most public schools in the United States, especially at the secondary level, offer service clubs with a set number of hours of volunteer service to the community as a requirement of membership. Students provide service in a number of ways such as visiting nursing homes, helping to feed the homeless and fundraising for countless charities. The first national survey of service learning, conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (1999), found that 83% of public high schools had some form of student participation in community service.

A more recent survey, conducted at the college level by Campus Compact in 2001, supported the findings of this 1999 survey. The Public Opinion Laboratory of the A. Alfred Taubman Center for Public Policy at Brown University conducted the survey for Campus Compact (Campus Compact, 2001). The results clearly showed that not only is there support for service learning in higher education but that students applying to

college with service learning experience in high school or even middle school level have a definite asset for the college application process (Campus Compact).

Young people seeking to gain community service hours for other organizations or to fulfill a court ordered service requirement often ask to participate in volunteer service activities sponsored by public schools. Seen as an extracurricular activity, guidance counselors who have observed the positive impact such membership has on the student's college application, encourage participation in a service club.

An organized service learning curriculum is an in-depth approach to teaching students the importance of giving one's time in service to the community. Such instruction is time consuming and requires a network of community partnerships in order to succeed. Teachers and students make a commitment of time beyond the normal school day to fully experience the program. Advocates of service learning see the benefits as being similar to those of community service but with added focus and structure, elements that help make the experience more meaningful for all involved (LeSourd, 1997; Masucci & Renner, 2000; Tai-Seale, 2001).

Overview of Service Learning in the United States

John Dewey was one of the first educators to advocate the concept of furthering the common good in society by engagement of learners in the community. An advocate of experiential education, Dewey is cited often as the inspiration for educators who develop programs that engage students in making a change for the common good. Influenced by the works of Dewey, Pijanowski (2001) stated "the importance of service is the development of 'democratic self-formation' ...[It] helps to prevent people from

performing the undemocratic actions of objectifying, exploiting and manipulating others for their own benefit” (p. 289).

Service learning became an official part of education in the United States with the passage of the National Community Service Act of 1990 and the National Service Act of 1993. The latter act makes a clear distinction between service learning and community service, stressing that the former concept is an integral part of the curriculum (H. Res. 2010, 1993). This mode of learning is highly structured and requires students not only to study, discuss and plan programs but also to become involved in the field experience of participating in these service activities.

Perhaps Senator John Glenn from Ohio, serving as chair of a commission dedicated to the concept of service learning, best defined this volunteer initiative. Senator Glenn stated simply “In addition to that understanding, service-learning adds a critical fourth “R” to the three R’s of education: “R” for responsibility. Let us embrace it at this moment in history when we have remembered what makes our country great and when we require the civic responsibility of the next generation to sustain that greatness” (Westat & Chapman, 1999, p. 1).

Service Learning and Student Reflection

A clear definition of terms is essential to understanding the concept of service learning. Unless classroom instruction and curriculum are tied to the service work, then students are involved in community service, not service learning. Classroom instruction addresses some of the issues associated with community service including ethical and practical considerations when working in the field. One researcher identified five elements of an effective service learning program that included integrating service into

the curriculum and life of the school, fostering civic responsibility and establishing the opportunity for reflection by students (King, 2002). An important element of service learning often lacking in community service projects is this opportunity for students to reflect upon the experience.

Such reflection takes many forms including classroom discussion and journal writing. A researcher at a private university in North Carolina had students respond to questions about the experience of tutoring elementary students twice a week. One participant related “Tutoring has enabled me to look at the world from a different perspective, allowing me to escape from the spoiled world of [college] and look at the world from the eyes of an excited ten year old. I would definitely do this work again” (Malone, Jones, & Stallings, 2002, p. 61). Any form of service to the community can have this effect on individuals giving time for volunteer work but reflection on their own experiences as well as those of others helps to define the nature of benefits gained by all parties.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe the perceptions and experiences of former students who were involved in a service learning course while in high school. A qualitative research design, specifically using a phenomenological method, was employed. Service learning was defined generally as a structured elective course that combines classroom instruction with volunteer service in the community.

The study was conducted through interviews with seven former high school service learning students from different localities. The results of this study, as depicted in the descriptive portraits of the perceptions of these young adults with a focus on feelings

of empathy, the intention of future volunteer work, and student perceptions of how well class activities linked class instruction with the volunteer service will further the body of research to help school district leaders as they grapple with decisions related to service learning programs.

Research Questions

The major research questions for this study were:

1. Does service learning foster in students the perception of a more empathetic nature in their understanding of the recipients of the service work?
2. Are the perceptions of the students as to their desire to perform volunteer work in the future affected by service learning experiences?
3. How do students perceive the usefulness of the service learning curriculum as to linking classroom work with the volunteer experience?

Overview of the Study Methods

This study was conducted using a phenomenological method to interview seven former service learning students who participated in a service learning course while in high school. The participants were chosen from several different localities to offer a variety of perspectives. The interview was used to get the participants to share life experiences as they relate to a specific topic with the assumption that these shared experiences have an “effable-structure and essence” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p.190).

The participants were interviewed using an open-ended questioning format that allowed the interviewer flexibility to pursue strands of interest as they emerged. The exact number of participants was determined by interest and availability of individuals;

the final number selected was seven. The study was conducted over the course of several weeks, allowing approximately one hour for each interview.

Limitations and Assumptions

The experience of students enrolled in service learning is an area that has not been given a lot of attention by educational researchers. This method of education has supporters as diverse as grass roots practitioners to the President of the United States (Pijanowski, 2001). The majority of research conducted thus far has been conducted as evaluations of small programs, rather than focusing on the students.

According to Billig (2000), most of the studies conducted are qualitative in nature and the handful of quantitative studies are flawed in many respects, but until the structure of service learning courses changes, qualitative inquiry into small, established programs is the best way to study this area. The mandate to the researcher is to be meticulous in both methods and analysis to provide research that will help others to understand the phenomena as the students experience it.

The researcher's bias in the area of service learning was acknowledged. The belief before starting the study was that service learning is a valuable concept in many respects, not the least of which is the belief in its ability to instill in students a capacity to feel empathy for others and a lifelong commitment to volunteerism. It was also believed that this bias would not be an obstacle to the study as great care was taken to insure stringent efforts to provide detailed, rich descriptions of the perceptions of individuals who have participated in a service learning program. The variety of ways in which the collecting and analyzing of data was completed helped in developing credible, transferable and dependable results, insuring against researcher bias.

Definitions

The following are the definitions of terms, as they were used in this study:

Service Learning - Service learning must be part of an academic course featuring a related curriculum with clearly outlined objectives for the course, address real needs in the community, and use a variety of classroom activities to assist students in drawing lessons from the service work. The National Center for Education Statistics (1999) defined service learning as “curriculum-based community service that integrates classroom instruction with community service activities” (p.3)

Community Service - Volunteer or mandatory service work without the support of classroom instruction that takes place on or off school grounds (National Center for Education Statistics, 1999).

Agency Volunteer or Representative – An individual representing a volunteer agency with which the student is working in volunteer service. This person is a stakeholder in a partnership that includes all persons affected by the project, including the students, parents, recipients of the service and the teacher (Meyers, 1999).

Reflection – The portion of classroom instruction devoted to time spent discussing and writing about the volunteer work in order to gain a deeper appreciation of the experience. Activities such as journal writing and class discussion will “give students a conceptual framework for learning from their service experience” (Hatcher, 1997, p. 154).

Empathy – “The action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experiences of another...” (Literary Link, 2004).

Lifelong Volunteer – Someone who views volunteer service to others as a part of one’s life mission; not just a one-time act of service. In service learning, it is “the performance of formal service to benefit others or one’s community...”, leading to the development of “civic responsibility” in the student (National Service Learning Clearinghouse, 2004).

Significance of the Study

The results of this study will add to a growing body of research on the concept and practice of service learning as students experience it. As qualitative research will most likely continue to be the method called for in this area, it is important that a body of rigorous, in-depth research be conducted to determine student perceptions as to their experience in a service learning program.

The survival of service learning courses in the competitive arena of high school curriculum and course offerings is dependent upon those researchers interested in the field conducting credible, transferable and dependable studies to continue the debate among peers, leading to improvements in practice. Of even more importance are the individual students in each course. The design and structure of their service learning course should provide maximum benefits.

If one truly accepts the beliefs of Dewey (1916) and the countless others since to embrace the notion that service to community is a keystone of a democratic society, then educators have a moral imperative to provide the best instruction in this area that is possible. Abernathy and Obenshain (2001) stated that unselfish service for the greater good is a long established part of the American tradition. If what we do is not effective, then we need to search for methods for improvement.

Overview of the Dissertation

In Chapter I, the context for the study along with related background, problems and purpose of the study was presented. Also presented in this chapter were the major research questions, overview of methods of research and related issues, the rationale for the use of a qualitative design and the significance of this research in the field of service learning.

In Chapter 2, a review of the current literature related to the topic was presented. This review detailed the history of service learning in the United States and included a description of issues in need of research, followed by literature that addressed issues such as perceptions of students, teachers, and adult volunteers in regard to service learning and the effect of service learning on student empathy, desire to volunteer and perceptions of effectiveness of the service learning course. The review of literature concluded with literature-based support for the proposed study.

Chapter 3 focused on details of the methodology used in conducting the research followed by a detailed description of participants, data collection and how data analysis was conducted.

In Chapter 4, the findings were presented in narrative form. Analysis of data was ongoing from the first day of the research as the researcher looked for themes related to increased empathy and the desire in students to continue service work as life long volunteers as a result of the service learning experience. In this chapter, these findings were pulled together, providing analysis plans in which the research questions were explored based upon the information gleaned from the study.

Chapter 5 was reserved for discussion, conclusions, implications and recommendations for further research. In this chapter, the researcher made meaning of the findings and expanded on what is currently known about students' experiences of service learning in the public school setting.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND RESEARCH STUDIES

History of Service Learning in the United States

“Democracy is meant to be participatory. The government is only one part of a working democracy” (McCarty, 1996, p. 28). Echoing this sentiment is perhaps the most cited author in the literature on service learning, John Dewey. This early proponent of experiential learning believed absolutely in the need for an involved citizenry to ensure the success of a democratic society. According to Dewey (1916), “The devotion of democracy to education is a familiar fact. The superficial explanation is that a government resting upon popular suffrage cannot be successful unless those who elect and who obey their governors are educated” (p. 87). He went on to state that democracy is much more than a mere form of government; it is a means of living and sharing the experiences of community.

Dewey (1915) criticized the school system of his time, believing that the atmosphere of personal competition in which success is measured by how far ahead of the others a child has progressed is detrimental to the individual and society. He felt that “the tragic weakness of the present school is that it endeavors to prepare future members of the social order in a medium in which the conditions of the social spirit are eminently wanting” (p. 15).

Simply learning lessons loses the effect of active work in which helping others is no longer charity but an activity that empowers the one offering the help, providing a measure of the student not just by the amount of material memorized, but rather by the “genuine value of the community” (Dewey, 1915, p. 16). Dewey then stated that only

when the school trains each child in the “spirit of service” will the best interests of society as a whole be well served (Dewey, 1915, p. 29).

The United States has a long history of interest in service to one’s community. At the dawn of the 20th century, William James (1906) proposed that there be a draft not only for military purposes but rather to have conscription for the entire population of our youth to work in service for good causes to even out the injustice “of the army enlisted against Nature” (§25). Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was a first step in realizing James’ vision of an army to restore, not destroy. John F. Kennedy established a similar program by authorizing the legislation that led to the establishment of the Peace Corps in 1961, followed by Lyndon B. Johnson’s Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA). Throughout the terms of subsequent administrations, similar programs have been established, recognizing the value of Americans being of service to one another.

The spirit of John Dewey lives on in the work of many of the leaders of the school reform movement of the 1980s. Two of the leading researchers of the time both advocated the use of service learning as a part of the curriculum to enrich the educational experience for students. John Goodlad’s (1984) study of schools nationwide recommended sweeping changes in the way schools do business. Compressing and reorganizing the traditional structure of public education, Goodlad recommended that students begin school at age 4, completing public education at age 16, with the student at that time awarded a certificate of completion. Education does not end at this juncture but rather is continued in a variety of ways that may include community college.

At this point in the educational process, Goodlad's recommendation resembles Dewey's experiential education, calling on business, industry, government and social service agencies to become involved in the student's continuing educational experience. The student would be involved not only in work along with his studies but service would form a third part of the curriculum. Goodlad (1984) referred to this phase as "volunteerism" (p. 348), which he placed in quotes on purpose to emphasize that his concept goes much beyond the meaning implied by the term. The purpose of the volunteer work is to instill in students a sense of the rightness of such work as being a lifelong mission. Goodlad likened his "volunteerism" to being on continuous jury duty.

Researching the nation's schools at this same time was Theodore Sizer, founder of the Coalition of Essential Schools. Guided by his Ten Common Principles, common sense concepts for structuring effective schools, Sizer's vision is realized in this successful network of member schools across the country, now in existence for more than 20 years. Sizer's (1984) first work on the state of education in America, *Horace's Compromise*, was followed up almost ten years later with the publication of his vision of effective education realized. Sizer's fictional teacher, Horace, leads this educational reform initiative in his school as presented in Sizer's companion work, *Horace's School* (1992).

In Horace's school, students must prove their knowledge of the curriculum by way of a project or exhibition, rather than by the use of pencil and paper tests. Graduation is dependent upon the completion of a successful exhibition to demonstrate that the student is ready to move on in the world. As advocated by Dewey decades earlier, Sizer

was more interested in how experience has helped the student to learn, not how much the student can memorize the night before the test (Sizer, 1992).

One of the projects as described by Sizer (1992) in this work includes an in-school portion of the exhibition, showing an understanding of the material studied to be coupled with an out of school portion that involves service to the community. Options such as tutoring either in subject matter or sports, volunteering with a small businessperson to help expand the company or working with a hospice program are listed as examples of acceptable activities. A survey completed by representatives of 28 of the most successful reform models and conducted by the American Youth Policy Forum, found the Coalition of Essential Schools to be the model most compatible with the inclusion of service learning in its curriculum (Pearson, 2002).

The tragedy of September 11, 2001 thrust to the forefront this core American value of helping others in need. In order to take advantage of this outpouring of civic responsibility as seen in the hundreds of selfless acts of service in the months following this most horrific day in America's history, President Bush established the USA Freedom Corps. The most far-reaching initiative of its kind, every American is called upon to donate a minimum of two years of service to other people. One high school in New York even developed their service learning program as a direct response to this terrorist attack. "Involvement in any substantive service learning program has powerful potential for every student. Given the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001....can anyone doubt the need to develop the highest levels of morality, compassion, and decency in our students" (Friedland, 2003).

One option to fulfill this ideal service initiative would be to sign up for an organization such as the Peace Corps but the goal for most Americans is to donate their time a few hours a week over a lifetime (Corporation for National & Community Service, 2002). This is a lofty vision that establishes the need to introduce children to acts of service early in life in order to succeed. The mandate is for our educational leaders to take up the challenge to educate our students as good citizens who volunteer their time to help others is evident.

The Need for Research in the Area of Service Learning

One of the major challenges in investigating the success of service learning programs is the fact that there is little empirical evidence in the field of service learning. This is due in part to the fact that the experience of helping others is highly personal to each individual. There is an abundance of material in which individual teachers or researchers report on single school or district programs but most of these reports are overviews limited to the successes experienced in each program. Two researchers called for more rigorous, better documented research in the field, citing this need due to the limitations of much of the current literature that purports to be research but in truth merely provides description of existing programs. Anecdotal stories supporting such service learning programs are plentiful (Abernathy and Obenchain, 2001).

Billig (2002) also discussed this lack of rigorous research methods on the subject of service learning, stating that such research should be treated with caution. She noted that control groups and random sampling are not used; program studies are preferred over “pure [experimental] research” (¶10). Voicing a concern very much in the same vein as Billig’s views on such research, Chapin (1998) stated “I concur that the first step in

evaluation is to ascertain whether the participants have been affected but research must also go beyond anecdotal evidence” (p. 207).

This lack of solid research in the field of service learning led one researcher to examine the practices of 2,164 teachers in middle schools that were in the process of school improvement. The research method used was a multivariate analysis of a variety of educational practices including service learning, specifically the teacher’s attitudes and beliefs, how often service learning was used in the classroom and the relationship between how teachers felt about service learning and standards-based instructional expectations (Seitsinger, 2005).

The results showed that when a teacher expressed a belief in service learning practices, there was generally a shared belief in other reform-based models but this belief did not necessarily translate into actual classroom practice. In comparison to other accepted classroom activities, service was used the least frequently. It was also found that teachers who used service learning practices the most often also used “the standards-based practices for literacy, numeracy and cross-content area practices” (Seitsinger, 2005 p. 27).

Seitsinger concluded by stating,

I examined teachers’ attitudes and beliefs and classroom instructional practices associated with service-learning in middle level schools involved in documenting school improvements. Researchers need to examine other components to better understand the context in which service-learning occurs (p.28).

In conducting this study with such a large amount of data, Seitsinger has laid a foundation upon which other researchers may continue the research into current practices of this very elusive concept of service learning.

Service Learning Issues as Addressed in the Literature

Student Perceptions of Service Learning. Much of the research reports positive outcomes for all who take part in the program but as cited by Dennis Potthoff (2000) in a quantitative study examining the effects of a service learning program on 26 faculty members, 68 adult volunteers and 136 students in the role of pre-service teachers, this outcome is not always the case. Conducted at the university level, Potthoff's analysis found that there was a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of faculty as compared to students and agency personnel.

In general, the teachers expressed less favorable opinions in all areas of the survey, including time commitment, classroom assignments and goal attainment. The instrument the researcher used to measure the perceptions of the three groups was a 53 item Likert scale survey, asking all three groups the same questions divided into three sections related to change in attitude and attainment of goals in skills and knowledge. On a scale of 6 indicating the highest level of satisfaction, the teachers' overall rating was only a 2.92 as compared with 4.61 for the agency personnel and 4.76 for the students.

Pothoff (2000) offered several explanations for the low scores of the faculty members, including that the faculty did not fully understand the goals of the course, they were not aware of how positively the other two groups viewed the experience and they were conceptually opposed to the idea of field work combined with classroom instruction. It is interesting to note the apparent success of the program for the students

and agency personnel even with the less than enthusiastic endorsement of the faculty. A qualitative study conducted at the high school level supports this view. Fourteen high school students from a small city setting worked throughout one school year in a service learning program pairing classroom science instruction with volunteer work with an environmental management group engaged in building a watershed management project for a local waterway (Hogan, 2002). The researcher examined the roles of the teacher, the agency personnel and the students.

The teacher's idea was for the students to be primarily responsible for the design and implementation of their project. The problem was that the teacher was never able to let go of the traditional student/teacher relationship. The students' perceptions at the conclusion of the study were that they did not learn as much about the project as they should have as the adults, teacher and volunteers could not let go of their power and authority over the students. The weekly after school meetings throughout the year were mostly teacher directed. These students felt that they were given only menial tasks to complete while the adults retained control of the more important tasks (Hogan, 2002).

On the other hand, the teacher expressed frustration at the students' lack of independence in taking leadership roles. The researcher concluded that a major theme emerging from her study was that of power dynamics between the adults and the students. The adults viewed the experience as generally positive while the students felt that they were not given enough control at the volunteer site. (Hogan, 2002).

A similar dynamic developed between the students and the adult volunteers during fieldwork. The students wanted to be involved in meaningful activities, including the creation of a citizen survey, a project accepted quite willingly by the students. They

spent long hours on the development of this survey but in the end, the project director did not use any of their work. He felt that the students did not understand the information they needed to obtain or have the expertise to develop a meaningful survey. The students felt betrayed by the agency, with a generally negative final impression of the experience as a whole (Hogan, 2002).

An example of a successful program that went this extra step to include students was conducted with a college economics class focusing on women and gender issues as related to economics (McGoldrick, 1998). Students were given the option of participating in a service project with 15 hours of required service or writing a traditional research paper of 10-15 pages in length; 17 of 19 students choose to participate in the volunteer work.

Each student was required to identify an agency that had an economic impact on women with which to complete the required service hours. A detailed contract between the students and the teacher outlining the expectations of the service work was signed; a copy of the contract was provided to the service agency to enable them to work better with the student. The researcher chose six of the students to illustrate the progression of students through the Kolb learning cycle, a model based on experiential learning (McGoldrick, 1998).

In this model, the researcher believed that the final and most important step is often neglected. In this step, the students extended the specifics of the experience to generalizations in order to move beyond the specifics. For example, rather than focusing on the situation of one homeless person, ideally students are to expand their thinking

beyond a single experience by developing theories that apply their knowledge to the issue of homelessness in general. (McGoldrick, 1998).

McGoldrick (1998) concluded that both the student and faculty responses were positive in nature, especially considering the limitations of such a finite time to complete their goals as that allotted in one course. Comments such as “I think it was a very interesting and rewarding experience. I got a look at homelessness that I never would have gotten elsewhere” (p. 373) from a student and “[This project is] a great way to engage students in their learning” (p. 373) from a teacher support this conclusion.

Also cited in the literature is the frustration experienced by students working with the disorganization of many volunteer agencies. However, McGoldrick (1998) emphasized the importance of reflection and classroom connections to the service work in handling these more negative aspects of the experience such as the disorganization on the agency’s part resulting in no projects being assigned to students and the discomfort of these students having to deal with the reality of extreme poverty. She put the responsibility on the instructor to make sure such important reflections and links between classroom and fieldwork are made.

In another college level study conducted with undergraduate education majors involved in volunteer tutoring work, students tutored fourth and fifth grade students in a variety of subjects. The researcher obtained data by a microanalysis of student essays based on a grounded theory approach to qualitative research. Passages were coded with the final state of analysis consisting of a subdivision of data into four categories related to the effect of the volunteer and classroom experiences on the participating students (Malone, Jones & Stallings, 2002).

The results found the experience to be generally positive for these students. In the category of identity and personal development, 62.2% indicated a positive change in their perspectives in this area. More than half of the students wrote about positive change in perspectives regarding service and responsibility to the community and a similar number wrote about the personal satisfaction of helping others (Malone, et al., 2002).

While data represented a majority of positive responses, with 59.2% reporting positively on identity and personal development and 55.1% personally satisfied by helping others, one might have expected the numbers in these two areas to be higher. Malone, et al. (2002) stated that students were transformed in significant ways. They concluded their comments by stating “After all, if the true aim of education is to transform what better experience...than to experience directly and to reflect explicitly on one’s own personal transformation” (p. 80). This comment suggests that the numbers may not tell the entire story; the researcher’s commentary on the study included few negative comments made by the participating students.

A recent study done at California State University centered on a program that presented an original design for their service learning program in which students were used as trainers for the teachers in the area of technology. Known as reverse mentoring, this program was used with teacher education students to provide experience in both teaching techniques and service learning projects. The author noted that both of the elements of teacher training and service learning were incorporated into this technology initiative but made clear the fact that this information was not intended to serve as research data (Leh, 2005).

Leh (2005) explained that the concept of reverse mentoring is not a new one; it has been used by corporations such as General Electric in order to take advantage of the expertise within their own institutions. Structured after these pioneer programs, the goal of the California State University project was to combine service learning and reverse mentoring with two discipline areas, teacher education and the Instructional Technology (IT) program.

A total of 35 faculty members who had expressed an interest in the training were divided into three groups related to the subject they taught. The thought was that people with similar interests would be more likely to work collaboratively. This training was delivered through both large and small group sessions as well as individually, as needed. During each quarter, the mentor spent about 12 hours working with faculty training (Leh, 2005).

Feedback was generally positive as many of the professors expressed their enjoyment in working with the mentors, adding “that such training was the most beneficial training they have ever received” (Leh, 2005, p. 36). A few of the professors expressed their approval of the individual work with mentors but some of them requested mentor help that they never used.

Students were concerned that this unfulfilled work time would have a negative impact on their grades, but the class instructor talked to the faculty members involved in the project and the unused mentoring time did not count against the students. In final evaluations of the project, both students and faculty felt it was worthwhile and that both groups had benefited from the service work and the mentoring.(Leh, 2005).

Increased Empathy and Desire to Volunteer in Students. Illinois' junior United States senator Barack Obama shared his views on the concept of empathy when he wrote of the late United States senator Paul Simon. "That last aspect of Paul's character – a sense of empathy - is one that I find myself appreciating more and more as I get older. It is at the heart of my moral code and it is how I understand the Golden Rule-not simply as a call to sympathy or charity, but as something more demanding, a call to stand in somebody else's shoes and see through their eyes" (Obama, 2006, p. 66). This is an excellent definition of a concept that is often misunderstood as being no more than a form of sympathy or charity.

As for the concept of volunteerism, Obama, in speaking of values, talks of our "communal values and sense of mutual responsibility and social solidarity" that extends to all aspects of our lives. (Obama, 2006, p. 63). For Obama, helping those less fortunate is not just a responsibility of one's church or local civic group; it is a responsibility we share for all of our fellow beings. This young senator echoed the sentiments felt by many of those leaders who first articulated these values that are at the heart of service learning.

Much of the research on service learning focuses on these two concepts of empathy and volunteerism. One such study utilizing a quantitative design measured perceptions of university students related to altruism and desire to volunteer. Student self-perceptions related to their motives for performing volunteer work were examined by use of the DePaul Values inventory, an instrument used to measure students' perceptions related to the values and mission developed by the university (Ferrari & Bristow, 1996).

While this study was not directed specifically to students enrolled in a service learning course in high school, the students were enrolled in a psychology course after

completing community-based service work and the service courses offered by the university to raise awareness of freshmen to social issues in urban environments. The researchers concluded that this program promoted a general atmosphere of altruism in students that benefited the university community and increased students' desire to perform volunteer work. They further recommended that such research be conducted with students enrolled in high school service learning courses as well (Ferrari & Bristow, 1996).

The research on service learning documents the benefits for the student participants, but an equally important outcome of participation in a structured service learning program was the student's increased ability to feel empathy for others along with the desire to perform future volunteer work. One very comprehensive analysis of this result is presented in a study involving 24 college students at six schools which examined the motivation for participation in service activities in high school and college (Jones & Hill, 2003). The researcher reported the increase of interest in this topic as the catalyst for the study. This researcher did not study service learning courses as such but focused on previous volunteer experiences of the participants, including course related and mandatory service along with all volunteer activities through family, church or other community group. The relevant findings from this research applied to the impact of such service on the volunteers in all categories of service work.

The constructivist model of research was chosen to study these 24 college students "because the aim of our inquiry was understanding students' construction of meaning and their perceptions about their own patterns of participation" (Jones & Hill, 2003, p. 3). It was further stated that all decisions in relation to research methods were

based on the tenets of this constructivist design. As in much qualitative research, this approach necessitates a close relationship between the researchers and participants. It is the stories of the students that were examined in depth (Jones & Hill).

Data were analyzed using a constant comparative method, moving in a cyclical manner from the concrete to the more abstract, sorting data into themes and categories (Jones & Hill, 2003). The starting point for this analysis was the common ground of all participants having been involved in service work during high school. From there, the researchers moved to the point of the students' current level of involvement. One common thread found among the participants was difficulty making meaning from their high school experiences. This seemed to be the case more for those whose participation had been mandatory as opposed to voluntary in nature (Jones & Hill).

Jones and Hill (2003) found that those students involved in high school experiences that cultivated empathy in the individual participant were more likely to continue to be involved in service work in college, approaching such work with "an ethos of caring for others" (p. 10). It was further stated that these high school experiences were made even more meaningful if combined with support from teachers and family, encouraging a commitment to service in college. It was concluded that it was not any one factor taken alone, but students who in high school had been involved in direct service supported by school and home to help bring meaning to the experience and foster the desire to continue to volunteer in college (Jones & Hill).

In another study conducted at the college level, the students were assigned as volunteer research associates to work with a team of other volunteers on a variety of community based projects such as a smoking cessation program and a substance abuse

recovery facility. The students were at all levels in their field of study from one that recently had completed his bachelor's degree to doctoral level students. The main purpose for the fieldwork was to gain experience in using various research methods; each participant was involved in a research project related to the experience (Ferrari & Jason, 1996).

A survey was administered to 24 of the 25 participants at the conclusion of the fieldwork. Results showed that the time spent on the project was correlated to the ratings, finding that the more time invested, the greater the degree of personal growth from the experience by the individual including impact on personal life, career goals and recommendation of the program to others. Most of the responses were positive, with more negative responses to items such as difficulty scheduling meetings, the early morning meeting time and personal conflicts with a few of the associates (Ferrari & Jason, 1996).

The researchers concluded that even though the findings were mostly positive, further research is needed. One of the positive results indicated that not only would the participants recommend this project to others, they would also like to repeat the experience for themselves, a result indicating a desire for further volunteer experiences. One area Ferrari and Jason (1996) identified as needing further research was related to the determination of the extent to which their curriculum affected qualities such as "honesty, cooperation, respect for others, non-violence, tolerance, empathy, citizenship, and social responsibility" (p. 450).

These qualities do seem to be interrelated to a great extent, making it hard to study a single quality such as empathy in isolation. Several of the studies in the field of

service learning specifically mentioned many of the above listed qualities, but if a study shows an impact on qualities such as empathy or tolerance for others, then related qualities such as respect for others and social responsibility naturally follow.

A study that supports this contention was conducted at Radford University with art education students involved in the Radford Beans and Rice Project based on the work of an artist who used her art as a means of making the world a better place while at the same time raising environmental awareness. One of the major lessons of her art was that a one-time act of service does not make a lasting difference. Another goal of the project at Radford was to instill a sense of social responsibility in these students. (Taylor, 2000).

This study devoted a great deal of space to an exploration of the concept presented by the artist and gave detailed excerpts from student journals. Taylor's (2000) analysis was ongoing throughout the reported research. Art education students reflected upon the experience of tutoring the children both online and in reflection journals. The researcher saw marked positive differences in those students who worked at the project weekly as opposed to those who only participated on a sporadic basis.

In another college level study measuring levels of altruism and empathy, student volunteers took part in a project focused on homelessness in the area. Due to job reductions, the homeless problem had grown tremendously and was seen by the community agencies and the college as the most appropriate area in which to have the students gain field experience. A major recruiting effort was made on campus and many students signed up for an elective course titled Volunteer Services. Another group of students participated in the project but did not take the elective course. The fieldwork opportunities took many forms and ranged from working in shelters to serve meals to

participating in fund raising activities. Students were asked to keep a journal to reflect upon their experiences (Forte, 1997).

The researcher administered pre-test and post-test instruments to the participants. These participants included 20 students enrolled in the elective course and 18 participants who took part only in the volunteer segment of the program. The tests were in the survey form, asking demographic information about the individual along with questions designed to characterize patterns of altruistic activity, empathic concern, attitudes about voluntary service and related concepts. Additionally, there were questions to determine what types of volunteer work the students had done on their own. Survey results were used to compare the volunteers taking the course with those only participating in the volunteer work (Forte, 1997).

The data analysis was conducted by means of a t-test comparing the means between the two groups. At the end of the semester, the group that had taken the elective course reported the highest levels on measures of altruism. Items also rated highly included community expectations and plans for future volunteer activities. Surprisingly, both groups rated empathy fairly low. On several other measures, the volunteer only group scored slightly higher but the researcher stated that such differences were not statistically significant. The findings were supported by inclusion of qualitative data gleaned from the end of semester service reports completed by those enrolled in the elective course (Forte, 1997).

The researcher concluded by citing the fact that this program provided 1,465 homeless individuals with 1,800 hours of service from the student volunteers, definitely providing a sense of accomplishment for the students involved. He believed that the 14-

week program might be too brief a time in which to conduct the study (Forte, 1997).

Results from other research studies would tend to support this assertion.

One positive to be noted from the study is the fact the both groups rated a desire to volunteer in the future quite highly but a disappointment was the low scores given by both groups in the area of empathic concern. It seems likely that the 14 weeks may indeed be too short a time to form the type of connections needed to affect the ability to feel empathy but it is also possible the nature of the research may not have provided an accurate measure. Unlike a tutoring experience, it is unlikely that the students formed any real bonds with the homeless people with whom they worked.

This effect of time spent volunteering along with forming some type of relationship between the volunteer and the recipient of the service as a means of increasing feelings of both empathy and intention for future volunteer work is supported by a case study conducted at the University of Tennessee. The students enrolled in a course in cultural studies were required to participate in a service learning project, a key component of which was a reflective journal. These students worked through a local church located in an area in which many of the children were living in poverty. University students provided a weekly meeting in the church library with the goal of mentoring these children (Masucci & Renner, 2000).

Mentoring activities involved one on one time with the children, tutoring in their schoolwork, reading to them or just talking with them. The participants encountered unexpected problems that were really flaws in the design of the program. There was no orientation program before the service work began and no clear directives were given on

issues such as who was in charge. More practical issues such as the lack of a first aid kit or parent contact list also surfaced as problems (Masucci & Renner, 2000).

The results of the project were mixed for a variety of reasons but the overall conclusion of the researcher was that there is much work involved in developing a successful service project, a key to the success being to know the culture of the people with whom you are going to work. Masucci and Renner (2000) contrasted the cultural studies approach to volunteer service to the more traditional styles of evangelism with a set agenda connected to the service or mission in which the service actually becomes more an act of charity.

One of the major flaws seen in the project by the researcher was that the community being served was never consulted or involved in any discussions. Masucci and Renner (2000) saw this omission as not only undermining the value of the community but also reinforcing the traditional power structure. They further stated that exclusion of the community from the planning stages had far reaching implications. Without such inclusion, there was no hope for the students to take seriously issues of social justice or to move toward the formation of a more caring community.

One key ingredient that appears to be missing in this project was that of a community agency person working in partnership with the college and the student participants. Service learning is a program dependent upon all parties working closely together in partnership. Due to the failure of this plan to follow the necessary steps in developing a good program, these participants were not given the opportunity to move beyond the level of charity work to that of feelings of empathy with the children they

were mentoring and it is less likely that these participants will choose to take part in such volunteer activities in the future.

Support for Proposed Research Study. There is clear support in the literature showing a need for additional research in the field of service learning. Early in the 20th Century, Williams James (1906) supported the concept of universal service by the country's youth and John Dewey (1916) was one of the first educators to write of the value of this type of educational experience. The ideas of these supporters of volunteer service were further developed in the 1980's with educational reformers such as John Goodlad (1984) and TheodoreSizer (1992) proposing schools that incorporated volunteer service with classroom instruction as an integral part of the curriculum.

Educators from kindergarten to the university level have since instituted numerous service learning programs but researchers such as Billig (2002), Chapin (1998), and Abernathy and Obenchain (2001) contend that too little empirical evidence currently exists as to the effectiveness of such programs. These researchers point out that most current research is little more than evaluations of small programs, acknowledging that the majority of service learning programs is constructed around such single school or district models.

Current research has been conducted employing more rigorous standards than those cited by these researchers. Studies by researchers such as Potthoff (2000), Hogan (2002), McGoldrick (1998), Malone et.al. (2002) and Leh (2005) represent only a few of current research efforts examining the perceptions of teachers, students and agency volunteers involved in service learning. Others such as Jones & Hill (2003), Ferrari & Jason (1996), Taylor (2000), Forte (1997), Masucci & Renner (2000) and Seitsinger

(2005) have conducted studies from the perspective of the effect of service learning on empathy and a desire for future volunteer experience in students. Even though much recent research has been done with individual programs, these two major areas of research still leave many unanswered questions and additional study is needed to add to the growing body of research in the field of service learning.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Overview of the Methods

The merits of the concept of service learning are supported in the current literature but the problem of just how to measure the perceptions of students completing such a course is an issue to be addressed by additional research. One area in need of this study is that of the perceptions of individuals who were enrolled in a service learning course in high school and have had several years to reflect upon the experience. Such perceptions of individuals given time to reflect upon their experience best portray the effectiveness of service learning education. The major research questions for this study are:

1. Does service learning foster in students the perception of a more empathetic nature in their understanding of the recipients of the service work?
2. Are the perceptions of the students as to their desire to perform volunteer work in the future affected by service learning experiences?
3. How do students perceive the usefulness of the service learning curriculum as to linking classroom work with the volunteer experience?

Overcrowded schools with enormous budget constraints are forcing educators to make hard choices; investigating the benefits for students completing service learning courses is necessary to support and to justify the resources required to continue this method of learning in the competition for the needed teachers and curriculum support. The purpose of this study was to describe the perceptions and experiences of individuals who were enrolled in a service learning course in high school. A qualitative method,

specifically a phenomenological design, was employed to present descriptive portraits of the perceptions and experiences of these participants.

Assumptions and Rationale for a Qualitative Design

Type of Design. A qualitative research design was chosen for this study based on the fact that service learning is a very personal concept for each individual involved. In many cases, the students in such programs are not typically given the opportunity to add their voices to the description of the programs in which they are involved, yet it is expected that various individuals involved in the same way may view the experience of similar volunteer work differently. The qualitative research method provides the means to give voice to such individuals after they have had a period of time to reflect upon the experience. The phenomenological design is based upon understanding the experience through the perceptions of the participants, not that of the researcher. The researcher's function is data collection and analysis primarily through the use of inductive strategies (Merriam, 1998).

Using the phenomenological design, the researcher chose to describe the experiences of seven young people who were enrolled in a service learning course while in high school. These participants were chosen from localities throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. The selection process took into account each person's gender, ethnicity, and geographical location while in high school in order to ensure a diverse representation of individuals.

The study was conducted through in-depth interviews with each participant. Rossman and Rallis (2003) asserted that collecting data from a relatively small number of individuals is appropriate for the in-depth nature of inquiry in a phenomenological study

that employs open-ended techniques leading to a more holistic collection of data for analysis by the researcher. Each participant granted permission to tape the interview but if anyone had not been comfortable with this format, the researcher would have relied on field notes and details recalled immediately at the conclusion of the interview.

The Researcher's Role. Cresswell (2003) viewed qualitative research as being interpretative in nature on the researcher's part; therefore, he advocated that the researcher identify his own personal biases or beliefs concerning the subject of inquiry. The researcher's deeply held belief in the value of service to others was fostered by childhood experiences. With parents very involved in service to the community, memories of the time included the church youth group participating in holiday food drives or collecting other items such as clothes and school supplies for those in need.

Procedures

Gaining Access and Entry. As the subjects of the study were no longer enrolled in a service learning course, there was not a particular site at which to conduct the research. Once the Virginia Tech Internal Review Board (IRB) granted approval, signifying that the methodology met the tests of ethical standards, each individual was contacted by telephone, e-mail or in person to explain the purpose of the study, review the details of the IRB agreement and set up a time and place convenient to the individual in order to conduct the interview. All participants were apprised of the approximate length of the interview and efforts were made to best accommodate their schedule and preference of location.

Before contacting any participants, IRB permission was obtained from Virginia Tech. The IRB form and protocol are presented in Appendix A. Once all permissions had

been obtained, contact was made with the individuals recommended by the teachers and other colleagues in order to obtain their permission to take part in the study.

Participant Selection. Cresswell (1998) recommended several methods of participant selection, including maximum variation as a means of obtaining a diversity of perspectives from multiple viewpoints. Due to the choice of the phenomenological study design, this method of selection was attractive in order to get as wide a variety of responses as possible from the small number of participants that were involved in the study. Participant selection was based on individuals who represented the diversity of individuals enrolled in service learning courses across the Commonwealth of Virginia.

This selection of participants was designed to ensure representation based on gender, ethnicity and individuals representing rural, suburban and urban locals along with college students as well as high school graduates who are not attending college as well as individuals who did not complete high school. While more diversity of participants would have been preferred, the difficulty in finding individuals who met the criteria for participating in the study limited the extent to which this group could be made more diverse.

Due to the fact that the research was based on the subjective views of persons who have experienced service learning first hand, this wide variety of perspectives was preferred in participant selection. Names of possible participants were obtained by contacting various administrators in schools throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. Five was the target number but adding two additional candidates proved to be appropriate to get the data needed for saturation. It was quite possible that some of those invited to participate would decline; in fact, approximately 100 persons were approached

as to participation, but most did not meet the criteria and others declined to participate. Still, the original target number of five participants was met with two additional participants added to make for a more diverse group. Ultimately, the researcher should reserve the right to make final selection of participants (Yin, 2003).

Assurance of Confidentiality. One of the most important issues between the researcher and each participant is that of confidentiality. According to Anderson (1998), there must be an understanding between the researcher and all participants as to exact usage of collected data and the researchers' steps to protect the confidentiality of the participants. All names of participants and any others connected to the study have been reported as pseudonyms or given a coded number. Any other identifiers were also hidden.

Additionally, each participant was offered a copy of the interview transcript in order to review the accuracy of transcription of the taped session or the researcher's notes, coupled with an opportunity to make corrections or add information or comments at that time. A set of interview questions is found in Appendix B. These participants were informed at the beginning of each interview that they could refuse to answer any question or withdraw from the study at any time.

Gillham (2000) suggested that transcription be done as soon as possible after the interview as it is easier to use memory as a tool to aid in hearing what has been taped. All tapes were transcribed personally by the researcher to further protect the participants as well as allowing the use of verbal cues such as tone of voice to add meaning to the analysis of taped interviews. All tapes were stored in the researcher's home office in a locked cabinet; additionally, the home is equipped with a security system. After the dissertation was approved and information was disseminated, all tapes were destroyed.

Data Collection Procedures

Means of Collecting Data. Interviews were conducted in a location agreed upon by each participant and the researcher. Data included the participant interviews and ongoing informal contact with the participants as needed. After all IRB forms had been signed, the initial visit with the participants was the actual interview. Following this interview, the researcher asked for permission to maintain voluntary e-mail contact with participants to ask for clarification of material obtained during the interview session as needed and to provide a copy of the transcribed interview for each to review. As all participants had e-mail access, each agreed to this arrangement.

The use of reflection as a means of data collection in the research on service learning is well established. Hervani and Helms (2004) stated that the best outcomes of a meaningful service learning experience are enhanced by the use of reflective tools such as student journals, small group and classroom presentation, and class discussion. Support for this point of view was provided from the journal of a university student who wrote “Even though we spent the first half of our first day cleaning (much to our disappointment), I think we all learned later what a difference we had made” (Pleasants, 2004, p. 20). All participants were asked if they had such a journal from their service learning course. Unfortunately, even though most of the participants did keep a reflective journal as a part of the course, none still possessed this document.

The addition of time and variety of life experiences added to a deeper level of reflection than is possible while one is still immersed in the experience and it would have added to the depth of the research if the participants had been able to provide any reflective writing done during the time they were enrolled in the service learning course.

Presented in these descriptive portraits of each individual was the long term effects of participation in a high school service learning course in regard to one's capacity to feel empathy for others and the effect on future participation in volunteer activities.

Interview Procedures and Protocols. The use of the interview was chosen as a tool to more accurately assess the current perceptions of participants in regard to their past experiences. Interview times varied, with the average lasting from 45 minutes to one hour. All interviews were prearranged based on the most convenient time and place for the participant.

Seidman (1998) offered several interview techniques, including one he named the mini-tour, a technique that utilizes open-ended questions that are designed to start the conversation, leaving room for the participant to tell his or her story as it relates to the questions asked. This technique was employed, asking a pre-selected set of open-ended questions at each interview with flexibility allowed to pursue issues generated by the respondent's answers.

Seidman's technique allowed flexibility for the participants to tell their stories, yet keep the questions within a set framework and proved to be an excellent option. When it was found that questions were too open ended based on the responses received, the researcher adapted the technique to more tightly focus the inquiry as additional questions provided a means to delve into the meaning of the responses.

Each participant was asked for permission to audio-tape the interview. Seidman (1998) highly recommended audio-taping the interview sessions, citing advantages to both parties of the tape as a record of the session. Interview questions are included in Appendix B. If a participant had not been comfortable being audio-taped, the researcher

would have taken detailed notes during the session and recorded as much other information about tone and body language as could be recalled immediately following the interview. All of the participants in this study agreed to be audio-taped. The researcher also reserved the right to select another participant if there were too many obstacles presented in not being able to audio-tape an interview but it was not necessary to make use of this right in the study.

Data Analysis Procedures

In employing the qualitative model, it was important to remain aware of the emergent nature of this research method. Unlike the deductive method of testing a theory found in quantitative designs, the qualitative design relies on inductive logic that starts with a general concept that evolves into theory garnered from the perceptions of the participants (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). The goal of the data analysis was to gain an understanding of the perceptions of the experience of service learning for the participants. Specifically, the researcher was looking for data that related to the students' perceptions as to feelings of empathy for others and ongoing volunteer work as a result of the service learning course.

Qualitative researchers suggest that data analysis begin as soon as the first document is obtained by sorting data into categories based on key words or concepts, later to be analyzed for themes emerging from the data. Mirriam (1998), Patton (1990) and Yin (2003) asserted that without ongoing analysis data could be overwhelming to the researcher. For this study, the analysis began at the conclusion of the first interview.

A systematic approach of sorting and making sense of participant responses by utilizing data obtained from these interviews was employed. At the conclusion of data

collection and sorting, the researcher began to organize emerging themes into categories, looking for common strands. Rossman and Rallis (2003) asserted that the development of themes is the most difficult aspect of analysis but that such themes take analysis to a deeper level. Of importance were commonalities in responses as well as data that seemed to be out of place with the other information as it emerged. All data were considered; none was immediately discarded on the basis of the appearance of irrelevance to the topic.

Analysis involved a holistic interpretation of the collected pieces of data as the participants themselves presented a wide variety of cultural and experiential differences. The final written analysis provided a narrative and thematic picture of the perceptions of the participants; such analysis of data involves reflection by the researcher as an ongoing process precisely due to the fact that the researcher is working with open-ended data based on information provided by the participants (Cresswell, 2003).

Data Management. A difficult aspect of qualitative inquiry is that of organizing and sorting the mass of data collected. One of the most crucial components of a good qualitative study is the researcher's ability to develop a method that gives structure to the data so that it can be organized as the study is conducted, allowing for ongoing analysis from the first contact with the participants. While the researcher was coding and sorting data into themes and viewing the emerging data in a holistic manner, a structured system of categorizing the findings was necessary to make sense of information. Rossman and Rallis (2003) did not see the two methods of categorical and holistic analysis as being mutually exclusive, but made the case for using both to make better sense of the data.

The initial data was sorted using a system of coding that sorted information into codes as they emerged from the interviews. A system of coding that assigned a different color to the response of each participant enabled the researcher not only to see how the data from each participant fit with the others, but also to track the participant data across thematic lines as the sorting took place.

Each piece of data from the interviews was analyzed as it was transcribed. The analysis began with field notes written immediately at the conclusion of each interview and used in conjunction with the interview transcripts to provide a deeper, richer portrait of each experience related. Even though the data was sorted into a number of categories, constant work with the data enabled the researcher to more quickly see the emerging themes as the study progressed. These themes developed as data from smaller categories was sorted and combined, leading to the development of larger categories, enabling the emergence of major themes as suggested by Anfara, Brown and Mangione (2003).

Cresswell (1998) and Rossman and Rallis (2003) all warned the researcher to be aware of the point of saturation, at which time the same responses are occurring in a repeated fashion; at this point it is time to stop the collection of data and continue with the analysis of this data. While watching for this point of saturation, it is equally important to insure that sufficient data exists to support conclusions drawn from analysis of data collected. The more often a response occurs in each data source, the stronger the implication exists in support of major findings.

An important step in the analysis process was to identify the major themes that answer the questions as to the effect of the service learning program as it relates to a students' perception of empathy toward others and the desire to be involved in volunteer

work in the future. Cresswell (1998) recommended an external audit of the study by an individual with no connection to the study. Such an individual, along with a group of peers, helped to review the work as the researcher moved through the stages of analysis. The final check of findings was a peer audit by these individuals. While familiar with the work as personal auditors from the beginning of the study, these individuals have only a reviewer connection to the study.

Credibility. Rossman and Rallis (2003) noted that qualitative research is an analysis of multiple perspectives of the same phenomenon. Since there is no one truth that applies to all of the perspectives of those who experienced the phenomenon, it is the job of the researcher to present each account as honestly and accurately as possible. They recommend the use of a community of practice and a critical friend to add a strong credibility check by those not directly engaged in the study.

As an ongoing process, this network of peers provided a cross check of the methods and findings. This was a group that could be counted on to challenge any finding that may not meet tests of credibility, transferability, and dependability. The researcher met with this group to discuss data collection and analysis at each stage of the study, soliciting their feedback to the analysis.

Within this group of colleagues who made up the community of practice was an even more important element of analysis, the critical colleague (Anfara et al., 2002; Cresswell, 2003; Rossman, 2003). This is a person with whom the researcher shared each step in the study, from the initial visit to the final document in which the findings are presented. This person reviewed transcripts of interviews and field notes recording reactions and observations.

The critical colleague also color coded randomly selected sections of the data to compare with the coding done by the researcher on these same sections. The names of the participants were blocked on any information shared for this purpose. This was a person who asked the tough questions and noted the need to gather additional data or to consider different interpretations of the data as it was analyzed throughout the study.

Transferability. The problem of transferability of the findings to other situations was one of the more difficult aspects of qualitative research. There were a small number of participants who met very specific requirements for the selection of the ideal participant involved in the study. The job as researcher was to provide as much information from as many sources as possible to support the conclusions of the study. The detail provided from all data sources must provide the thick, rich description so necessary to qualitative research. The steps that were followed in the analysis were precise and painstaking; care was taken to record accurately each bit of information.

Rossman and Rallis (2003) addressed the issue of transferability in what they call applicability to other situations. They note that in qualitative research, the researcher is not looking for one application universal to all situations. In order to provide a useful study, the researcher must provide complete descriptions of methods and results of the study. This very detailed description will allow others to decide the usefulness of the research on an individual basis.

Using the phenomenological method with only seven participants being studied, it was especially important to make use of every piece of data collected. The researcher's ability to recognize the importance of information uncovered in surprising ways was a key to the usefulness of the research. Equally important was the skill of interpreting this

data and effectively communicating it so that others may see their own situation in my findings. This area of analysis is one in which the community of practice and critical colleague played key roles.

Dependability. According to Anfara et al. (2003), dependability can be assured by following a number of strategies, including peer review, a technique already cited as necessary for the entire process of data analysis. These authors provided a variety of strategies but one point made in the article perhaps best sums up the problem to be overcome by the researcher. Stating “Most studies do not reveal these inner working and good writing can cover up awkwardly collected and poorly documented fieldwork” (Anfara et al., p. 30), the case is made not only for more careful data collection methods, but also a meticulous cataloging, coding, and analysis of the findings.

The careful sorting, coding and analysis of all data was the key to insuring dependability of the research. This method of cataloging and coding was a way to show the organization of the findings that resulted from the total analysis of the data. The narrative addressed the perceptions of each individual student participant. An audit of results by the community of practice and critical colleague served as yet another test of the findings, adding one more level of testing to the dependability of the study.

Chapter Summary

The choice of a qualitative design for this study is supported by the literature related to past studies in the field of service learning along with the researcher’s own past experiences in this area. The individuals chosen to participate in the study were selected to represent a diverse group adding depth to the perceptions of the experience related by these participants. While a plan was set for collection and analysis of data, the researcher

was open to the emergent nature of qualitative research and did not discard other avenues of collection, sorting, and analysis of data. Through scrupulous attention to methods, the study presented meets the tests of credibility, transferability, and dependability.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to describe the perceptions and experiences of individuals who were enrolled in a service learning course while in high school. A qualitative method, specifically a phenomenological design, was employed to present descriptive portraits of the perceptions and experiences of these participants. The three research questions that shaped the methodology are: 1. Does service learning foster in students a more empathetic nature in their understanding of the recipients of the service work? 2. Are the perceptions of the students as to their desire to perform volunteer work in the future affected by service learning experiences? 3. How do students view classroom instruction as to its ability to make connections between class activities and the volunteer experience?

These questions were explored through a series of interviews designed to elicit students' recollections of their service learning experiences in high school as recalled with the passage of time. There were seven participants, all of whom were enrolled in college in the Commonwealth of Virginia and were chosen for the study based upon such participation in a high school service learning course coupled with the passage of time to allow for reflection upon the experience. The interview questions were designed to explore the students' feelings related to the classroom experience and the volunteer experience including topics such as classroom instruction, journal writing and other reflective activities, the nature of the volunteer experience outside of the classroom and the reactions of each participant to both experiences.

Data collection took place in a series of interviews conducted mostly on a college campus in Virginia. Two of the interviews were conducted by telephone as a result of location and time constraints of both the students and the researcher. All seven participants agreed to have their interview audio-taped.

Description of the Participants

Access to potential participants was more difficult than originally anticipated as individuals who had graduated from high school and moved to other areas were the target group. A few participants were recruited based on the referral of former students from colleagues but the majority was recruited from two separate classes at a local university. The advantage to this method of selection is that it provided for a more diverse pool of participants than if the focus had been on finding students from one particular school or district.

The original plan was to limit the study to participants who were enrolled in public or private schools within the Commonwealth of Virginia while in high school. This parameter was changed to include students enrolled in a service learning course in any public or private high school within the United States while in high school. There were several reasons for this change including availability of participants and the breadth of experiences afforded by this wider pool of possible interviewees. Individuals interviewed in this study were from Virginia, Michigan, New Jersey and New York with four of the participants representing three different regions of Virginia.

Interviewee #1 was a female from a suburban public school of approximately 2,000 students at the start of her ninth grade year. She was currently an accounting major

at a large urban state university. The population of her high school was quite diverse as is that of her university and she felt very much at home once she had moved on to college.

Interviewee #2 was also a female and a student at a large state university in an urban setting. She attended high school in a rapidly growing bedroom community of a major east coast city and, as with Interviewee #1, the population of her high school was quite diverse as well.

Interviewee #3 attended a suburban school in a large school district and was currently a student at an urban state university in the adjoining city. Her high school was the largest in the district and one of the first in the area to offer service learning as an option.

Interviewee #4 attended the same suburban school as did Interviewee #3, but they graduated at different times and it is unlikely that they knew each other. This student was attending a smaller private college in the same state in which she attended high school.

Interviewee #5 was one of the two males interviewed. He attended a private Catholic school in a small city bordering a rural setting and was currently enrolled in an urban state university. This young man had graduated from college but was working on a teaching endorsement. At 30, he was the oldest person interviewed.

Interviewee #6 was a female from a rural community who was currently attending the same urban state university as were several of the other participants. Her service learning experience reflected the rural nature of her school and the volunteer activities available to the high school students.

Interviewee #7 was an Asian male. His high school was located in a small city setting much like Interviewee #5 and he also was currently enrolled at this same urban

state university as were several of the other interviewees. His high school population was comprised of approximately 1,600 students.

The seven participants represented individuals from urban, rural and suburban areas bringing to the group a wide range of age and experiences. More diversity as to ethnicity and gender would have been preferred but finding individuals who fit the criteria limited the pool of participants from which to choose.

Approximately 100 persons were asked to participate, either through referrals of individuals or through the college classes visited by the researcher. In the end, every participant that volunteered was interviewed. Several others were approached either through colleague recommendation or the individual's indication in the college classrooms visits that they had been enrolled in a high school service learning course but these individuals did not respond to multiple requests for an interview.

Findings from the Participant Interviews

Each interview was conducted using a set of open-ended questions to allow for additional and follow-up questions as deemed necessary. All of the participants were asked the same 20 pre-selected questions but some interviews went quite a bit longer than others as the original 20 questions naturally led to follow-up questions.

The questions were not field tested for two reasons, the first being that the pool of individuals from which to test these questions was very limited and finding individuals who matched the same criteria as that of the study participants would have been extremely difficult. Perhaps the more important reason that the questions were not field tested was the nature of the research design.

As a phenomenological study method was employed in this research, the purpose of the questions was to gather the individual remembrances of each participant. The unique stories revealed through these questions are the memories of a service learning course as recalled by each of those interviewed. Through examining these individual stories conclusions were drawn as to the effect of service on each individual; a field test of the questions would likely have presented a very different set of perceptions of the experiences as recalled. In phenomenological research, the stories of the individuals are not being measured against any other stories.

The participants were informed of this questioning format before the start of each interview. The questions were divided into three sections representing the participants' views at differing stages in their service learning experience. Service learning interview data used in this study resulted from the use of the following questions in the interviews:

Before Enrolling in a Service Learning Course

1. Did you participate in any type of volunteer service before taking a service learning course?
2. Why did you choose to take a service learning course?
3. Did you understand the meaning of the term "service learning" before enrolling in this course?

While Enrolled in a Service Learning Course

1. What was the most rewarding part of the course and/or the volunteer service experience?
2. What was the most frustrating part of the course and/or the volunteer experience?

3. Were you allowed to choose the agency with which you volunteered?
4. At the time you were enrolled in the service learning course, did you feel that your volunteer work was of value to others?
5. Did you participate in meaningful classroom instruction related to the concept of service learning?
6. Did classroom instruction illustrate the connection between the material being studied in class and the out of class volunteer activities?
7. Was your participation in a service learning course an elective choice or was it a mandatory course?

After the Experience of Participating in a Service Learning Course

1. Thinking back, can you recall what class activity was the most helpful to you in making the connection between class work and volunteer activities?
2. Do you feel that your service work was of value to the community?
3. Do you think that the experience has helped you to better understand the feelings of those receiving the volunteer service?
4. Have you participated as a volunteer with this or any other volunteer agency since taking a service learning course?
5. Has this experience made you want to be a lifelong volunteer?
6. Has the experience changed your feelings about others in any way?
7. Have your feelings about volunteering changed over time?
8. At the conclusion of the course, were you asked about your feelings as to volunteering and how you felt about the people for whom you volunteered?
9. Do you currently participate in any volunteer activity?

10. Would you recommend a service learning course to others?

As noted above, the questions were divided into three sets to ascertain how the participants viewed their experiences at three distinct stages in their life as they reflected back on each question. A few of the participants were very willing to talk about their experiences and in some instances the participant was the one introducing additional questions. One participant was cooperative and answered all of the questions, but often with the briefest of answers and no additional details were forthcoming.

The majority of the participants were somewhere in the middle, not generating questions but replying in depth to the original and any follow-up questions introduced. Findings from these questions will be discussed in the order presented, starting with those questions that relate to the participant's perceptions of service learning before enrolling in such a course.

Due to the phenomenological design of the study, the exact responses of the participants have been preserved as recorded during the interviews. In many cases such language may seem a bit confusing or the grammar may be incorrect but the purpose of the study is to tell the story in the vernacular of each individual as recalled and revealed to the researcher, preserving the richness of detail in each account. In many cases the responses are in the form of single word answers or sentence fragments, but any editing would have altered the voices of the students as presented during the interviews.

Participants have been identified by the letters A-G, coinciding with the code given to their interview. In citing either direct quotations or paraphrasing statements from these interviews, a system was employed in which the letter along with a number appears

behind each quote or paraphrase, the first being the interview letter and the second being the page number in the interview. Therefore, (C, p.3) is interview C, page number 3.

Perceptions of Service Learning before Enrollment in the Course

Volunteer Activity Prior to Course. The first question was related to the participant's experience with volunteer work before enrolling in a service learning course. The level of involvement varied but all except two of the participants recalled being involved in some type of volunteer activity before having enrolled in the course. A very typical experience was voiced by the student who volunteered at church, recounting that "We collected items for families in need at Christmas and collected items to donate to the homeless all year" (B, p.1). Another experience related to participation in a church activity was one of two activities cited by a young woman who replied that "I volunteered at church and also at Goodwill" (F, p.1).

The exception to this early experience with volunteering was that of the two male participants. One of them didn't even need to think about it; he just replied "Not voluntarily; not to my recollection" (E, p.1). The other recounted how he had worked with his father helping coach in a youth football league and in high school he helped run football camp but added that "I, along with all of the varsity football players, would go and help" (G, p.1). The way he related this activity, it seemed that he did not count it as a volunteer activity but rather a part of being a varsity football player.

The female participants, on the other hand, related a variety of activities in which they had been involved. These activities ranged from volunteering in the public library to volunteer time in a local pet store. Two students cited church volunteer work, recalling

activities such as collecting items to give to the homeless at Christmas. The most enthusiastic of the participants as to her volunteer work went into great detail about her role in Operation Smile, a program providing dental work to needy children in other countries, and offered to work with any school that would like to start such a program (C, p. 1).

This same participant had a long history of volunteer work as a young girl, listing “Girl Scouts...a little. I volunteered with church and like in middle school, me and this other girl; we went to the nursing home like once a week, every Thursday” (C, p. 1).

Reasons for Choosing a Service Learning Course. The second question in this section asked the students why they had signed up for service learning. Again, there were a variety of responses but certain themes began to emerge even from this small group. Based on the responses, these given reasons ring true as to the motivation behind a teenager choosing a course that dictated hours in the classroom coupled with additional time out of school to complete service requirement hours.

In only one instance, that of the student enrolled in a private school, was the service learning requirement mandatory. Of those choosing voluntarily to take such a course, the reasons varied greatly although one student gave a very pragmatic reason for her choice as another course she was taking required a service project as a component of the course, allowing her to fulfill both requirements with the same volunteer hours. The only other private school student simply stated “it was a part of the curriculum. I went to a Catholic high school. It was just part of what you were expected to do” (E, p. 1).

Some of the less altruistic, although definitely most honest responses were “my guidance counselor recommended it because she said it looks good on college

applications” (B, p.1) to “I had a bunch of friends who were older than me that did it and they had a lot of fun. You got to leave school for a class” (D, p. 1). Interestingly, it should be noted that this is a quote from the participant that was so enthused about Operation Smile.

The male participant who listed his service experience prior to enrolling in a service learning course as volunteering with other varsity players at football camp stated that he chose to take a service learning course because he knew he wanted to teach and he wanted the experience with elementary students as preparation for this goal (G, p. 1). He continued to volunteer with youth football after the service learning course, but there may have been an additional motive for this volunteer service as the young man added that he was now getting paid for working with the youth football team, implying that his volunteer work had made this employment possible. (G, p .5).

In one instance, the volunteer’s prior experience was done as a requirement for another course, a program called Handling Your Finances. To fulfill this requirement, she volunteered in an elementary school, working with special needs students and this was a major factor in her decision to enroll in service learning (A, p. 1). For another student, the choice was less about academics and more about friendship and things she heard from friends already enrolled in the class. She quite candidly responded that “I had friends in the course and I knew they participated in a lot of activities but I didn’t really understand about the class work part. I didn’t see a lot of connection with the class and activities before taking the class” (B, p. 1).

Understanding of Term “Service Learning”. What emerged clearly from these responses was that the participants were doing their best to give accurate, truthful

answers as to where they were at that stage of their lives. When asked if they understood the meaning of the term service learning before enrolling in the class, one student really came closest to the accepted definition. She defined service learning as “It was going and helping and reflecting on what you were doing” (C, p. 2). Whether she knew this before taking the class or if it is just a part of her knowledge base developed while in the high school course was hard to distinguish. As with most of the students, specific information related to the course curriculum was somewhat harder to recall than facts about the actual volunteer service.

A more typical answer came from a participant who summed up the thoughts of most of her fellow participants as voiced by one who replied “I kinda thought you would go and volunteer...I just thought it was volunteer work” (A, p. 2). Another participant related that she understood the volunteer part but was not at all clear on the classroom part (B, p.1). Perhaps the best understanding of the concept comes from the participant who stated “Basically, through the experience of volunteering, you gain a better knowledge of your interactions with others” (D, p. 2).

Perceptions of Experiences While Enrolled in a Service Learning Course

The second set of questions related to how the participants recalled their actual experiences of a service learning course starting with what they remembered as being the most rewarding part of the course. Regardless of their opinions of the structure of the course itself, all of the participants had good things to say about the volunteer experience. All but two of the participants had at least some experience working with younger children and for them, this was a highlight of their experiences.

Most Rewarding Aspect of the Course. Many schools set up their programs so that the high school students in service learning visited an elementary school on a regular basis and worked with one teacher. A student working with a special education class stated “I liked getting to know the kids and really working with them because it was really different. It wasn’t a regular class so you got to learn from their perspective” (A, p. 2).

Another echoed this enthusiasm in stating “I just had so much fun. My senior year I actually worked with kindergarteners. You got to see so much fun things...” (D, p. 2). Also enthused about working with young children was a student who was somewhat anxious about working with these young students yet concluded the experience with very positive feelings. Summarizing his time volunteering with elementary students, he shared that “When I first went in, I didn’t know any of the kids; I was kind of nervous. But at the end they all wrote me these thank you letters. You really see that’s why you really liked being there” (G, p. 2).

One of the two participants who did not have volunteer experiences working with elementary students in the classroom was the participant who attended a private school. His two volunteer experiences while in the service learning program were quite different and it was his work in a nursing home that he cited as the most rewarding part of this course. His other placement was on a family farm helping with the chores but this participant felt a bit more cynical about this second placement, relating that he felt the farmer saw it as just a way to get extra help (E, p. 2).

This individual did go on to state that he felt both experiences were valuable, going into detail, describing his experience by saying,

It allowed me to walk in two different sets of shoes. One of the places I worked was in a nursing home helping the residents fixing things and clearing up things. My second place was working on a farm doing farm work. I got to see two different walks of life. The nursing home was the most rewarding one....They were just really appreciative of my time that I was giving them even though they knew it was just a requirement. The farm just saw me as an extra hand. I don't think they really needed it; it's just that they signed up for it (E, p. 2).

Even though at this stage of his life in high school the participant showed no interest in teaching, he was the young man who has returned to college at age 30 to complete his teaching requirements.

Most Frustrating Aspect of the Course. The next question explored the flip side of their volunteer experiences in that the participants were asked about the most frustrating part of either their classroom or volunteer experiences. Once again, there are many common themes that occurred in all of the programs discussed by these individuals. The most positive of those interviewed replied to the question that "It wasn't really frustrating in either. Every Tuesday we just went to the class and it was fun" (A, p. 2).

On a less positive note, the students also observed the teachers for whom they volunteered and found some of what they witnessed to be very discouraging. In one of the more extreme instances, the participant noted that "this teacher, it was like her second year...she hated the kids and you could tell it. She did not like her job. She didn't like the principal; she didn't like anything and it showed. It was sad" (C, p. 2).

On the other side of this frustrating experience was that of a student who found issues not with the teacher but in working with some of the students with whom he

volunteered. Unlike his peers who found the students excited to have a high school student working with them, some students were not really pleased with the experience. According to this participant, in his experience “There was always that one kid that didn’t want to work with you. Especially in kindergarten; it’s their first year and they don’t know how to act with adults. We had maybe one or two kids that were really unruly” (D, p. 2).

For all of the participants who had volunteered in an elementary school there was unanimous assent that their work with the students was extremely rewarding but many of them were less complementary of the classroom teachers. As long as these volunteers were given work that had them interacting with the students, they were engaged in their assignments but one respondent spoke for most in recalling “I forget how most of the classroom went” (C, p. 3) or another who shared that the most frustrating part of the experience was “probably going there and not having anything to do. We mostly had to do so many hours” (F, p. 3).

Another recalled that “The lady I worked for, sometimes she would just throw things on me. It was things like make copies where I would not be in the classroom and I was only there for about one hour per day so part of my days would be doing busy work” (G, p. 2). One of the participants described how she believed the teachers saw their visits declaring,

We’re sending these students to do community service and the teacher just thinks it is for them. Some of the kids in my class, they had so much fun. I think that’s what needs to happen but I didn’t have fun doing it...Even though I hated it, it still made me want to teach. ...I’ve had teachers like her and I’ve had wonderful

teachers and I've had teachers who don't like their job. It is obvious. I really believe some people can be teachers and some people really just should not be teachers (C, p. 6).

All of the participants who encountered similar situations in the classroom still felt that the experience was worthwhile and none of them indicated that they did not want to teach because of the experience. For all of the students, the least favorite part of the service learning course was the classroom instruction as opposed to getting out and working as a volunteer. One young woman remembered that "It was really fun while volunteering but the questions [in the classroom] didn't really make sense always as to what we were doing" (B, p. 2). This disconnect described what students saw between the classroom instruction and the real world experience; it was a theme that appeared over and over again in many of the questions throughout all of the interviews.

Choice of Volunteer Activity. The next question addressed whether the students could choose the site where they did their volunteer work or were they just assigned to a set location. The common practice seemed to be that students were allowed to choose from a number of positions already arranged by the school. Their reasons for selecting certain placements are fairly standard and most of the participants were very straightforward in sharing why they picked one job over another.

One response shared by most of the participants was that their choice of volunteer activity was based in part on their friends going to the same location. In many of the schools, the seniors were given early release to complete their volunteer work and, as described by one of the participants, "We went to an elementary school; it was in Fredericksburg so we felt like we were really going somewhere. Since we were seniors,

we were able to go on our own and we spent a lot of time with the kids” (B, p. 2). This was a person who loved working with the young children but also remembered the fun she had with her friends on these outings.

Other participants were given the location they wanted but were disappointed that they did not get assigned to a specific teacher. In one instance, the school personnel setting up the exchange seemed to have made an effort to place the student where she had requested as this participant recounted “I knew exactly what teacher I wanted to do, my old teacher; they really worked with us to try to get the classes that you wanted” (D, p. 3).

In spite of this effort, the student did not get the placement. In a similar experience of another participant, this student knew “who I wanted but I had to ask and didn’t get her” (C, p. 3). This participant had an overall less favorable impression of her volunteer experience than did the one who had the school working with her to secure the placement she requested.

Another related that “you were allowed to go to any of the elementary schools. You could also pick a classroom that you wanted to go into. But a lot of time you’d go back to your elementary school and the teacher would pick you” (G, p. 2). He did not express any particular degree of disappointment or enthusiasm over this selection process but rather just related the process as he recalled it

Feelings as to Value of Volunteer Service. When participants were asked if they recalled, at the time of the volunteer service, that they felt their work had been of value to others, most of these former service learning students gave a positive response, even if they found the actual volunteer experience less than fulfilling in that it did not live up to their expectations. Many of the responses to this question were a bit vague and were

along the lines of “I hope so; I think so” (C, p. 3), “I think overall the teacher I was with did like having me there” (G, p. 3). and “I think so because I’d come in to class and they’d be really excited to see me. I hope I made a difference” (D, p. 4).

One student had a more negative recollection of the experience, relating that “I believe it made my high school look good so they had it as part of the curriculum” (E, p. 3). While another student couldn’t recall if she felt that she had made a difference, she did recall that “I know we all got recognized at graduation because President Bush has Presidential Service Awards and all of us in the class received one of these for our hours of service” (B, p. 2).

One of the more thoughtful responses came from the person who is studying to be an accountant. She gave a very detailed description of the way in which she felt she had helped the students, using an example to show how she helped them with real life experience:

I just tried to help them learn. They had like a little money machine and a little machine to do the math. There was a little shopping cart and like for a dollar or something, you just put in the items in there. You could help them understand that this item was worth this many cents and they took turns, one being the customer and one being the cashier” (A, p. 3).

This experience is similar to the participant who noted that her presence in class changed the classroom environment in a positive way, recalling that

I just had so much fun. My senior year I actually worked with kindergarteners. You got to see so much fun things like they had eggs in the classroom that they

actually hatched during the class so we had baby ducks and chickens. It was really cool. (D, p.2).

A common theme with all those interviewed was that making a difference to either the children in the classroom, the residents of the nursing home or the individuals helped by Goodwill had a very positive effect on those providing the volunteer service.

Meaningful Classroom Instruction. The question that asked if these students had participated in meaningful classroom instruction related to the concept of service learning really led to some of the major issues with these programs. Once again, the problems seemed to be universal and definitely indicated an area that needs further study. Many of the volunteer situations were not ideal and very few respondents indicated that they enjoyed every aspect of the experience, but the overall comments on the classroom portion of the experience offer few positives.

One of the most extreme of the situations was related by the young man who attended a private Catholic school. The only class related project he could remember was keeping a journal; credit hours were given for the course when his service hours were verified. When asked if he could recall any one activity that tied it all together for him, the answer was “Nothing tied it all together. It was all about getting it completed. I don’t even know who we turned our journal in to. It was just all publicity” (E, p. 4).

His negative remembrance did not carry over to the experience of volunteering, adding “Now knowing what I do and knowing the people I do know and the experiences I had, volunteering is really a huge portion of being a part of the community” (E, p. 5). This positive remembrance of the volunteer service as opposed to the classroom instruction was a common theme with all of the participants.

A participant who had taken one of the more structured programs remembered that “we learned different types of service learning... We also had speakers come to class a lot” (A, p. 3). She also cited her remembrance of keeping a journal during the volunteer experience. While many of the participants kept a journal for their class, these students did not recall them as being a major focal point of the classroom instruction. One recalled that “sometimes these journals were just assigned, never really used in any way and, in the end, the journal was never commented on by the teacher and never returned” (E, p. 7).

Most of the other participants seemed to have experienced a bit more structure than seen in this example but as one student saw it, “The class work wasn’t much fun all the time. We worked in groups and answered questions but it was boring” (B, p. 2). Another voiced a similar opinion, recalling there were meaningful activities but when pressed for examples all she could think of was “Worksheets. I don’t remember at all what the worksheets were about” (C, p. 4) and asked if she kept a journal, the answer was “No. Some classes had to but mine didn’t” (C, p. 4).

Several of the participants recalled similar types of activities but all were much more enthused about the volunteer experience as opposed to the classroom portion of the course. One stated that “I forgot how most of the classroom went” (F, p. 3) but when prodded with a follow-up, she did recall keeping a journal. Another remembered that “We learned different types of service learning. I feel bad because I can’t remember, but we learned different types of service learning (A, p. 3). One participant was able to summarize the experiences of the majority of the volunteers in stating

I want to say that I think senior year you actually have projects to do throughout the senior year. You know, to make up for the classroom time. And I remember

that some of them were journal pages like ‘Your Best Days so Far’ and ‘What You did the First Week’ ...stuff like that but as far as actually discussing it, we didn’t do that” (D, p. 2).

Connection of Classroom Instruction to Volunteer Activity. A related question examined the connection between the material being studied in class and the actual volunteer experience. Many of the reactions to this question mirrored the responses to the previous question about classroom activities. This idea of disconnect between the classroom and volunteering was probably best expressed by a response to a follow-up question used to further explain the original question. When asked can you remember something that made you feel a connection between what you were doing in service learning class and in the volunteer experience, the response was “I think we were just there because we wanted to take the service learning course and go over to the elementary school and they all appreciated our help” (A, p. 4).

From the participant who had spoken of the most structured of the classroom experiences, a positive recollection was recounted. She shared that “We had really good classroom discussions and in them we talked about what we did as volunteers so I would say it was meaningful instruction” (B, p. 3). This student also shared that she felt the journals were very important in helping to recall day to day details and that “our verbal sharing of our experiences was the most important activity we did” (B, p. 2). Also with a positive memory of classroom instruction in the course, a student shared that “You had to go through a training program for 3 or 4 days. How to talk to the kids, what you can and can’t do, don’t give hugs, etc. (G, p. 3). However, he added that “That was pretty much it. It didn’t really prepare us for what the teacher would be having us do” (G, p. 4).

Other students had trouble even calling to mind what type of classroom instruction had been presented as in the case of one that remembered “Worksheets. I don’t remember at all what the worksheets were about” (C, p. 4), adding when asked about keeping a journal for the class “No. Some classes had to but mine didn’t” (C, p. 4). Another reported that some of the classroom activities made a connection to the volunteer work, telling of newspaper articles assigned to the class her first year, adding “Some of them made sense and some of them were just what did you believe about the United States and...I don’t know, some them were just busy work” (D, p. 5).

Elective or Mandatory Course. As the last question in this series related to the actual time the students were in a service learning course, participants were asked whether their decision to take the course was voluntary or was the course a mandatory part of the curriculum. Only in the case of the private school student was the course mandatory; all of the public school students took this course as an elective. It turns out that this question elicited a simple yes or no response from the respondents and only one offered further comment as to whether they felt it should be a mandatory or elective course.

Perceptions Looking Back on the Service Learning Experience

The last 10 questions are from the perspective of the participant in the present time. Each was asked to think back and reflect upon the experience as related to each of the questions. For most of the students, it has been several years since they experienced a service learning course; in the case of the one student, it has been more than a decade. Some of the questions mirror those already asked but in this set of questions each

participant was not so much looking back at how things were but reflecting upon how the experience was viewed in the current moment of the interview.

Most Helpful Classroom Activity. This first question in the set asked the participants to think back and recall what class activity was most helpful in making the connection between the work in class and the actual volunteer activities. One of the shortest responses was also the most negative. This participant simply stated “There wasn’t any” (C, p. 5). She went on to say that that even though her school had a number of service learning classes, her teacher was gone a lot and there were many substitutes. In her opinion, the lack of a committed teacher had quite a negative impact on her experience (C, p. 5). She concluded the response by adding “I think we were just there because we wanted to take the service learning course and we all wanted to go over to the elementary school and they all appreciated our help” (C, p. 5).

In another instance the student just replied “I don’t think this applies in my case” (F, p. 3). She was enrolled in a traditional English class but part of the course was the service learning experience. The students were required to find their own placements. This individual was a bit unsure as to how the program actually worked and how the credit was recorded but even though she enjoyed her volunteer experience, the classroom instruction related to service learning seemed to have been almost non-existent (F, p. 3).

One student whose course appeared to have been successful in making the connection between the classroom and the volunteer aspects of the curriculum replied that “I believe our class discussions, our verbal sharing of our experiences, was the most important activity we did. Some of the things we did weren’t as fun but I think most of the activities were important to the overall understanding of the course” (B, p. 4).

In the case of one of the private school students there was not even a class to which he reported. The course apparently was listed as community service and according to this student “It was part of the curriculum....It was just part of what you were expected to do” (F, p. 1). While a journal was required from all students, there were no assignments related to the journal and at the end of the course, this student reflection tool was just turned in to a teacher with no feedback. This course really does not qualify as service learning as the term is defined but there was credit given for the course and there was a required written assignment.

Another student cited a much different experience with his reflective journal, already mentioned as being one of the most effective tools in drawing a connection between instruction and volunteer work. When asked what class activity best helped make this connection, he immediately cited the journal. Recalling the experience, he said,

Yes, the reflective journal helped. I remembered each kid; when you go back, you remember actual experiences you had with the kid. You realize that you did like the experience. As you read back, you realize that your feelings did change from being nervous to being involved. You can see that you really did have an effect. (G, p. 4).

While many of the participants referred to their reflective journal, this student perhaps best illustrated the power of this type of writing as a tool for current and future reflection.

Value of Service to the Community. A question that elicited a positive response from almost all of the participants was whether or not they felt that the volunteer service had been of value to the community. The one negative response came from a student who was very frustrated that the teacher in the room where she was a volunteer saw her more

as a teacher's aide than another individual to work with the children. Her immediate response to this question was "No, I graded papers" (C, p. 5).

Trying to phrase this question a bit differently, the follow up question was: Do you feel like a connection you made with any student was of value? Again, the response indicated her extreme disappointment with the experience. She quietly replied "Um...not in the particular thing. I think that the teachers that participate in it also need to know what it is and not just 'oh, I'm getting a helper'. That's all I was; I was just a helper" (C, p. 5).

The other students, even those that were not impressed with the classroom part of the course or really didn't have a structured classroom, still felt that they had made a difference for those with whom they had volunteered. One student's answers were consistently positive, responding "Oh yes, definitely" (F, p. 3) and "Yes, by far" (F, p. 4) when asked this question and follow-up questions to determine if she saw the experience as more valuable now that she had had time to reflect upon it.

Another student offered a bit more detail in saying that "Yes, I had one or two students I felt really close to and as they succeeded at a task, I could feel their sense of accomplishment; it was almost as if I had accomplished this task as well" (B, p. 4). A student who worked with kindergarten children recalled her feelings of making a difference in working with these youngsters when she said "Yeah, especially with the kid who really struggles to learn stuff. I never had a problem with that growing up but it was really humbling to actually go back down and try to help someone" (D, p. 6).

Those students who felt strongly that they had made a difference most often remembered their experiences while working with young children, whether in a

classroom or other community setting. A student who had worked with elementary children felt that the evidence her work had made a difference to the community could be seen when the students with whom she volunteered, at the end of her time with them, “all said ‘Come back and see us’ and gave us cards. They got me a present and I thought it was so sweet” (A, p. 5).

This was a sentiment echoed by another student who responded “I think so. As an athlete, a lot of these kids were involved with camps. We’d see them there and they loved it. Everyone got positive feedback from their teachers and our teacher told us that she was very pleased” (G, p. 4).

Feelings of Recipients of Volunteer Service. A question that elicited the participants’ views as to whether or not the volunteer experience through the service learning course had helped them to better understand the feelings of those receiving the service resulted in positive responses from all of the participants. Even those expressing dissatisfaction with the service learning course or even with the volunteer experience felt that they had gained a better understanding of what issues those for whom they volunteered were experiencing.

Responses varied from “Absolutely, you can see how school can be repetitive to them and how a change of pace can make a difference” (B, p. 5) from one participant to “I think I realize it’s made me more aware of the people in my own class right now... Noticing people” from another (C, p. 6). A third participant shared that she might change her major to special education as a result of the experience (A, p. 5). One student’s response went beyond his individual experiences to a much more global perspective when he responded that

There's just such a need; so many different places. There is such a need in Richmond...in Virginia. You need those people out there. You know, these aren't paid positions. Many of these volunteer companies work on minimum pledges for support (E, p. 5).

A student who also worked in a classroom replied when asked if her feelings might have changed as to an ability to better understand the students with whom she worked, "Yes, I had one or two students I felt really close to and as they succeeded at a task, I could feel their sense of accomplishment; it was almost as if I had accomplished this task as well" (B, p. 4).

A similar feeling was expressed by another participant, who had also worked with elementary students, when sharing that he believed he gained a much better understanding of the feelings of others and had an opportunity to make a difference in young lives "because men are role models to men and a lot of my friends are from single parent, divorced homes and may never have a male role model. That's why I wanted to teach elementary, but you still can make a difference in someone's life at high school. Probably more so as they start to get in more trouble" (G, p. 5).

Volunteer Experience After the Course. The question related to how much, if any, volunteer work each had done since completing the service learning course revealed that participation in volunteer activities has been in large part affected by life events such as jobs, college and family obligations. While some of the participants have been involved in many more activities than others, all of them have volunteered at some level since completing the course.

For a few of the students, the additional volunteer work experience had been gained while enrolled in a service learning class in college. One participant had been enrolled in such a course but when asked about her volunteer work in college said it was not a part of a course requirement; “it was just something I wanted to do” (F, p. 4). Another replied that in college “it was mandatory as well. At that time, I did it in an emergency room” (E, p. 5).

Other than service learning requirements in college, there are various organizations on campuses that require volunteer service. The participant that stated her college was “big on service learning”(B, p.1) also shared that “My sorority has a service requirement and we have done a lot of projects in this area to help the community” (B, p. 4). She elaborated on this response to share how valuable she felt it was for such organizations to make service work a part of their mission.

A couple of the participants have not really participated in volunteer service to a large degree since taking the high school service learning course. A variety of reasons were given such as “...I’ve mostly been going to class” (D, p. 6) to “I worked as a coach at a high school and last year I was a volunteer. This year I’m actually a paid coach” (G, p. 5), and in response to a follow-up question that further queried if the reason for not volunteering was because college is hard?, the single word response was “Yeah” (C, p. 6).

Desire to be Lifelong Volunteer. When asked if the service learning experience had made them want to become a lifelong volunteer, all of the participants responded affirmatively although their answers provided a variety of views on the subject. Several of the participants shared a long history of volunteering when they were children as part

of a family activity. One related that she would continue with volunteer work on her own in part because “a lot of my family members do a lot of volunteer work too. I grew up with it. My grandma volunteers at church three days a week” (D, p. 7).

Another student who had volunteered at her church before taking the service learning course shared that “Pretty much the only thing I don’t like about volunteering is there’s a lot of time when you are just sitting. I’ve always felt pretty much the same about this” (F, p. 4). In spite of the knowledge that this may be a part of future volunteer activities, she was still enthused about taking part in helping others.

One of the more original approaches to volunteering was related by a student that said he had not really done anything structured since high school but that “I do a little on my own to make a difference but nothing for a company or agency” (E, p. 6). When asked in a follow-up question if he believed that his past volunteer experience had made him more aware of people in need, his response was “Yeah, it made me a little more altruistic. Seeing myself as a part of a whole, I try to be the very best person I can” (E, p. 6).

This conversation carried over into several follow-up questions but his final response to the question related to lifelong volunteering was that the experience “makes me think I should” (E, p. 6). A clarification question was answered by saying “When I was working full time and had a regular schedule, that’s when I could volunteer more. Now that I’m back in school and working part-time, that kind of schedule doesn’t allow me to do it as much as I can...as I should” (E, p. 7).

His response voiced another theme found in the responses of most of the participants. All felt that volunteering was a worthwhile activity but most had issues with

fitting volunteer time into a schedule packed with school, jobs and family obligations. In spite of these constraints, many still managed to fit in volunteer hours in their current schedules.

Change in Feelings Concerning Others. Another question that elicited positive responses from all of the participants was if they think the service learning experience had changed their feelings about others in any way. One of the most revealing responses was “I think I look at them and I see the possibilities. There was one kid when I was with service learning. He was always upset all the time but he was a really nice kid once you got to know him” (A, p. 5).

When asked in a follow-up question if she thought she felt empathy, not sympathy for him she elaborated on her answer, adding “Yeah, I remember I was not so good at math when I was younger and the teacher saying you’re not going to do very well. It made me really relate to them and make them be able to try to get it so they won’t feel the way I did” (A, p. 6).

Another echoed this sentiment in stating “I think I’m more compassionate and understand people better. I see what others have to deal with in life” (B, p. 5). On a similar note from another participant was the response

Yes, I think being in the class and watching, you see the different attitudes. Like watching the kids in the back and the prissy girls and the quiet ones. I think I realize it’s made me more aware of the people in my own class right now ...noticing people (C, p. 6).

Not all of the students verbalized their feeling in a way that can be called feelings of empathy but all saw a need to help others. One of the more pragmatic responses from a

participant was “Well, I know there’s a need out there and it’s not getting filled by me standing around” (E, p. 7). Another replied, “Yeah, it definitely had” (F, p. 6) changed his feelings but he also did not really elaborate on how this was so.

Changes in Attitude to Volunteering. The next question in this last set was one that was a part of other questions related to the volunteer experience so in reality the students’ answers to Question 7 as to any change in attitude regarding volunteer work have been answered in responses to Questions 5 and 6. In the transcripts, this gets a bit confusing as the questions are asked in order but as there was an ongoing dialogue with these participants, there was really a continuity of response in these three questions.

Reflection as to Feelings Concerning Others. Question 8 also deals with these feelings as to the volunteer experience but the focus here was on the service learning course and how such feelings were addressed in the course itself as to making a connection between the course and the volunteer work. The participants were asked to recall if, at the conclusion of the course, they were asked about these feelings as to the experience of being a volunteer and their feelings about the people for whom they performed the volunteer work.

The responses from the participants were mixed but three of the seven recalled a more negative experience with the classroom part of their service learning course. One student responded that they were “not really” (A, p. 6) asked to reflect upon their experiences in any way.

Another was asked to turn in a journal but recalled that “There was no real closure to it. There was just write in your journal and turn it in” (E, p. 7). The third recalling this

part of the course shared that they were asked how they felt about volunteering and the people for whom they volunteered but “they weren’t really that interested” (F, p. 5).

For one student with positive memories of her course, there was a final disappointment in her reflective activities at the end of the course. She recalled that,

Yes, our final project was a collection of journal articles like which day in your community service stood out the most. Another was who do you think you affected the most during this course. Topics like that really brought everything together. We also did a scrapbook where we go out and take pictures of the classroom where we volunteered (D, p. 7).

As the experience has obviously made an impression on this student, a follow-up question inquiring as to whether or not she still had the scrapbook was answered, stating “I turned it in and he never gave it back! We turned it in right after our final exam” (D, p.7). Her experience was similar to the student in the private school who turned in a journal but never got it back nor received any feedback on his work.

A much different experience was recounted by a student that told of a major project at the end of her service learning course designed to bring everything together. When asked if she felt an effort to help her see what the class was doing and why it was being done had been made by her teacher, she replied affirmatively although she offered no further details about the project (B, p. 5). The others responding affirmatively to this question did not share details of their reflective end of course activities. In most cases, too much time had passed and the students could not recall the specifics of these events.

Current Volunteer Activity. Question 9 turned out to be another redundant question as it was hard to distinguish between current participation in any volunteer

activity from Question 4 that asked if the participant had participated as a volunteer in any activity since completing the service learning course. For that reason, Question 9 was addressed during the interview but, with agreement from the participants, incorporated into the answer for Question 4.

Recommendation of Service Learning Course. The final question asked the participants if they would recommend a service learning course to other students. All seven participants, even those whose experience had been recalled through more negative memories, responded that they would definitely recommend such a course to others. One student further advocated for service learning as a course, saying “I wish we had had more of them in our high school because it was a lot of fun” (A, p. 6). Another stated that she wanted both of her sisters to take a service learning course, adding “I would love to see everyone take a course like the one I had” (B, p. 6).

One participant’s response added what she had seen as a solution to a problem of students in the class who had no real interest in the course itself. She told the story of “One of the boys in my class just did it so he could leave school early every day” and how the problem was handled was “we just put him in the library to work. He was a distraction in class” (C, p. 7).

A couple of students were asked follow-up questions based on their own experiences that related to recommending such a course to others. Asking for clarification as to what level he was addressing, his response was

High school? Yes, I would recommend it. Should it be mandatory? Yes, I would keep it mandatory because looking back, it was definitely a worthwhile

experience. Even though you may not appreciate it at the time, but a few years later you do (E, p. 8).

Using an open-ended question format, most of the participants were asked follow-up questions but the purpose of such questions was most often used to clarify one of the questions previously asked from the list of original questions. In many instances, the participants seemed to need clarification or further information.

In other cases, some of the participants were more talkative than others so the follow-up questions were the result of a conversation between the interviewer and the participant. Other participants were very cooperative but did not elaborate on any questions even when prodded with a follow-up question. At times, follow-up questions were used with these individuals in attempt to draw them more into the conversation, perhaps providing more detail to their responses. The ability to use such questions added to the richness of detail that resulted from these interviews as no story was exactly the same as another.

Summary

Student interviews provided data related to the participants' remembrances of being enrolled in a service learning course at three different stages in their lives. Those signing up for service learning often had little idea what the course entailed other than volunteer work. Often, at the conclusion of the course, these same students had little better idea as to the structure of a service learning course or even what the term service learning meant.

Few of those interviewed recalled the classroom experience as being either challenging or enjoyable nor did they feel much had been gained from this portion of the

service learning course. On the other hand, all of the participants had positive things to say regarding the actual volunteer experiences which they recalled in much greater detail. Most of these students had done some form of volunteer service before enrolling in the course and most indicated that they would continue to volunteer in the future.

The majority of the participants had suggestions as to how classroom instruction can be improved, citing activities such as group discussion and journals as being effective tools. Many also had specific recommendations regarding the volunteer placements, sharing their belief that many of the schools or other agencies with whom they worked were not extremely organized and often were not informed as to the appropriate role for the student to assume in the experience. While feeling at times as if they were helpers for the adults, it was the recipients of the volunteer service who were the focus of the students and the reason that these experiences were recalled in such a positive light.

Overall, the participants expressed a desire to be lifelong volunteers even if their present schedules prevented them from being involved at this stage of their lives. The volunteer experiences, for many, gave the students a chance to look at the world from a different point of view and most felt that they saw the world through the eyes of those for whom they offered service. The participants recounted experiences that were a mixture of positive and negative occurrences but all said they would recommend taking a service learning course to other individuals.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to present, through the use of rich, authentic descriptive language, the stories of seven college students who had participated in a service learning course while in high school. There were five female and two male participants who attended high schools in urban, suburban and rural areas within the United States. The research was conducted through a series of interviews employing an open-ended questioning format of 20 pre-selected questions. Most of the interviews included additional follow-up questions which emerged as a part of the discussion. As a phenomenological method was employed in this research, the intention was to relate the recalled events of the participants in order to convey the personal experiences of each individual.

The three primary research questions were: 1. Does service learning foster in students a more empathetic nature in their understanding of the recipients of the service work? 2. Are the perceptions of the students as to their desire to perform volunteer work in the future affected by service learning experiences? 3. How do students perceive the usefulness of the service learning curriculum as to linking classroom work with volunteer experience?

Summary of Findings

Research Questions – Empathy. The first research questions asked what, if any, effect does the service learning experience have on an individual's ability to feel empathy for others. Empathy is a difficult concept to measure as the data revealed is found purely in the responses of the participants. Conclusions were drawn from the responses to any of

the questions that may have revealed a sense of empathy as described by these participants in relation to their volunteer work.

The results of a recent study described a school that addressed the concept of empathy through the use of service learning, relating that they viewed service learning “as the principal means for transmitting the core values of empathy, ethics, and service” (McCarthy & Corbin, 2003, p. 53). This use of service learning to nurture an ability to feel empathy may in part explain the feelings related by the seven participants of this study in which they described an understanding of the perceived feelings of the individuals with whom they were working.

As most of the volunteer work took place in elementary schools, the participants were often able to relate to the young students through the common link of shared experience. Many of those working with elementary students recounted an event through their own eyes as remembered from earlier personal events, using this familiarity of experience to more deeply understand the issues facing these young students. These feelings of empathy were expressed numerous times as various participants articulated concerns such as how young students must feel in classrooms with teachers who did not appear to truly like their jobs or even their students.

Those participants who shared volunteer experiences outside of the school system recounted similar feelings of sharing emotions that closely mirrored those of the people receiving their help. Such responses were seen in the comments of the young man working in a nursing home and the young woman volunteering at Goodwill, both of whom were able to put themselves in the place of the individuals for whom they offered

service. Other participants shared stories of volunteering through church and a variety of other organizations.

Many of the incidents related by these students included an account of how they felt about the experience, especially with a recalled realization of better of understanding the feelings of others in situations they had not personally experienced. While the effect of the service learning experience on the ability of these students' to feel empathy for others is measurable only through the words of the participants, these related experiences do seem to support the positive effect of volunteer service on the development in an individual's capacity to empathize with his fellow humans.

Empathy "can be achieved best through experiential and academic preparation that develops in the students an understanding of the strange, an understanding that makes empathy available in the interactions" (Sheffield, 2005, p. 49). This observation captures the essence of empathy, a concept one experiences but that is very difficult to quantify through research.

Research Questions – Lifelong Volunteer. The research question that asked if service learning instills in students a desire to be a lifelong volunteer was much easier to measure than the question concerning empathy. As there had been a passage of time since these participants had taken a service learning course, any actual volunteer activity that occurred since the completion of the course offered tangible evidence as to the effect of service learning on volunteer activity.

In words that seem to convey the feelings of the participants of this study, a student participating in a recent college study on service learning reported "I feel that this activity motivates students to get involved with projects in their community and learn

early on that their efforts, no matter how small, can make a difference in the lives of others” (Wells & Grabert, 2004, p. 576).

Volunteer service was not a new concept to most of the participants at the time of enrolling in a service learning course. The majority of these young people had volunteered in a variety of ways since early childhood; it could be argued that students with prior volunteer service of any type were more likely to enroll in a service learning course. One thing that was clear from the interviews was that the favorite part of the service learning course for all of the participants was the volunteer segment of the course.

The comments from the participants, in almost all instances, included an evaluation of the volunteer experience and all agreed that they wanted to be kept busy while volunteering. A common thread throughout the interviews was that the students wanted to do volunteer work that was meaningful and they wanted to make a difference in someone’s life. Even in the situations where the volunteer work did not provide this feeling of satisfaction gleaned from helping someone in need, such as the experience of the one participant who had worked on a farm, the participants still expressed a desire to volunteer in other situations.

When asked if their goal was to continue with volunteer work throughout their lives, all of the participants voiced a definite intention to make volunteer service a continuing life activity. Not all of the participants were volunteering currently and most seemed to feel a sense of guilt about this lack of participation in service activities. Many found time to volunteer in spite of busy schedules of college, work and family obligations, but those not currently involved cited time as the reason for their lack of volunteer work.

Research Questions – Classroom Instruction as Linked to Volunteer Experience.

A theme common among all of the participants was that of ineffective classroom instruction in the service learning course. Even though one student remembered some meaningful activities that had taken place in her service learning class, the overall impression for these seven participants was that they gained very little from the classroom experience. These students were very precise about what they did not like and what they felt was ineffective.

A major complaint from the participants was that the class was boring or that assignments amounted to “busy” work such as work sheets or watching movies. A few indicated that they really could not recall what activities had been assigned. These former service learning students were very disappointed in the curriculum; they felt their teachers had let them down. These were young people who really wanted to be engaged in learning and, for the most part, they just were not. One researcher stated that while service projects are developed by teachers with good intentions, there is little effort to structure these projects around effective practices in the field (Abilock, 2006, p. 9).

The main classroom activity that every student enjoyed and felt was extremely beneficial to better understanding their feelings about to the volunteer work was any activity that centered on student reflection. The journal was the reflective tool most often employed by teachers, but students were also assigned reflective writings in class and, in a few cases, group work or class discussion that was reflective in nature. Hatcher and Bringle (1997) asserted that

reflective activities (a) link experience to learning objectives, (b) are guided, (c) occur regularly, (d) allow feedback and assessment, and (e) include the

clarification of values. We posit that when reflection activities with those qualities are integrated into service learning courses, students will be better able to connect the service to coursework, and their learning will be enriched (p. 157).

Sadly, these activities were not used often in most of the classes experienced by the students in this study and they seldom received any teacher feedback on their reflections. None of the students who had kept reflective journals or scrapbooks of reflective pieces still had this work, mainly because most of it was never returned by their teachers. These students as a whole did not feel that the teachers were truly committed to the class, leading to the student perceptions of service learning as an easy course. While these students mostly enjoyed the volunteer work, they did not really see any connection between the classroom and volunteer experiences.

In summary, the interviews provided insight into the three research questions as well as providing much additional information regarding the structure and implementation of the curriculum in current service learning programs. Much of the information points to flaws within the programs but supports the need for effective, well-planned service learning courses as a part of the curriculum in our schools. The information gleaned from this study could be quite useful as a tool to create or revise current service learning programs, yet there are limitations to the study that must be considered.

Limitations of the Study

1. A larger number of participants may have provided more depth of response to the questions asked. The original number was set at five with the flexibility to add

additional participants if needed. This limitation was addressed during the study by expanding the criteria for participation. Even with this expanded criteria, of the approximately 100 students were asked to take part in the study, only seven both met the criteria and agreed to be interviewed. In a phenomenological study, it is not imperative to use a large number of participants but additional interviews may have provided more variety of responses.

2. A second limitation of the research is that it was not a study of one specific program. Due to the nature of service learning programs, there is not one set model or curriculum to study. There are many universals that apply to all service learning programs and the information reported from this study must be used as it applies to each individual situation.
3. One of the major limitations of this study was the lack of the diversity of participants. The original design included both gender and ethnic diversity from a variety of locations within the Commonwealth of Virginia. Due to the narrow focus of the requirements for participation, the study was broadened to include students from around the United States. This change expanded the diversity of applicants to include two males, one of whom was Asian, and included students from four states and added one student who attended a private school. As previously noted, there was difficulty in finding participants who met the criteria and were willing to participate; all seven who agreed to be interviewed were included.
4. A primary element of the study design was also one of the study limitations in that while the perceptions of students after the passage of time to reflect upon the

experience provided a more mature assessment of the event, it also allowed for the passage of time to blur some of the facts. The participants gave as many recalled particulars as they could but in some instances, exact details of a specific event were just not clear.

5. A final limitation of the study is that while providing quite a bit of interview data about the individual perceptions of the participants that suggest program elements in need of improvement, the data offers no concrete suggestions for improving these programs. There are suggestions as to changes that should be made but there is no outline as to how to develop a successful service learning program.

Conclusions

In spite of the study limitations, there was a good deal of data that led to conclusions as to common practice in many service learning programs. The conclusions include, but are not limited to:

1. The key to success in a service learning program begins with the development of a structured curriculum that addresses activities both in the classroom and related volunteer experience. In many of the programs described by the participants, there seemed to be a major lack of communication between the school and the volunteer site personnel. Without a well-designed and coordinated curriculum coupled with both training and time for collaboration between both the school and agency personnel, service learning programs will not reach their full potential. One study captured the benefits of such effective programs as the research found that “well-designed service-learning activities naturally and effectively lead to a deeper understanding of the learning process...” (Zlotkowski, 2003, p. 10).

2. A more structured, meaningful curriculum is needed to dispel widely held beliefs such as the idea voiced, in a variety of ways by several participants, that service learning is an easy elective taken primarily to ensure some students early release from school. One teacher captured the essence of the issue in stating of a service learning program with which she worked that "...my school was full of feel-good, superficial activities and little curricular coherence" (Abilock, 2006, p. 9).
3. If part of the course requires volunteer hours during the school day, there must be a reliable accountability system for this time. Additionally, a set number of volunteer hours, either during or outside of school time, needs to be listed as a part of the course curriculum. A project in one successful program specified that students make a set number of visits to a provided list of volunteer sites from which to choose and included a set time for each visit and a required total number of hours (Denner, Coyle, & Banspach, 2005, p. 152).
4. In order for a meaningful curriculum and accountability to become a part of a service learning program, there must be greater collaboration between the service learning teacher and the volunteer site personnel. If the volunteer personnel are not aware of the course requirements and do not work closely with the service learning teacher, there will continue to be a sense of disconnect between the classroom and volunteer goals. McCarthy and Corbin (2003) suggested that one key to a successful service learning program is that "Service-learning opens the doors of the school, inviting community members inside and allowing students to interact with community partners in settings outside of school" (p. 52).

5. It is necessary to develop a way to assess the effectiveness of both the classroom and volunteer segments of the service learning course. Group work, individual projects, class discussion and such should all be a part of the curriculum but the participants' descriptions of class work as "busy" work needs to be eliminated by the inclusion of engaging activities that draw connections between both the class and volunteer segments of the course. One teacher education course addressed this issue, finding that future teachers in the course gained a "feeling of empowerment, especially in how to address content standards in project-based activities" (Chen, 2004, p. 34). Change in practice beginning in teacher education classes is a good start toward improved classroom practice.
6. One of the most important tools for drawing these needed connections between what is studied in class and what is done as volunteer work is the reflective journal. The use of such a journal along with other reflective activities is key to providing students with a means of gaining full advantage of a service learning course. As suggested by one researcher, "Project leaders can use different media to help students reflect on the quality of their service...for example, student journals; classroom discussions; and art, music, and writing activities" (Wren, 2004, p. 30).

Recommendations for Future Study

.Service learning is a program being adopted by many school systems but, as shown in this study, there is need of additional research in order to determine what works and what should be changed or deleted from the courses. It is through the study of existing programs that recommendations for change in curriculum and structure of the

programs will lead to a standard that supports best practice guidelines for the teachers and volunteer personnel working with these programs. Recommendations for this future study include:

1. The majority of research in the field of service learning has been qualitative in design. While this form of research is valuable and perhaps most conducive to the nature of the subject, there needs to be more quantitative research to supplement the qualitative studies that are ongoing. Billig (2002) asserted that “The research in service-learning should be read with caution. Many of the studies were performed as program evaluations rather than as ‘pure research’; thus their general applicability to the field is limited” (p. 85).
2. Districts and states should look at the curriculum of various service learning programs and conduct studies to determine what works and what needs improvement or total elimination from the curriculum. In many cases the content of the course is an individual teacher decision and there needs to be study into what consistent practices will lead to a more effective curriculum. Sheffield (2005) contended that

...until philosophical clarity is reached as to what exactly we mean by such notions as ‘service’, reflection’, and ‘experiential learning’ (among others) in the service-learning pedagogy, the definitions of service learning will continue to spiral out of control leaving little or no guidance to practitioners how rightly to conceive of and then practice this very hopeful pedagogy” (p. 47).

3. The disconnect between the classroom instruction and the volunteer experience needs to be studied in order to find programs that have discovered a way to overcome this communication issue and to make suggestions for other districts to improve such issues based on the results of extensive research on existing service learning programs. It is “when student volunteering for local community groups and organizations is integrated with school-organized service and core curriculum, students’ civic attitudes and skills develop broadly” (Abilock, 2006, p.11).
4. The power of reflective activities in the overall design of any service learning program needs further study. The literature and the words of the participants in this study support the need for additional meaningful reflective activities. In describing the components of one successful service learning program, a researcher asserted that “Reflection is a key component of service learning...Have students discuss their reflections or keep a written journal documenting their feelings” (Scott, 2006, p. 28). Additional research is needed to determine if these activities are as effective as reported and if so, how they can be more effectively incorporated into both the classroom and volunteer segments of the service learning curriculum.
5. A follow-up study after the passage of 10 years would provide a better measure of an individual’s commitment to life long volunteerism Will they make room to volunteer in a post-college life? A student in another study stated that “I believe that my experience was one that started me on the road to incorporating service learning into my life. I no longer look at it as

something I don't have time for; rather, I look forward to the relationships that will form in the process" (Renner, et al., 2004, p. 137). Only with the passage of time can this statement be proven true for the students in this study.

6. Another research method that would provide additional data related to the three research questions of this study is to survey either former or current students, teachers or volunteer agency personnel. This method could employ a much larger number of participants and perhaps provide some of the much needed quantitative data in the field of service learning. Billig (2002) cited several surveys that have been conducted on service learning, covering topics such as type of service activities, degree of integration of curriculum and standards, and type of reflective activities in which students were engaged (p. 184). This method of survey research provides a means of study for countless related topics.
7. As the conflict of elective courses versus standards driven instruction continues to be an issue, a study into the cost of implementing an effective service learning program coupled with the academic benefits for students could be very useful in justifying the inclusion of such a course in a school's course offerings. One school superintendent, speaking of service learning courses in his district, stated that "Active learners do better in high-stakes testing" (Hergert, 2002, p. 196). The researcher in this study concluded that "there is no doubt in anyone's mind that they have learned skills at high levels because they are demonstrating what they have learned" (Hergert, p. 196).

More research is needed to see if the results of this study are consistent with additional research.

Reflections

While involving only seven students in the interviews, this study has been very instructive regarding many aspects of service learning programs. The research was undertaken by one who believes in the power of volunteerism and not all of the results were encouraging. Of utmost importance is the need to assess the effect of volunteer activity itself. Is it seen by students as being more than just community service that is something one should do but with no thought given as to why or do students see volunteerism as an activity vital for both individual self-fulfillment and the health of one's society?

With this perspective in mind, the results of the study are encouraging in that all seven students were passionate about the need to help those who are less fortunate than they. The participating students questioned many aspects of their service learning experience but the major goal of the program seems to have been achieved by instilling in these young people a sense of the value of volunteerism that extends beyond obligation into a feeling of self-fulfillment. Only time will tell if they are indeed to be life-long volunteers and only with self-reflection will these individuals know if what they feel for the recipients of their service is empathy rather than sympathy.

A less encouraging result of the study is the analysis of the effectiveness of existing service learning programs as to curriculum, class activities and communication with the volunteer personnel. It appears that these students

enjoyed some positive results in spite of the obstacles presented by the programs in which they were enrolled. One can only hope that with future study as recommended from the results of this research, service learning programs will become more structured as to curriculum, more focused on meaningful classroom activity, make better use of reflective tools such as responsive essays and journals, and work more closely with the volunteer personnel to form a true collaborative venture.

References

- Abernathy, T. V. & Obenchain, K. M. (2001). Student ownership of service-learning projects: Including ourselves in our community. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 37*(2), 86-95.
- Abilock, D. (2006). So close and so small: Six promising approaches to civic education, equity, and social justice. *Knowledge Quest, 34*(5), 9-16.
- Alliance for Service-Learning in Education Reform (1995). *The standards: School-based and community-based* (Brochure). Alexandria, VA: Close Up.
- Andersen, S. M., & Murphy, N. (1999). *Mandatory community service: Citizenship education or involuntary servitude?* (Issue Paper). The Education Commission of the States: Denver, CO.
- Anderson, J. (1998). *Community update* (Newsletter). U. S. Department of Education: Washington, D.C.
- Anfara, V. A., Brown, K. M., & Mangione, T. L. (2003). Qualitative analysis on stage: Making the research process more public. *Educational Researcher, 38*(8). 28-38.
- Billig, S. H. (2000). The effects of service learning. *The School Administrator, 57*(7), 14-8.
- Billig, S. H. (2002). Support for k-12 service-learning practice: A brief review of the research [Electronic version]. *Educational Horizons, 80*(4), 184-9.
- Campus Compact (2001). Campus compact annual service statistics – 2001 Retrieved 7/25/2004, from http://www.compact.org/newscc/stats_2001/exec-summary.html.
- Chapin, J. R. (1998). Is service learning a good idea? Data from the national longitudinal study of 1988. *The Social Studies, 89*(5), 205-11.

- Chen, D. W. (2004). The multiple benefits of service learning projects in pre-service teacher education. *The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin*, 70(2), 31-36.
- Corporation for National and Community Service. (2002). *Students in service to America: A guidebook for engaging America's students in a lifelong habit of service*. Washington, DC: USA Freedom Corps.
- Cresswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches (2nd Ed)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Cresswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publication, Inc.
- Denner, J., Coyle, K., Robin, L. & Banspach, S. (2005). Integrating service learning into a curriculum to reduce health risks at alternative high schools. *Journal of School Health*, 75(5), 151-156
- Dewey, John (1916). *Democracy and education*. New York: The Free Press.
- Dewey, John (1915). *The School and society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Ferrari, J. R. & Jason, L. A. (1996). Integrating research and community service: Incorporating research skills into service learning experiences. *College Student Journal*, 30, 444-51.
- Ferrari, J. R. & Bristow, M. J. (2005). Are we helping them serve others? Student perceptions of campus altruism in support of community service motives. *Education*, 125(3), 401.
- Fiske, E. B. (Ed.) (2000). *Executive summary: Learning in deed*. Newton, MA: National Commission on Service Learning.

- Forte, J. A. (1997). Calling students to serve the homeless: A project to promote altruism and community service. *Journal of Social Work, 33*, 151-66.
- Friedland, S. (2003). Service learning reaches out after 9/11. *Education Journal, 69*(2), 28-31.
- Gillham, B. (2000). *Case study research methods*. New York: Continuum.
- Goodlad, John. (1984). *A place called school: Prospects for the future*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- H. Res. 2010, 103d U. S. Cong., first session Report 103-21 (1993) (enacted).
- Hatcher, J. & Bringle, R. G. (1997). Reflections: bridging the gap between service and teaming. *College Teaching, 45*, 153-8.
- Hergert, L. F. (2002) *Snapshots of service-learning: Factors for integration and sustainability in school districts. 80*(4), 195-9.n
- Hervani, A. & Helms, M. M. (2004). Increasing creativity in economics: The service learning project. *Journal of Education for Business, 79*(5), 267-274.
- Hogan, K. (2002). Pitfalls of community-based learning: How power dynamics limit adolescents' trajectories of growth and participation. *Teachers College Record, 104*(3), 586-624.
- James, William. (1906). *The moral equivalent of war* (Speech). Retrieved March 16, 2003, from <http://www.emory.edu/EDUCATION/mfp/james.html>.
- Jones, S. & Hill, K. E. (2003). Understanding patterns of commitment: Student motivation for community service involvement. *74*(5). 516-39.
- King, K. (2002). Students realize they can shape the world. *Momentum, 33*(3), 61-4.

- Leh, A. S. C. (2005). Lessons learning from service learning and reverse mentoring in faculty development: A case study in technology training. *Journal of Technology and Teacher Education*, 13(1), 25-41.
- Literary Link (2004). *Literary Terms*. Retrieved October 14, 2004, from <http://www.theliterarylink.com/definitions.html>.
- Loupe, D. (2000). Community service: Mandatory or voluntary? *The School Administrator*, 57(7), 32-9.
- Malone, D., Jones, B. D., & Stallings, D. T. (2002). Prospective transformation: Effects of a service-learning tutoring experience on prospective teachers. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 29, 61-81.
- Masucci, M. & Renner, A. (2000). Reading the lives of others: The Winton Homes library project, a cultural studies analysis of critical service learning for educators. *The High School Journal*, 84(1), 36-47
- McCarthy, H. M. & Corbin, L. (2003). The power of service-learning. *Principal*, 82(3), 53-54.
- McCarty, M. (1996). Love yourself enough. *New directions for community colleges*, 93, 27-34.
- McGoldrick, K. (1998) Service learning in economics: A detailed application. *The Journal of Economic Education*, 29(4), 365-76.
- Merriam, S. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. (2nd ed.) San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Meyers, S. (1999). Service learning in alternative education settings. *The Clearing House*, 73(2), 114-17.

- National Center for Education Statistics (1999). Service-learning and community service in k-12 public schools. (U.S. Department of Education Publication No. NCES 1999-043). Washington, DC.
- National Service-Learning Clearinghouse (2004). *Glossary*. Retrieved October 14, 2004, from <http://www.servicelearning.org/article/archive/>
- Obama, Barack. (2006). *The audacity of hope: Thoughts on reclaiming the American dream*. New York: Crown Publishers.
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Pearson, S. S. (2002). *Finding common ground: Service-learning and education reform*. Washington, DC: American Youth Policy Forum.
- Pickeral, T. L. & Bray, J. (2000). Service learning in an age of standards. *School Administrator*, 57(7), 6-11.
- Pijanowski, C. M. (2001). Thou's sacred ways: A case of relational learning for democratic self-formation. *Philosophy of Education Yearbook*, 288-96.
- Pleasants, R., Stephens, K. R., Silph, H., & Pfeiffer, S. (2004). Incorporating service learning into leadership education: Duke TIP's leadership institute. *Gifted Child Today*, 27(1), 16-21.
- Potthoff, D. E. (2000). Preparing for democracy and diversity: The impact of a community-based field experience on preservice teachers. *Action in Teacher Education*, 22(1), 79-92.

- Renner, A., Price, L, Keene, K. & Little, S. Service learning, multicultural/antiracist education, and the social foundations of education: Weaving a cultural studies' pedagogy and praxis in an accelerated teacher education program. *Educational Studies (AES)*, 35(2).
- Rossman, G. B. & Rallis, S. F. (2003). *Learning in the field, 2nd ed.*. Thousand Oaks, CA.: Sage.
- Scott, V. C. (2006). Incorporating service learning into your special education classroom. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 42(1), 25-29.1
- Seidman, I. (1998). Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences. New York: The Teacher's College Press.
- Seitsinger, A. M. (2005). Service-learning and standards-based instruction in middle schools. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 99(1) 19-30.
- Sheffield, E. C. (2005). Service in service-learning education: The need for philosophical understanding. *High School Journal*, 89(1), 46-53.
- Sizer, Theodore. (1984). *Horace's compromise: The dilemma of the American high school*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Sizer, Theodore. (1992). *Horace's school: Redesigning the American high school*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Stake, R. E. (2000). Case studies. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln, Eds. *Handbook of qualitative research*, (2nd Ed., pp. 435-545). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Tai-Seale, T. (2001). Liberating service learning and applying the new practice. *College Teaching*, 49(1), 14-18.

- Taylor, P. G. (2002). Service-learning as postmodern art and pedagogy. *Studies in Art Education, 43*(2), 124-40.
- Wells, C. V. & Grabert, C. (2004). Service-learning and mentoring: Effective pedagogical strategies. *College Student Journal 38*(4), 573-578.
- Westat, R. C. & Chapman, C. (Eds.). (1999). *Service-learning and community service in K-12 public schools* [Research Report]. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.
- Wren, D. J. (2004). Reaching out, reaching in. *Principal Leadership (Middle School Edition), 5*(1), 28-33.
- Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research design and methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Zlotkowski, E. (2003). Mapping new terrain: Service-learning across the disciplines. *Change, 33*(1), 24-33.

Appendix A

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Informed Consent for Participants

In Research Projects Involving Human Subjects

(Participant Form)

Title of Project: Perceptions of Individual Experiences in a Service Learning Course

Investigator(s): Patricia L. Brown

I. Purpose of this Research/Project

. The purpose of this study is to describe the perceptions and experiences of individuals who participated in a service learning course while in high school using the phenomenological method. The result will be in descriptive portraits of the perceptions and experiences of these former students. Service learning will be defined generally as a structured elective course that combines classroom instruction with volunteer service in the community.

II. Procedures

Approximately five former students will be participating in the study. Participants will be chosen by the researcher based on desire to take part in the study with the researcher reserving the right to make final participant selection. Names will be provided to the researcher by administrators throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia and randomly chosen by the researcher from the names provided. In order to insure diversity of participants, selection will be based on gender, ethnicity, geographical location and level of education.

The researcher will interview all student participants, using the same set of prepared questions along with questions that may stem from the discussion. Each interview will last approximately one hour. Participants will be asked if the interview may be audio-taped, but the interview will not be audio-taped if this individual has an objection. The researcher will request to take notes during the interview if not using a tape, but the participant may also deny this request. If such a case should exist, the researcher will construct as much of the interview as possible from notes made after the interview, noting such circumstances in the final analysis.

All interviews will be held at a location agreed upon by the researcher and the participant. If a reflective journal was a part of the class assignment, the researcher will ask the participant if the journal or any related written class materials may be used as a part of the study.

III. Risks

The risks to participants involved in this study are minimal. The researcher can think of no circumstance in which a participant could be negatively affected by participation.

IV. Benefits

Any benefits to participants gained by taking part in this study will be through personal reflection on the experience, leading to a better understanding of the participants' perceptions of the service learning experience. Hopefully, results will help teachers and agency personnel to develop ways to improve the experience for all involved.

The researcher makes no promise or guarantee of benefits to encourage participation by any individual. Once the study has been published, participants may request a summary of the research results.

V. Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality

The researcher will take all necessary precautions to ensure the confidentiality of participants. Names in the study will be changed, and any descriptions that may reveal the identity of the participant will also be changed to protect the privacy of the individual involved. At the conclusion of the study, audio-tapes of the interviews will be destroyed. The researcher will keep research notes, but no one will be given access to these notes. They will be stored in a secure location. Confidentiality will be broken only under those circumstances dictated by law.

VI. Compensation

There is no compensation of any kind offered for participation in this study.

VII. Freedom to Withdraw

Participants are free to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty. The researcher may find it necessary to request that a participant withdraw from the study. If such a circumstance should occur, the researcher will discuss the issue with the individual concerned.

VIII. Approval of Research

The Department of Educational Leadership and Policy and the school district in which the study is conducted have approved this research project, as required, by the Institutional Review Board for Research Involving Human Subjects at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

10/10/2006

10/5/2007

IRB Approval Date

Approval Expiration Date

IX. Subject's Responsibilities

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I have the following responsibilities:

To take part in the one interview with the researcher of approximately one hour. At this time, it is the responsibility of the participant to inform the researcher of his decision regarding taping of the interview.

X. Subject's Permission

I have read and understand the Informed Consent and Conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent:

Participant Signature

Date

Should I have any pertinent questions about this research or its conduct, and research subjects' rights, and whom to contact in the event of a research-related injury to the subject, I may contact:

Dr. David Moore

Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

moored@ct.edu or (540) 231-4991

This Informed Consent is valid from 10/20/2006 to 10/5/2007.

**[NOTE: Subjects must be given a complete copy (or duplicate original) of the signed
Informed Consent]**

Appendix B

Student Interview Questions

1. Did you participate in any type of volunteer service before taking a service learning course?
2. Why did you choose to take a service learning course?
3. Were you allowed to choose the agency with which you volunteered?
4. What was the most rewarding part of the course and/or the volunteer service experience?
5. What was the most frustrating part of the course and/or the volunteer experience?
6. Would you recommend service learning course to others? If so, why?
7. Thinking back, can you recall what class activity was the most helpful to you in making the connection between class work and volunteer activities?
8. Do you feel that your service was of value to the community?
9. Do you think that the experience has helped you to better understand the feelings of those receiving the volunteer service?
10. Have you participated as a volunteer with this or any other volunteer agency since taking a service learning course?
11. Has this experience made you want to be a lifelong volunteer?
12. Has the experience changed your feelings about others in any way?
13. Have your feelings about volunteering changed over time?
14. At the conclusion of the course, were you asked about you feelings as to volunteering and how you felt about the people for whom you volunteered?
15. Do currently participate in any volunteer activity?